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OUR INHERITANCE FROM THE JEWISH IMMIGRANT
COMMUNITY OF 1880 TO 1920: A STUDY IN CURRENT
JEWISH VALUES FOR THE REFORM HIGHSCHOOL STUDENT

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of the requirements for the Degree of
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DIGEST OF THESIS

This course is designed as a value oriented program for the high school. The topic is the third wave of Jewish immigration to America. This covers the period from 1880 to 1920. What I seek to achieve is the discovery of values exhibited by these Jewish immigrants. Such an examination will serve as the basis for student discussions about standards prevalent in today's Jewish community.

The amount of material from this era is vast. Consequently, I have divided the course into units. The scope of each unit is intentionally general so as to include insights from related topics. Here are the titles of the units: An Historical Overview, The Family, Religion, Socio-Cultural Aspects of the Ghetto, and Politics. The final unit is a summing-up of the course.

Let me say a word about how I selected these headings. I felt it essential to explore areas where Jewish values were being substantially challenged. The units concentrate on questions which might have arisen in the minds of students. I wanted to show how these issues were handled in the past, and how we are coping with them. I thought that the wisdom of the past might provide guidelines for us.

The initial presentation of the course becomes important in motivating the students. It is a matter of setting the proper tone. The first unit tries to do this through an historical survey, and project oriented materials. For instance, the idea of drawing a family tree is a wonderful incentive. Imagine what it means for the student who discovers that we are going to study about his relatives!

The unit about the family talks about inter-personal relations and the responsibilities marriage brings. The third unit focuses on the viability of religion. It also deals with the threat of assimilation. The unit about the ghetto's socio-cultural aspects discusses issues ranging from civic reform to Feminism. The unit on politics delves into Jewish participation in 'radical' causes and the emergence of Zionist activity. The final unit tries to outline the values we have gained from the immigrant experience.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

It seems ironic that I chose for my thesis the subject that bored me most in Hebrew school! I had been introduced to what was unceremoniously dubbed 'the third wave of Jewish immigration'. But my distinct recollection is that as the teacher droned on, I dozed off. This incident made a lasting impression on me because I was a highly motivated student and actually enjoyed Hebrew school. Poor pedagogy almost spoiled my appreciation of the East Side. It wasn't until rabbinical school that I realized what I had missed. Why the change in attitude? It was pure chance. I had randomly selected the Lower East Side for a discussion topic at a bi-weekly congregation. I thought it would be a good change of pace. Little did I know where my research would lead. In preparing for my presentation, I became immersed in the unfamiliar world of the immigrant. I laid school assignments aside and spent several nights studying into the wee hours of the morning. I thoroughly enjoyed teaching that adult education class, and afterwards committed myself to this thesis. This initial enthusiasm was my original source of motivation. It has yet to wane.

There is another factor in my decision to write in this area. This is the conviction that what our fore-

fathers went through on the East Side addresses itself to the present Jewish community. This does not mean to say that events of one era coincide with present trends. But I do feel that there are parallels from which we can draw significant conclusions. The lessons we learn from the Jewish community of 1880 to 1920 can be guidelines in working out the problems Jews face today.

Consequently, this thesis is more than a glorified history lesson. Understanding the past is crucial to this study. But it is only the means to a larger goal. Our task is to extract the value system of the immigrant community and evaluate it in terms of our own situation.

To my knowledge nothing along these lines has been done. I believe that my effort is unique. Our students know little about their American Jewish origins. They have no sense of continuity with the Jewish past. And most important, they doubt that their forebearers' struggle has meaning for them. It's time they got the message from the immigrant radical, Feminist, artist, and civic reformer. Perhaps their world holds the directions we so desperately seek.

Let me say a word about methodology. There will be two parts to the thesis. One will consist of the lesson outlines. These will have suggestions about motivational technique as well as points of information for the class.

The other section will contain resource material helpful for teaching: pamphlets, letters, newspaper articles, autobiographical accounts, and bibliographical references.

I will employ various methods in studying an issue: the creation of a family tree by each student, the construction of a Lower East Side stage set, a scrap-book for the course, simulation games, debates, readings from Yiddish newspapers and literature, interviews with those who remember the East Side, films, class trips and role-playing. One of the educational advantages of this thesis will be its reliance on a variety of pedagogical approaches.

The organization of the thesis is another matter for our consideration. I plan to begin with a motivational unit which uses the vehicle of the family tree. The following four units delve in areas that are of concern for today's Jewish community. The first will be the Family and will concentrate on marriage, the status of children, parent-child relationships, experiments in commune life, divorce, and family priorities.

The second area will be Religion, and will devote itself to the rise of various approaches to Judaism, the problems each encountered, the threat of assimilation, and the question of the modern Jew's need for organized religion.

Socio-cultural aspects constitute the third major focus, and here the concerns are the Yiddish press, Jewish literary expressions, Feminine activism, Jewish welfare activities and civic reform.

The fourth section is that of Politics which touches upon the organization of the Jewish labor force. Socialism, anarchism and Zionism. The final unit is a summation of the values exhibited by the immigrant generation in regard to current Jewish conditions and needs.

The focus of this thesis will be practical as I intend to confront the challenges our young people are posing to the standards of the Jewish community.

THE TEACHERS' MANUAL

U N I T O N E

AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

UNIT 1

An Historical Overview

Lesson 1

An Introduction

OBJECTIVES - 1) The teacher should explain the goals of the course. We want to discover the values inherent in the Jewish community from 1880 to 1920. Then we will see how these standards contrast with those of today's Jewish society.

2) The remaining time should be devoted to a survey of this period (1880-1920) in terms of Jewish history. The presentation must be attractive enough to capture the students' interest, and to create excitement about the course. Many of the students' grandparents came to America in the 'third wave.' This should be an exciting venture for the class.

METHOD - Remember that this first session provides the impetus for the course. Your main task is to generate interest. Here are a few suggestions.

1) Show the film Storm of Strangers (distributed by Pyramid Film Co.). Let this serve as the basis for a survey.

2) Distribute copies of Portal To America: The Lower East Side 1870 - 1925, edited by Allon

Schoener. Use the book's pictures to make the overview. You could also make slides from these photographs, and insert them in an illustrated lecture. I have used the former method very successfully.

3) Another suggestion - certain popular songs about travelling, coming to America, eg. "Immigration Man" are familiar to students, and would serve as 'attention getters' for any presentation.

4) For those near the New York area, arrange for a tour of the Lower East Side.

5) Ask the class what it knows about Jewish life in this period. Build an introduction on their statements.

FACTS - 1) Leave the class with an impression of the sudden upsurge of Jewish immigration to America. Use colorful charts to list any figures. Do not go into a detailed numerical analysis. The facts outlined in Levinger's A History of the Jews in the United States are sufficient. I've used this survey with success.

2) Characterize this group of immigrants. Let the students get a feel for the people they are studying. Discuss the economic, religious, political

and cultural backgrounds of the immigrants.

3) Where did they settle? Lower East Side Conn., commune experiments - Woodbine, N.J., Louisiana, and South Dakota.

4) What were their occupations? Garment industry, merchandise, newspaper, theater, teaching, professions, etc.

5) What contributions did the Jewish immigrants make to America?

ASSIGNMENT - Make a family tree. See if some students had relatives come to America in the 'third wave' of Jewish immigration. Expect a written report or diagram from each student. Tell the students to use bright colors for a chart.

UNIT 1

Lesson 2

Your Family Tree

OBJECTIVES - 1) Devote this session to a discussion of the family tree projects.

2) Pay particular attention to the reports of those students whose relatives emigrated to America between 1880 and 1920. Our goal is to continually build interest in the course.

METHOD - 1) Post the students' charts on the front blackboard. It will be interesting to see how families grow. Have the students locate their place in the family. Do the family trees tell a story? Are there any patterns or trends among the families diagrammed? Have the student talk about his family.

2) If a student wrote a report, let him discuss the findings with the class. Ask what impressed him the most.

3) Have the students start family scrap-books. These albums can contain photographs, letters, newspaper clippings, records, tapes - in short, any memorabilia pertaining to family history. I feel that this scrapbook assignment should last the duration of the course. As the students study a different unit, more relevant items could be

added to the book.

The scrapbook accomplishes several important goals:

- a) It reinforces what is being taught in the class.
- b) It increases student involvement.
- c) It provides the student with a way to concretely experience a family identity that is uniquely Jewish.

FACTS - 1) The focus of this lesson lies in the students' discovery of their families' American origins. What interests us is:

WHY the family came to America?

HOW it came to America?

WHEN it arrived?

WHAT the family did to earn a living?

WHERE they settled?

2) Family histories will differ. But you might find these common facts -

a) During this period (1880 to 1920) most Jewish immigrants came from Russia, and settled in the Lower East Side of New York City.

b) The usual pattern was for the father to arrive first, find a job and save enough money to purchase a steamship ticket for his family.

c) At first, most immigrants entered the garment industry.

d) There was an intense desire to become 'Americanized'.

e) Orthodox religious habits were burdensome and became neglected.

f) Family units and even towns remained intact by going into business together, starting their own shul, or belonging to the same Verein (welfare association).

ASSIGNMENT - Read either Morris Cohen's or Abraham Cahan's recollection about immigrating to America.

UNIT 1

Lesson 3

The Reasons For Immigration

OBJECTIVES - 1) Discuss the reasons for Jewish immigration. The greatest number of Jews came from Russia. Describe the anti-Semitic climate of that country. Are there any parallels with the situation of Soviet Jews today? Can American Jewry play the same role as it did in the 1880's?

2) The class read the Cohen and Cahan accounts of their trek to America. Follow these routes on a map. Talk about the problems the immigrants encountered. What experiences particularly interested the class? Explore the class's reactions.

METHOD - 1) In the Appendix to Israel Zangwill's play The Melting Pot, I found two personal accounts of pogroms. One deals with the famous Kishenev pogrom of 1903. They are both moving stories. I recommend that the teacher read selections to the class, or have parts xeroxed for distribution.

2) Have a class viewing of Fiddler. How did the students feel about what happened to the Jews? To what extent did they identify? What would they have done in a similar situation. List the specific factors which forced the Jews to move.

3) The Education of Abraham Cahan (Bleter Fun Mein Leben) contains wonderful pictures of ghetto scenes. These are authentic photos not some Hollywood set. Use these to describe life in the Pale of Settlement.

4) After examining the factors which forced the Jews to leave Russia, describe the trek to America. Trace the routes on a map. Locate border crossings, 'way-stations', and ports of departure. Note the great distances covered.

5) Use the Cahan and Cohen memoirs. The teacher should go over sections of both to reinforce the impressions of the class. These descriptions are fascinating. They provide invaluable insight as to what went on in the mind of the Jewish immigrant.

6) Have a socio-drama among the class about a Russian Jewish family forced to leave its home, and making the long journey to America. This is an excellent way to point out the concrete, daily problems involved in such a traumatic move.

7) Schoener's Portal To America (p. 66) contains an article from The New York Tribune describing the American Jewish reaction to Kishinev. This would be useful for a discussion about the place and value of Jewish protest.

FACTS - 1) Talk about the restrictions of the Russian May Laws of 1881.

2) Mention the Russian pogroms - Odessa 1871, others occurred in 1881, 1889, Kishnev 1903, Zhitomir massacre 1904, hundreds of Jewish towns were attacked throughout 1905.

3) Other restrictive measures against the Jews: forced to pay special taxes, obliged to live in the Pale of Settlement, couldn't own or rent farms, and limited to the businesses they could enter.

4) Why were the Jews singled out?

a) One of the members of the revolutionary group that assassinated Tsar Alexander II in 1881 was Jewish. She was Hessia Helfman. This stirred anti-Semitic reaction. Ronald Sanders in The Downtown Jews gives an excellent account of the revolutionary effort to kill the Tsar.

b) Jews served as the rent collectors for absentee landowners. The Ukranian peasantry greatly resented the Jewish middlemen.

c) The anti-Semitic attitude of the tsars and government. This can be traced to the Church's indoctrination and the government's need for a scapegoat in order to ward off potential revolutionary uprisings.

5) Do similar conditions prevail in America so that Jewish persecution could come about? Could we prevent such discrimination?

6) Know the routes taken by Jewish immigrants to America.

7) Note the various groups involved in this migration. Some were fleeing out of ideological and political convictions. Which bands went to Israel?

8) Describe the fears, hopes, and goals that motivated the immigrant Jew.

UNIT 1

Lessons 4 and 5

Transforming The Classroom

OBJECTIVE - 1) So far we have dealt with the plight of the Russian Jews, and their immigration to America. We followed the immigrants to the Lower East Side. Now it is time to set the stage for what happened in America. Our goal is to establish the proper atmosphere for the remaining units.

METHOD - 1) I think that the classroom should be transformed into a Lower East Side scene. I suggest a full length mural to cover one wall. This could picture one specific subject or it could be a modern, impressionist version of a Lower East street.

2) Another idea is to have black silhouette figures mounted on a white blackboard. The 'people' could be doing something together, or the mural could just consist of a gallery of Lower East Side types.

3) On a second wall, students could make a photo montage of the Lower East Side.

4) In one area, the family tree charts should be put up. These diagrams are a reminder of the students' involvement.

5) There might even be a bulletin board where anyone could place an item related to the unit being studied. This would be a good way to highlight articles concerning the values of the past or current Jewish community.

6) For those students who are 'into' carpentry, there are several possibilities:

a) Construct a peddler's wagon and stock it.

b) Build certain sets that could be used for class socio-dramas:

(1) a small shul or cheder

(2) a sweat shop

(3) any type of cafe

(4) a tenement room

(5) a store, butcher shop, etc.

These sets would prove invaluable in re-enacting scenes from the ghetto.

FACTS - 1) Any book containing pictures of the Lower East Side would be helpful for these lessons.

2) By decorating the classrooms, we have created a mood. This is essential if we are to give our students a feeling for this period. A student who comes straight from his suburban house to a stark classroom will not be able to identify with

the Jewish ghetto. In addition, the transformation of the classroom lends a certain authenticity to the course.

3) These projects will require time, so that is why I set aside two sessions for decorating the classroom.

Having gained historical perspective and established a mood, we are ready to proceed with the other units.

ASSIGNMENT - Read one of the following:

1) Abraham Cahan's A Sweatshop Romance or The Providential Match.

2) Selections from A Bintel Brief, pages 45, 62, 68, 73, 81, 91, 103, 129, 137, 143.

3) Parts of Our Crowd, pages 195-197, 230-235, 298-303.

UNIT TWO

THE FAMILY

UNIT 2

The Family

Lessons 6 & 7

Marriage

OBJECTIVES - 1) The early arrivals had weddings which were conducted in accordance with Halacha. Describe the rituals of the Orthodox ceremony. What was the legal status of the wife? 'Matches' were arranged through the auspices of a shadchen. This system quickly diminished among the second generation, but how did it work?

2) On the basis of several sources, draw some conclusions about the immigrant's attitude toward marriage.

METHOD - 1) Refer to these books for an explanation of the Orthodox marriage procedure:

a) The Soncino Talmud - The volume entitled Kedushin.

b) The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, by Rabbi Solomon Ganzfried.

c) Ha Madrich - The Orthodox Rabbi's manual, by Hyman E. Goldin.

d) Read The New York Tribune's (January 9, 1898) description of a Jewish wedding. (Schoener, p. 118)

e) Consecrated Unto Me (pp 27-33) by

Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn. This section contains quotations from traditional sources dealing with the religious significance of marriage.

2) Those who have attended an Orthodox wedding should share their impressions with the class. Contrast the wedding scene in Fiddler with its modern counterpart in Goodbye Columbus. What do these presentations reveal about our changing approaches to marriage?

3) Abraham Cahan was the unofficial spokesman of the ghetto. As editor of the Jewish Daily Foreward, he argued the cause of the Socialists. As an author, Cahan depicted the immigrant's life. His writings reflect the Russian preoccupation with realism and with the human condition. I have included two of Cahan's stories which are about the marriage aspirations of young immigrants. Both contain the typical Cahan ironic ending. I guarantee that the class will enjoy reading them.

a) "The Providential Match" tells how Rouvke Arbel painstakingly went about winning the consent of his childhood sweetheart Hanele, only to lose her. What was the role of the shadchen? What factors did Arbel weigh in deciding whether to ask Hanele to marry him? How did you feel about what Hanele eventually did? How binding is an engagement? What responsibilities does it en-

tail?

b) "A Sweatshop Romance" is another story of an unfulfilled romance. Heyman was a sewing machine operator in a sweatshop. He had been dating Beile, a co-worker. In a shop argument, Heyman failed to come to Beile's defense. Beile responded to the rebuff. What expectations did young immigrants have of a husband or wife? Are ours similar? Was Beile justified in what she did? How would you handle a similar predicament? One of the story's themes is the lack of communication between people. How much is this a factor in marriages today?

4) Turn to A Bintel Brief edited by Isaac Metzker. Bintel Brief is Yiddish for a bundle of letters. This was the title of a column in Cahan's paper. Readers wrote to the editor for advice on all sorts of problems. This feature shows the intense pressure brought to bear on immigrants who were guided by old world values. In his replies, Cahan gently tries to reshape the thinking of the Jewish community. To the greenhorn (an arrival fresh off the boat), Cahan symbolized a new breed of Jew. He was financially successful, and acclaimed by the Gentiles. Consequently, his advice was taken seriously.

This project can be a fascinating study in values. Have the class read a few letters which concern marital problems. (See pages 45, 62, 68, 73, 81, 91, 103, 129, 137, 143) Discuss the contents. Now let the students be the editor. What advice would they give? Read Cahan's responses. How do the two compare? What substantial shifts have occurred in our standards?

5) The Jewish Press, edited by Rabbi Sholom Klass, is an Orthodox weekly which contains advice columns. The Press's replies follow the dicta of Jewish law. It might prove interesting to take a particular marital issue, and see how it's treated in The Forward, The Press, and by the class.

6) Contrast the marriages of the poor, Russian immigrant with those of the rich, Uptown Jew. In the family histories of Our Crowd, Stephen Birmingham mentions the considerations which went into making the proper match. Inbreeding was one way the German Jew safeguarded his social and financial status. Turn to Our Crowd, pages, 195-197, 230-235, 298-303.

7) Aspects of the current sexual revolution, ie. the belief in free love and criticism of the double standard, have repercussions for the institution of marriage. These issues were openly

discussed in the Yiddish theater! If you know someone who understands Yiddish, get the following plays translated. The Beggar Of Odessa advocates free love. Broken Chains criticizes the man's freedom of action in love matters. Its outcry that men exert an unfair advantage has a modern ring! What were the views of the playwrights? Do their insights have application for our concept of marriage?

- FACTS -
- 1) Familiarize the class with the steps involved in an Orthodox wedding. Explain the meaning of the ritual.
 - 2) The teacher should include the following points in a discussion about marriage:
 - a) In the late eighteen hundred's, a marriage was a religious event. The reading of the Ketubah (marriage contract) symbolized the legal and binding nature of the relationship. Has this understanding of marriage changed?
 - b) Young immigrants had high expectations for a wife or husband - virginity, honesty, loyalty, compassion, a social concern, and an interest in work. Do we have these standards?
 - c) Most early arrivals had their marriages arranged by a shadchen. Is our method of "falling in love" preferable? Read what a shadchen

thinks in an article which appeared in The New York Tribune (September 30, 1900), Schoener, p. 117. Refer to the letter in A Bintel Brief, p. 150.

d) How much do factors of wealth, social status, education, religious observance, and family mean in a couple's decision to marry today? Cahan's stories and A Bintel Brief show they were important to the immigrant.

e) In this period, the idea of marriage was rarely challenged. The roles of husband and wife were clearly defined. How does our Jewish community feel about the changing concept of marriage?

ASSIGNMENT - Read parts of Henry Roth's Call It Sleep or Abraham Cahan's The Rise Of David Levinsky. See Jewish Literature, edited by Charles Angoff and Meyer Levin.

UNIT 2

The Family

Lesson 8

The Status of Children

OBJECTIVES - 1) Discover what it was like to grow up on the Lower East Side. What type of atmosphere pervaded the child's home, school, synagogue, and neighborhood?

2) Characterize the East Side child. What were his ambitions and concerns? Did he face the problems of today's youth - boredom, depression, unhappiness, apathy, etc.?

3) The family was engaged in a constant struggle for survival. What responsibilities did children assume to help out?

METHOD - 1) For a first hand report, invite in several of the students' grandparents who remember stories of a Lower East Side childhood. Have the class prepare questions in advance. After the ice has been broken, look out-the grandparents will take over! Be prepared for a real treat. This is bound to be a memorable lesson.

If a grandparent is incapable of visiting, send a team of students to make a cassette recording of an interview.

2) Follow a day in the life of a Lower East Side child. How does his schedule compare with the daily routine of your students?

3) Flip through Schoener's Portal To America and let the photographs tell the story of where the children lived and what they did.

4) Extra, Extra, read all about it! For the facts on children go to this period's newspapers. Schoener's book contains several good articles.

a) "Playgrounds of Asphalt" (p. 67) argues that paved roads make good playgrounds. Imagine coming out for kids playing in the street!

b) "The East Side Boy" (p. 124) talks about the types of ghetto children.

c) "The Largest Public School" (p. 129) and "Jew Babes at the Library" (p. 133) cites the Jewish interest in education.

d) "Sweatshop Girl Tailors" (p. 159) and "60,000 Children in Sweatshops" (p. 162) describes child labor and the conditions of work.

5) Two books are good for this lesson.

a) Henry Roth's Call It Sleep. Roth introduces us to the ghetto through the eyes of young David Scheare - yeshiva bucher, adolescent, worker on his father's milk cart, and only child.

b) Abraham Cahan's The Rise of David Levinsky is the most famous novel about the Lower East Side. Cahan describes the successful rise of a Russian immigrant. The teacher should xerox sections for class use.

Some students might have read these novels. What episodes do they remember? Perhaps they can choose one to re-enact in the ghetto set constructed in the room.

FACTS - 1) The central concern of the ghetto child was in supporting his family. Working in a sweatshop, peddling, selling newspapers, sewing garments at home - were all in the line of duty. Not until the early nineteen hundreds did state legislatures, prodded by groups like the National Child Labor Committee, set minimum age limits and fix working hours for child laborers.

2) The environment of the Lower East Side was horrible. The rooms housed large families and several boarders. Sewage was inadequate, utilities did not function, buildings were flimsy, people were packed in like sardines, filth lined the streets, etc. This was the atmosphere that the immigrant child grew up in.

3) The children possessed a singleness of purpose. They had definite goals. No one had much time for leisure. They eagerly sought to be

Americanized. They imitated the language and styles of the land. See Harry Golden's footnote (pp. 6-7) in The Spirit Of The Ghetto, by Hutchins Hapgood. Children were self-sufficient. Despite their poor lot, they seemed to be happy and relatively free of the neuroses that plague our youth.

ASSIGNMENT - Read Hutchins Hapgood, The Spirit Of The Ghetto.

UNIT 2

The Family

Lesson 9

Childrens' Relations
With Parents

OBJECTIVES - 1) The American Jewish family is facing a crisis. Relations between parent and child have broken down. A redefinition of roles is in the making. What parental characteristics are a source of tension for Jewish children? What traits do children display which might upset parents? Evaluate the situation. What role do your students see for Judaism in the family?

2) Explain the relationships between parent and child on the Lower East Side. Note the binding influence Judaism exerted on the family.

METHOD - 1) Hutchins Hapgood's analysis of parent-child relations in the ghetto is excellent (The Spirit Of The Ghetto, pp. 16-38). Hapgood explains how the life style of the second generation threatened the religious and cultural foundations of the family.

2) In my opinion, Goodbye Columbus is the best expose of the modern Jewish family. How can

you ever forget the scene at the wedding, that family dinner, and the club party! Recall these episodes with the class. Is the picture Roth creates of the Jewish family accurate? Draw a chart with three columns. In the left column, list specific incidents in the movie where parent and child interacted. In the middle space, write what the students felt was right or wrong with what occurred. Save the right column to note the value that either parent or child exhibited. Now compare these standards with what the class found true of the ghetto family.

3) One of the values you will want to mention is the dependency of the children on the parents. Abraham Cahan has a beautiful story about a young couple who must start married life on their own. Contrast "A Ghetto Wedding" with the way Jewish parents "help" couples today.

4) In The Old East Side, An Anthology, there is an excerpt from Morris Cohen's autobiography. This is a clear description of the circumstances under which Cohen rejected the religious beliefs of his father.

5) Henry Roth's Call It Sleep also depicts the relationship of a child to his parents. The father was a working man and felt that the mother pampered David too much.

6) Schoener's Portal To America includes an article (p. 116) that tells why the children drifted away from the Orthodoxy of the parents. This was an undeniable point of conflict between parent and child.

FACTS -

1) In Russia, the children shared their parents devotion to the religious life. They were occupied with the study of the Torah and the law. The scholar was the model to emulate. The secular influences of America, along with the public school changed the religious feelings of Jewish children. Their heroes became famous people - sports players, politicians, etc.

2) In the Jewish household, the father was the figure of authority. His decisions were not to be challenged. He had the final word. It was derech eretz (respect) not to undermine what the father said. This value might be changing now. The mother might be assuming more of a decision-making role.

3) The second generation was intent on becoming Americanized. They felt embarrassed by their greenhorn parents who spoke Yiddish, dressed in a foreign manner, and held old world views. This was part of their generation gap. Our gap arises for different reasons. (See Hapgood pp. 37-38)

4) In Russia, the children were taught to respect the parents. This process was reversed in America because the children spoke English and conducted family affairs for the parents. The parents admired the children.

5) The dependency of the children on the parents was not long because everyone had to work. Now the length of dependency can last into the child's marriage.

6) The ghetto child supported, and felt a keen responsibility towards his parents. Do our children act the same way? For example, the rich children who live in the suburbs sometimes abandon their parents to the dangers of the inner-city. Has our sense of obligation to parents disappeared?

7) Does the love and warmth which seemingly permeate the ghetto family exist among our Jewish families? Is the family a single unit any longer, or does each member go his own way?

ASSIGNMENT - Go over the report about the New Odessa commune in The Education of Abraham Cahan, pp. 339-344.

UNIT 2

The Family

Lesson 10

The Commune Experiments

OBJECTIVES - 1) The majority of immigrant families chose to live in metropolitan areas: New York City, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago. However, a small percentage moved to the South and West in an attempt to establish agricultural settlements. Examine the situation of these families in light of what we know about life in the city.

2) There are a host of issues to explore. What prompted Jewish philanthropists and civic leaders to encourage these agricultural ventures? What organizations sponsored the Russian immigrants? Where were these colonies located? Note the various types of settlements. What factors contributed to the failure of this entire scheme?

METHOD - 1) Did you know that the Union of American Hebrew Congregations appealed for funds on behalf of a Beersheba Colony near Cimmarron, Kansas? To find out about the fascinating story behind the Union's involvement, read James G. Heller's Isaac M. Wise, His Life, Work, and Thoughts (pp. 587-589). Wise's interest in locating the Russian Jews on farms is also discussed

by Joseph Brandes in Immigrants To Freedom (pp. -60).

2) Use the photographs in Brandes' book to get an idea of what the Southern New Jersey farms were like. Turn to the Appendix for a list of pioneers (are you related to anyone there?), and for vital statistics about the industrial, social, and religious aspects of the farms.

3) Abraham Cahan reports what his friends have to say about the New Odessa commune in Oregon (The Education of Abraham Cahan, pp. 246-249, 339-344). The founder of the group, William Frey, was a Gentile who was attracted to Felix Adler's Society for Ethical Culture. Frey's philosophy was a curious mixture of communism, Comtism and vegetarianism. Despite his influence, the commune failed for a number of reasons.

4) Some of your students might have worked on a kibbutz or moshav. Have them compare their experience with what Cahan tells us about the New Odessa.

5) Another technique might be to have the class set up a commune of their own. What political philosophy would they adopt? Who would govern the group? Would there be a need for social, religious and work regulations?

6) Let the students do a socio-drama about a problem that could arise on a commune like New Odessa. See how the 'members' would grapple with it.

7) For an eye-witness account of the Woodbine settlement, read Francis Lee's speech before the New Jersey Board of Agriculture (1893). Lee's favorable characterization of the Russian immigrant is apologetic, and probably was a response to critics of the program.

FACTS - 1) The farm communities varied in nature. Vineland and Woodbine were representative of those molded in a Western capitalist image. Sponsors like de Hirsch, Jacob Schiff, and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society were intent on Americanizing the Russian arrivals. They envisioned the creation of a Jewish rural proletariat. These philanthropists honestly believed that the immigrant would find success only through hard work and self-improvement. This attitude led de Hirsch to found an agricultural school in Woodbine, about 1899. The second type of colony was like New Odessa. Its form was communistic. The group distrusted aid societies, and preferred to be self-supportive. New Odessa was 'an experiment in living.' The family was not the basic unit of the commune, as there were many

single persons. The philosophy of the members was that of a Comtian humanism. Whereas in Woodbine, an Orthodox synagogue was erected.

2) The Union of American Hebrew Congregations formed the Hebrew Union Agricultural Society to spur settlement in areas like Kansas. Wise's efforts along these lines ceased after the First Zionist Congress (1897).

3) The role of agencies like the HIAS was important. Jewish organizations financially supported these farms, and directed the flow of workers to colonies in Iowa, Michigan, Colorado, California, Texas, and Washington.

4) The farm experiment failed for a number of reasons: leadership problems, differences in political philosophies, sexual jealousies, social isolation and agricultural inexperience.

5) Philanthropists like de Hirsch and Schiff sought to take Eastern European Jews and fashion them into American capitalists. They were also very conscious of the impression that these Jews would leave on the Gentile world. In a country environment they would be less conspicuous.

6) Certain elements in the farms resented the paternalistic attitude of the directors, and felt a sense of exploitation. When farming proved an inadequate source of income, the trustees

built clothing, cutlery, knitting and cigar factories. Women and children were recruited to work. There were minor protests against the owners on several farms.

7) Try to determine to what extent communes like Odessa are a viable option for today's Jewish youth. Would such experiments undermine the family orientation of the Jewish community? Do you see the various chavurah groups arising as a compromise solution on the part of an urban Jewish populace?

ASSIGNMENT - Have the class read Abraham Cahan's "Yekl" or the following pages in A Bintel Brief - 49, 56, 65, 110, 116, 121, 136.

UNIT 2

The Family

Lesson 11

Divorce

OBJECTIVES - 1) Describe the divorce procedures as prescribed by Jewish law. Who initiates it? Who draws up the Get (divorce document)? What does the ceremony consist of?

2) Note the factors which caused ghetto marriages to break up.

3) Discuss the problems of the agunah (married woman who for whatever reason is separated from her husband and cannot re-marry, either because she cannot obtain a divorce from him, or because it is unknown whether he is still alive.)

METHOD - 1) Use the Encyclopedia Judaica for information about divorce (volume 6, p. 122) and the agunah (volume 2, p. 430.)

2) Once again, read Abraham Cahan's short stories.

a) Review the plot of "Yekl". Why did Yekl become estranged from his wife Gitl? Was it a question of love or a clash between two irreconcilable worlds. What were the psychological effects

of the separation on the couple? An important part in the story was played by the middle-aged, Mrs. Kavarsky. She became a symbol of the hardened, Americanized Jew. How did her views of divorce differ from Gitl's?

b) "Circumstances" described the inevitable separation of a young couple. Boris, a former university student, had to become a factory worker in America to eke out a living. He and his wife, Tatyana, decided to take on a boarder to earn more money. Circumstances made the situation unbearable for the wife. Rigid definitions or pre-conceived notions of what a husband or wife should be often have disastrous consequences for a marriage. Do couples have such ideals today? Did Tatayna handle the situation correctly? Are there instances when divorce is the preferable course of action?

3) A Bintel Brief contains letters seeking advice about divorce. See pages 49, 56, 65, 110, 116, 121, and 136. How has the writer reacted to and coped with the problem? What does the editor's reply reveal about the standards of this period?

4) There are also letters in A Bintel Brief which reveal the agonies of the agunah. Read pages 83 and 108. How would your students seek to resolve

the problems of the abandoned wife?

FACTS -

1) Make sure that your students know the steps involved in getting a divorce according to Jewish law.

2) There are no statistics on the number of women who were abandoned by their husbands. The agunah was not an uncommon problem though. Despite the liberal application of Halacha, such women encountered particular hardship. A similar predicament arose for the wives of the Vietnam POW's. Bring in newspaper clippings to show how these women acted.

3) What factors caused separations in this period?

a) Differences in religious observance. The husband, who had been living in America, usually was more lax in practice than the rest of the family.

b) The embarrassment the husband suffered for his greenhorn wife.

c) The husband's infidelity. "Yekl" is a good example of the flirtation that many husbands engaged in while their wives were in Russia.

d) Differences in political philosophy caused tension among the serious minded Russian Jews. How could a Socialist tolerate an Anarchist!

e) The New York Tribune (August 16, 1903) carried an article which attempted to explain the relatively high divorce rate of the Lower East Side. (See Schoener, p. 105)

3) What are the causes of divorce today?

4) To what extent do changing sexual mores account for our rising divorce rate?

5) Jewish people have continually reaffirmed the fundamental worth of marriage. What happens to this view in light of the relative ease with which one can get a civil divorce?

ASSIGNMENT - Read Sholem Asch's short story "First Day In School".

UNIT 2

The Family

Lesson 12

Family Priorities

OBJECTIVES - 1) Our families often give us advice - "at least be happy", "don't act foolishly, it could ruin your career", or "just be rich". These expressions reveal something about our ultimate concerns. Are there goals which Jewish families believe more important than others? What are the priorities of our families?

2) How do these compare with the things a ghetto family deemed important?

METHOD - 1) There are several ways to uncover the primary interests of a family.

a) Cut out magazine pictures that represent material as well as spiritual values. Place **these** before a student, and let him select the things most valuable to his family.

b) Ask each student what his family does in its spare time. Our activities are an indication of our priorities.

c) Let the students decide what things their families would least like to part with.

d) Have the students draw up a schedule of what their families do on a weekend. Do they

attend services, have a Shabbat dinner, hold Havdalah, etc? This would give you some indication of their Jewish priorities.

e) The High Holy Day period has become symbolic of the hypocritical values which the younger generation finds in the family. Ask your students to recall the Holy day and what things turned them off.

These suggestions are techniques to make students aware of what their families consider important.

2) The place and necessity of money is an important element in our society. Hutchins Hapgood wrote that the American emphasis on money and making a living had a considerable influence on the immigrant. See what changes this philosophy caused in The Spirit Of The Ghetto, (pp. 10-53). Harry Golden makes a similar observation in the Foreward to A Bintel Brief, p. 25.

3) The priorities of the Orthodox Jew were challenged by the demands of the secular world. The shtetl had protected the Jew from this reality. But in New York City the threat was great. Sholem Asch depicts this struggle in "First Day In School" (Pushcarts and Dreamers, edited by Max Rosenfeld). Asch writes about a yeshiva bucher's confrontation with the very value system represented by the

public school. See if your students can empathize with Yosele. How do they feel about making the transition from Hebrew to public school?

4) Harry Golden was raised on the Lower East Side. His memories are colorful and imaginative. In the Foreward to A Bintel Brief, Golden gives his impressions of the ghetto family. He talks about the unity, warmth, humor, and compatability of such a family. On the Lower East Side, the family was a significant entity in itself. Is this statement true of today? According to Golden, apparently not.

5) Education was a primary consideration in the ghetto. Families struggled to send the son to college. For an absolutely hilarious story about an immigrant class trying to learn English, read Leo Rosten's The Education of Hyman Kaplan. Rosten manages to capture the immigrant's fervent desire to excel academically. Do Jewish families make the same sacrifices to send their children to school? Is education a priority for the modern family?

6) Read The New York Times article "The Jewish Family: The Ties That Bind Are Being Loosened " (February 9, 1973). This article notes

the key role the family played in the formation of religious and cultural values. The priorities the Jewish family once stood for are being lost. What has caused this situation, and what can be done about it?

FACTS - 1) In Russia, a class of scholars developed within the Jewish community. Families worked to support those who studied Gemara and Torah. The Jewish ideal was the rebbe or Talmudist. The family took pride in the fact that one of its sons was a yeshiva bucher. Is this still the ideal for an American Jewish family? It might well be that our priorities in terms of Jewish education have become quite minimal.

2) Conditions in America compelled entire families to work. This factor contributed to the demise of Orthodoxy. Observant Jews became lax. Even the primacy of religion in Jewish life quickly faded.

With a prosperous, middle-class Jewish community you get other priorities. Our families no longer arise for shaharit, but for six o'clock hockey practice! Explore how the Jewish community has become absorbed by a Gentile life-style and thought pattern.

3) As I've noted, the family in itself was an important consideration for the immigrant. Families were closer and found more opportunities to be together. Today, we hear about polarization, and lack of communication with respect to families.

Another thing was that families sought enjoyment within themselves-reading, visiting relatives, etc. Now, the family is often ignored in place of external activities - movies, night clubs, etc.

4) Our society is obsessed with the idea of success. You frequently hear the expression - "Boy, that's a real success story!" We even go to plays that describe the struggle to get ahead - How To Succeed In Business. Has success become a priority for the Jewish family? In what did the success of the ghetto family lie?

This lesson concludes our unit on the family. The next section deals with issues pertaining to religion.

U N I T T H R E E

RELIGION

UNIT 3

Religion

Lesson 13

The Tension Between
Reform and Orthodox

OBJECTIVES - 1) By 1880, most of the approximately 250,000 Jews in America were associated with the Reform Temple. These people traced their origins back to Central Europe. Suddenly they were faced with an influx of East-European Jews who represented a completely different stage of Judaism and culture. Examine the reaction of the Reform Jewish community to this wave of immigration.

2) There was a great deal of friction between the Uptown and Downtown rabbis. Explain why this tension arose.

METHOD - 1) To generate discussion, read several provocative quotations which emanate from the American Jewish community. For example:

a) Simon Wolf, a B'nai B'rith leader and chairman of the UAHC Board of Delegates, assured a Congressional Committee in 1901: American Jews had "never stimulated, encouraged, desired, or wished this whole-

sale influx of their co-religionists...

having naturally preferred that they should remain in the countries which they had been born." (American Jewish Archives, volume 17, No. 2, November 1965)

b) The United Jewish Charities of Rochester contended that "organized immigration from Russia, Rumania, and other semi-barbarous countries is a mistake and has proved a failure. It jeopardizes the well being of the American Jews." (Stuart and Rosenberg, The Jewish Community of Rochester, pp. 63-69)

2) Don't neglect Nathan Glazer! His analysis in American Judaism (pp. 63-67) is excellent. Glazer provides us with background information about the German and Russian Jew. He then proceeds to analyze their confrontation in America.

3) There were two outstanding Anglo-Jewish newspapers in this period - The Jewish Messenger of New York City and Cincinnati's The American Israelite. The latter was edited by Isaac M. Wise. It would be thrilling if the class could work from photostats of the original articles. See how The American Israelite actually advocated barring some 200 indigent Russian refugees from landing (edition of March 15, 1884, p. 2). Isaac M. Wise even suggest-

ed admitting some young Russian Jews to the Hebrew Union College in order to 'enlighten' them (The American Israelite, May 26, 1882, p. 381). The Jewish Messenger thought "Down-town Synagogues" would be a solution to the Russian problem (edition of April 7, 1882, p. 4).

A good source for quotations is Irving Mandel's "The Attitude of the American Jewish Community Toward East-European Immigration". This appears in The American Jewish Archives of June, 1950.

4) James Heller devotes a section to Wise's attitude to the immigrants (Isaac M. Wise, pp. 583-591). It might be interesting for the class to learn that Wise favored colonization of Palestine as an option to the wholesale Jewish immigration to America!

5) In Our Crowd (pp. 345-352), Stephen Birmingham points out that Reform Jews blamed the Russians for the anti-Semitism in New York. Birmingham also includes editorial comments on the immigrants from the Jewish press.

6) Hutchins Hapgood lived through this period and recorded the antagonism which existed between Reform and Orthodox rabbis (The Spirit Of The Ghetto, pp. 67-75).

Hapgood also recalls that periodicals of the Reform Community protested the production of Israel Zangwill's The Children of the Ghetto. The Uptown Jews felt it "baneful that the religious customs of the Jews should be thus detailed upon the stage" (p. 69).

FACTS - 1) The reaction of the American Jewish community ranged from sympathy to hostility.

This was motivated by several factors:

a) The Russians were religiously Orthodox and politically radical. These were points of disagreement.

b) Reform represented a civilized, scientific, enlightened and acceptable approach to religion. The Orthodox immigrants symbolized all that was anachronistic in Judaism.

c) There was a real concern over what the Gentiles would say. Those who eagerly sought to assimilate felt that the Russian immigrants jeopardized their chances of winning acceptance.

d) Embarrassment at the immigrant's poverty. Some were sensitive to the change that these Jews were looking for a free ride.

e) You have to understand the mind-set of the Uptown, German Jew. I think plain old snobbery accounts for some of the tension. Throw

in a little self-hate too!

2) There were those who welcomed the Russian immigration. See Mandel's article for a listing.

3) The ghetto rabbis scoffed at the Reform rabbis. For one thing the Reformers were preachers and not expounders of Halacha. They didn't even have a knowledge of Jewish law! The Reform rabbis were out "for business only". I get the impression that the Orthodox rabbi resented grubbing for a living, while his Uptown counterpart enjoyed financial security. The ghetto rabbis were alone in their plight. The Reform rabbis were oblivious to their problems.

4) The distance the American Jewish community felt towards the immigrants sharply contrasts with the spirit of K'lal Yisrael within Reform today. What factors produced this change? Should we allow dissension among Jews, which marked this period, to continue as a future pattern? Think of the potential good that a united Jewish community could produce!

ASSIGNMENT - Read the chapter entitled "Reformers and Conservatives" in Nathan Glazer's American Judaism..

UNIT 3

Religion

Lesson 14

The Rise of Conservative
Judaism

OBJECTIVES - 1) You might be surprised to know that in the early eighteen eighties the membership of The Union of American Hebrew Congregations consisted of Reform temples as well as several Orthodox synagogues! Glazer writes that almost every synagogue of importance in the country belonged to the Union (American Judaism, p. 56). Therefore, it was assumed that the Hebrew Union College would train rabbis for all American Jewry. However, a rift developed and the more traditional elements in the Union formed the Conservative movement. Describe how the break came about.

2) Talk about the founding of The Jewish Theological Seminary and The United Synagogue of America.

METHOD - 1) For an explanation of the rift between The Reform and Conservative elements refer to:

a) Nathan Glazer's chapter on "Reformers and Conservatives", (p. 43 of American Judaism).

b) David Philipson has a priceless account of the famous terefa dinner served on the occasion of the first ordination at HUC (My Life As An American Jew, p. 23).

c) The Growth of Reform Judaism by Gunther Plaut includes documentation dealing with that ill-fated banquet and the subsequent founding of the Jewish Theological Seminary. See pages 55-59.

2) The Encyclopedia Judaica has an article about JTS (Volume 10, p. 95).

3) The best historical study of the movement is Moshe Davis's The Emergence of Conservative Judaism. You will find that material about the Seminary or the movement itself is not as accessible as the information on Reform Judaism.

4) I have been in touch with the library and Public Relations Director of JTS. There are no filmstrips or recording about the history of the Conservative movement or JTS.

5) Abraham Karp wrote a pamphlet entitled "A History of The United Synagogue of America 1913-1963". This booklet contains some wonderful photographs of such great men as Solomon Schechter, Dr. Joseph H. Hertz, Late Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, Louis Ginsberg, Judah Magnes, David Philipson,

and Cyrus Adler.

FACTS - 1) There is no doubt that the terefa dinner dramatized the radical departure of Reform from traditional Judaism. The unity of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations was illusory. Counter-reaction was inevitable.

2) The adoption of the Pittsburgh Platform in 1885 also spurred the Conservatives to action. The Platform declared that ceremonies and Rabbinic law out of keeping with modern times were not binding.

3) The early relation between Reform and Conservative Judaism is worth looking into.

a) Some of the Seminary's staunchest supporters were Reform Jews! (e.g. Louis Marshall, Cyrus Adler, Jacob Schiff, and the Guggenheim brothers - Daniel and Simon) These men felt that the Seminary would provide the East European immigrant with a brand of Judaism compatible with an American environment. Cyrus Adler's autobiography I Have Considered The Days reveals his devotion to the Seminary.

b) Isaac Mayer Wise's opinion of the Conservatives was less than complimentary. Wise called the Conservatives "occasional growlers... who lack the moral courage...to side openly and

honestly with the reformers..." (See James Heller, p. 556)

ASSIGNMENT - Ask some students to read Abraham Cahan's "The Imported Bridegroom". For those who want to try other authors, let them make a selection from - Kobrin's "Little Souls", Opatoshu's "Poker Game in a Synagogue", and Asch's "A Union For Shabbos". These three stories are in Pushcarts and Dreamers.

UNIT 3

Religion

Lesson 15

Orthodoxy Has Its
Problems

OBJECTIVES - 1) The Haskalah (Enlightenment) rattled the gates of the ghettos in Eastern Europe and Russia. Students and the intellectual elite tended to become the Mashilim (Enlightened). For the most part, the Orthodox community remained intact. It was a closed grouping regulated by Rabbinic law. This system could not be re-created in America. The Orthodox Jew was forced to live in a Gentile society. There were points of conflict, eg. the Sabbath was Sunday, people naturally worked on Saturday. Under these circumstances, Orthodoxy struggled to maintain itself. Explore the problems Orthodoxy faced in America.

2) What happened as a result of the clash between Orthodoxy and 'the American way'? Can you foresee any trends with respect to the future of traditional Judaism in America?

METHOD - 1) Unfortunately, no one has written a good account of the religious life of East European Jews in America.

2) How can students from a Reform High School come close to appreciating the dilemma America posed for the Orthodox Jews? Our problem is one of orientation and background. For this reason, I suggest taking the class to visit a traditional community. I know that in the New York City area the Hassidim and Orthodox plan week-end programs for interested groups. Let the class go on such an experience. Expose them to an Orthodox lifestyle. Perhaps this will give them a better understanding of the problems the religious immigrant faced.

3) Most immigrants abandoned their Orthodox ties. Abraham Cahan writes about this process in "The Imported Bridegroom". The tragic plot involves a Talmudic prodigy who turns appikoros (heretic) and then avowed Socialist!

4) In "Little Souls" (Pushcarts and Dreamers), Leon Kobrin writes about the humiliation an Orthodox Jew willingly suffers in order to keep a job. Kobrin's point is that Orthodoxy has become a negligible factor for the immigrant who must struggle to survive.

5) "Poker Game in a Synagogue" by Joseph Opatoshu (Pushcarts and Dreamers) sounds like one of our "Las Vegas Nights"! Opatoshu's story is a

commentary on the vitality of the ghetto synagogue.

6) Sholem Asch begins "A Union for Shabbos" (Pushcarts and Dreamers, p. 83) with the statement: "You think America is a treyf country? Not so. Whoever wants to, can be a Jew in America, and whoever is a goy from the old country, well, America won't help him either." Asch then proceeds to tell the incredible story of how the heroic Orthodox workers of a small shop fought for their religious rights.

7) The Old East Side Anthology includes Morris Raphael Cohen's explanation of why he drifted away from his father's Orthodox leanings.

Use this in conjunction with Glazer's analysis of the demise of Orthodoxy. (American Judaism, p. 69)

8) A Bintel Brief contains some material from immigrants who are having trouble reconciling their Orthodox backgrounds and American identities. Turn to pages 74, 101, and 124.

9) Orthodoxy faced problems within its own ranks. This is seen in the attempt of eighteen Orthodox Russian synagogues to establish the position of Chief Rabbi. In 1888, they invited over Rabbi Jacob Joseph from Vilna. Joseph was one of the most erudite Talmudic scholars, but his career in America was less than successful. Even the Orthodox in New York considered him a

greenhorn and thought his sermons were out of date! Hutchins Hapgood refers to this incident (The Spirit of the Ghetto, p. 73) and so does Ronald Sanders (The Downtown Jews, p. 352)

FACTS - 1) The complete grasp that Orthodoxy had on its members was broken in America. The nature of American society was such that any type of strict regulation was near impossible. The rabbis authority was valid only upon the individual's decision to submit to it. The Orthodox community was split into factions, and therefore could not exert social pressure to get compliance with the Law. The immigrant's life was suddenly his own, and this tremendously weakened Orthodoxy.

2) The American life-style clashed with Orthodoxy. While in America, do as the Americans do! Who ever heard of stopping work to recite prayers?! Americans worked on Saturday and rested on the Sabbath, which as everyone knew was Sunday. Immigrants quickly gave up the dietary laws because they were an inconvenience. Thus, the American way of doing things had disastrous implications for Orthodoxy.

3) No doubt among the educated immigrants philosophy took its toll. Morris Raphael Cohen

tells us about the circles that would gather to discuss issues such as religion. Many fell victim to the onslaught of the Western philosophers. The immigrants had been taught simply to follow the commandments. They were not armed with dogma or fancy justifications.

4) Given the inevitable process of assimilation wouldn't you naturally conclude that Orthodox Judaism should have ceased. Yet instead we have a renewed interest in tradition among the descendents of these immigrants! How can you account for this? What will be the future of Orthodoxy based on the facts from this period and what we see now?

5) The value I see emerging from this lesson is that traditional forms somehow speak to our religious sensitivities, and therefore they are enduring. As Reform Jews, we must seek to realign ourselves with these past norms.

ASSIGNMENT - Those interested in drama might like to look into Israel Zangwill's "The Melting Pot."

Others might read about "The Assimilationists", p. 152, in Our Crowd. Opatoshu's "How The Fight Began" (Pushcarts and Dreamers) would make a good assignment.

UNIT 3

Religion

Lesson 16

The Threat Of
Assimilation

OBJECTIVE - 1) The drive to be Americanized raised the whole issue of Jewish identity. In a country where it was possible to be like everyone else and to share equal rights, why remain loyal to the Jewish heritage? Many believed that the Jew should forfeit his particular identity to become an American. Explore the threat that assimilation posed for the Jewish community.

2) What manifestations of this issue occur today?

METHOD - 1) This period's classic presentation of this topic is Israel Zangwill's play The Melting Pot. A great deal of controversy surrounded the meaning of this drama. Zangwill denies that he advocates complete assimilation. But the image of The Melting Pot speaks for itself. The plot is about a Jewish composer who writes the great American symphony, and marries a Gentile girl as a testimony of his conviction that in America we become all one people.

There are several ways to approach The Melting Pot.

a) The Appendix was an interesting discussion written by the author about what the imagery of The Melting Pot signifies. Zangwill also expresses his view that mixed marriage can succeed under certain conditions. Do you agree with him?

b) Create a modern drama based on The Melting Pot! For example, West Side Story was an adaptation of Romeo and Juliet. Encourage your students to select a scene from Zangwill's play, and develop an updated version of it. Let them use their own experiences, or information from the bulletin board clippings to embellish the story. Afterwards, probe the feelings of your students. Do they recognize the difficulties involved in a mixed marriage situation? Is an American society devoid of ethnic groups a real possibility?

2) Assimilation was a hot issue. Baron de Hirsch discovered this too late. In an interview with The New York Herald, the Baron was quoted as saying: "Let the Jews as a distinct race disappear." The Vineland Journal picked up the story:

"The greatest Jewish banner and philanthropist believed the true future for the Hebrew race will be found in assimilation with Christian races and religion." De Hirsch tried to clear himself. See Brandes, Immigrants To Freedom p. 103.

3) Our Crowd touches upon the efforts of the Uptown Jewish families to mix with society. They were snubbed on several occasions. The chapter entitled "The Assimilationists" (pp. 152-162) talks about the process of integration. Birmingham notes that Temple Emanu-El was the symbol of the German's efforts "to become one with progress" (p. 153) The German Jews tailored their religion to win acceptance. "The Seligman-Hilton Affair" describes Joseph Seligman's clash with the owner of the Union Hotel in Saratogo. This was the most publicized instance of anti-Semitism in America. Birmingham also records the snide remarks of the 'gentlemen' who made up the "Social Register" for New York City (pp. 304-305). Do you think the German Jews succeeded in breaking down the barriers of the Gentile world?

4) There were problems of mixed marriages in these well-to-do families. Read about Jim Loeb (p. 301, Our Crowd), William Guggenheim (p. 323) and Meyer Robert Guggenheim who converted to Cath-

olicism (p. 325)!

5) As to be expected, A Bintel Brief contains letters about mixed and inter-racial marriages. You play the editor and compare your answers with Cahan's. Refer to pages, 43, 95, 141, and 147. One letter shows that separate religious identities can be unpredictably divisive in a marriage. Another letter deals with the predicament of Jewish families who live in small Southern towns. Their children have no other choice but to date Gentiles. In these communities, the picture isn't bright for Judaism. What does the Forward suggest?

6) Joseph Opatoshu dramatically illustrates how inescapable one's Jewish identity is. Read his "How The Fight Began" (Pushcarts and Dreamers).

FACTS - 1) The German Jewish families unsuccessfully tried to enter the ranks of the Gentile elite. They modified their religion and lifestyle to achieve acceptance. But nothing helped.

2) In the later half of this era, mixed marriages were certainly not uncommon among the Uptown families. News of this sort was usually kept in the family because mixed marriage was considered in poor taste. Even with these

people 'tribal loyalties' were instinctive and strong.

3) As A Bintel Brief shows, the immigrants were caught in the tide of assimilation. The open nature of American society and its high ideals lured Jews away from their heritage.

4) The prevalent mood of the Russian community was particularistic. Assimilation was frowned upon.

5) The threat of assimilation is greater than ever. Close to 41% of the Reform Rabbinate performs mixed marriages! Do we have emerging here the resolution of the assimilation question? What are the arguments pro and con mixed marriage? Where does your rabbi stand? What are the consequences for Judaism in cases of mixed marriage?

6) The desire for a harmonious, universal society is still strong among certain Jewish elements. These Jews are willing to sacrifice what they are to gain entrance into the system. But how realistic is this negation of our religious and cultural roots?

7) Time and again we have seen attempts to lose one's Jewish identity. The present moment is no exception. Perhaps history's lesson is that the

Jews forget their distinctiveness. Let the class
ponder this value.

UNIT 3

Religion

Lesson 17

The Need For Religion

OBJECTIVES - 1) Devote this lesson to a consideration of Judaism's continuing role as a religion in America. We have observed the weakening of Orthodoxy among the immigrants, and an emerging fascination with traditional forms. But in all honesty, we must admit that the current trend lacks the intensity of the 'Orthopraxy' we found in the ghetto and on the Lower East Side. The truth of the matter is that observance and religious commitment are waning. Religion is no longer a major governing force in our lives.

2) Discuss what we can do to change the picture.

METHOD - 1) Stimulate discussion by reading the dirge composed by Maurice Eisendrath for the American Jewish community of 1984 (p. 9, Can Faith Survive?) Then ask your students this fascinating question - if Judaism were to die "painlessly in its sleep" how would you feel? What will you do to revive the religious aspects of

Judaism?

2) Have your students divide a paper into columns. On the left side, list the areas where the influence of religion or the rabbis was felt (eg. the determination of kosher foods, obtaining a divorce, etc.) In the right column, place a check next to the item if the same holds true for you will be surprised to see the diminishing role of Judaism.

3) The American Jewish Committee issued a report entitled "The Future Of The Jewish Community In America". This is not a technical study, but rather a summary of where we seem to be headed. Turn to the section on the synagogue, and read what it has to say about our crisis of faith.

4) Leonard Fein did an analysis of the Reform movement for the UAHC. It was called "Reform Is A Verb". Fein collected data from questionnaires and personal interviews. His goal was to ascertain what the future had in store for Reform Judaism. Go through the sections on belief and practice, inter-marriage, and the temple. One of the striking conclusions the report reaches is that our constituents simply "do not know what being Jewish implies, what they must believe as Jews, and how their Jewishness should be expressed" (p. X).

5) What are Judaism's chances of survival in a changing American society? For a clue, look up Earl Raab's article "Choices of American Jewry" (in "Congress Bi-Weekly, March 10, 1972, published by the American Jewish Congress).

FACT - 1) The problem this lesson poses is whether Judaism as a religion is a necessity anymore? We have seen that in Eastern Europe Judaism had a firm hold on the lives of its members. In America the group was loosened from 1880 to 1920, and now it is certainly slipping.

2) Just take a good look at what we are! Never before have Jews been so well off. We are a secure and financially successful people. Our people are middle class and they enjoy the benefits of such a status. Do such Jews have a need for religion? Lets be concrete. What does Judaism have to say to the family who is part of the typical suburban scene, and escapes on the Shabbat to a resort home? What does our religion offer to spoiled kids who see no reason for believing in God? Why should they, they've got the best in life?

3) I see two possible answers.

a) The first is that Jews need religion because human beings still search for ultimate

meanings and desperately want spiritual comfort. Our material luxuries mask much of our emptiness and lack of fulfillment. Judaism responds to these demands.

b) The second reply is that in order to be relevant Judaism must seek new directions. The thrust of religion might no longer be 'Godward', but earthbound. It must play a part in the construction of community-physical and personal.

4) Don't neglect to ask your students what they plan to do in respect to the religious dimensions of Judaism. Pinpoint with them where the Jewish religion can enter their lives. The value you want to inculcate is that Judaism can make a difference.

This discussion marks the conclusion of the unit on religion. Let's move on to the socio-cultural aspects of the Lower East Side.

U N I T F O U R

SOCIO-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF THE GHETTO

UNIT 4

Socio-Cultural Aspects

Lessons 18 and 19

The Yiddish Theater and
What It Reflected

OBJECTIVES 1) 1) The Nineteenth Century Yiddish Theater had its origins in Purim plays or Purim Shpil. These were re-creations of the Story of Esther. In the shtetl, the Purim Shpil served as a type of folk entertainment. Actually, the first record of a Purim play is in the Ninth Century AD! The performance of Solomon Ettinger's Serhele in 1862 paved the way for the Yiddish Theater. Among the cast was a rabbinical student, Abraham Goldfaden, who was to become the "father" of the Yiddish Theater. Serhele launched Goldfaden's career, and the young man began to write songs and plays. At this time, there were troupes of Yiddish performers, the best known being the Broder Singers. In cooperation with Goldfaden, this company put on a show. Thus, the Yiddish Theater began in a bar, known as Simon Marks Wine Cellar, in Jassy, Rumania around 1876. Goldfaden not only founded the theater, he provided it with a constant repertoire of plays. Other theatrical groups sprang up, and toured Russia and Poland. However, a Russian edict of 1883

prohibited Yiddish plays. Its effect was to send Yiddish performers eventually to America. We pick up the story here. Briefly trace the development of the Yiddish Theater in America.

2) Discuss the values of the Jewish community as reflected on the Yiddish stage.

METHOD - 1) Introduce the class to the world of Yiddish drama by showing S. An-ski's The Dybbuk. This work had a tremendous impact and drew much attention to the Yiddish theatrical movement. The story concerns two young lovers, Leah and Chanon, who decided from childhood to get married. Leah's father, though, betroths her to another man. In desperation, Chanon forsakes Talmud and turns to the dread Kabbala. Chanon suddenly dies, and his spirit enters Leah as she is to be married. Her father goes to the rabbi, who frees Leah of the Dybbuk, but not without tragic results.

The film is in color and runs ninety-five minutes. It can be rented from Audio-Brandon, 34 MacQuesten Parkway, South, Mount Vernon, New York 10550. There are English sub-titles.

2) It's my feeling that picture sparks alot of excitement. If this is your orientation you can use the following sources:

(a) The Yiddish Theater resounds with the names of Thomaskevsky, Lateiner, Huruwitz, and Mogaleses. Turn to their photographs in Boris Thomaskevsky's Book of My Life (Mein Lebens-geschichtel).

(b) Schoener's Portal To America includes pictures of the Grand Theater and the cast of The Broken Hearts. If you notice, each section of the book begins with a cover from the score of a Yiddish production (eg. Der Yiddisher King Lear - The Jewish King Lear, p. 102)

(c) Harry Golden's The Greatest Jewish City In The World has beautiful portrait shots of Jacob Gordin, Jacob Adler, and Bertha Kalich.

(d) David S. Lifson's The Yiddish Theater In America contains illustrations of Goldfaden, Peretz, Sholom Aleichem, Pinsky, Hirsh bien, Maurice Schwartz, and Jacob Ben-Ami.

3) Benefit performances, aisles filled with boys hawking ice cream and anarchist pamphlets, a heckling audience and the bad review - these things were the Yiddish Theater. No writer captures this mood better than Harry Golden. Read what he remembers of the theater in The Greatest Jewish City In The World, p. 12.

4) Without a reading knowledge of Yiddish, the amount of material available to you is limited. The most comprehensive English study was done by

David Lifson in The Yiddish Theater In America.

Sol Liptzin has two good chapters on the Yiddish Theater in his book The Flowering of Yiddish Literature. Use both volumes to follow the development of the theater in America.

5) On the programs distributed to the audience you could find lyric praise of the stars:

"Thomaskevsky! Artist great!
no praise is good enough for you,
...of all the stars you remain the
king. You seek no tricks, no false
quibbles. One sees truth itself
playing. Your appearance is godly
to us...Everything falls to your
feet." (The Spirit Of The Ghetto,
p. 122)

Hutchins Hapgood was acquainted with the great Yiddish actors and playwrights. Much of what he writes comes from personal conversations, interviews or reliable sources. This is why Hapgood is indispensable for any evaluation of the Yiddish Theater.

6) Ideally speaking, your students should be working with Yiddish plays. I have a few ideas.

(a) Contact the YIVO (Yidishur visenshaft-likher Institute), Center for Jewish Studies, 1048 Fifth Avenue, New York City. They will provide you

with scripts. Afterwards, ask people who know Yiddish to do an informal reading of several scenes. They will have to furnish summaries as they go along. I've seen this method employed successfully on the stage.

(b) Get someone to translate a particular play. Then assign parts to members of your class.

(c) There are some films in Yiddish of recent productions. YIVO has a listing of distribution companies.

(d) As a last resort, use Hapgood's plot summaries of the more famous Yiddish dramas. These will give you a general idea of what the theater touched upon.

Only by delving into the material can the class possibly uncover the values which preoccupied the theater.

- FACTS -
- 1) At the height of Jewish immigration there were fourteen theaters in New York! Of the legitimate theaters, five were prominent - The People's Theater, The Windsor, Miner's, The Thalia, and David Kessler's Second Avenue Theater.
 - 2) The People's catered to the Uptown crowd. Adler, Mogalesco and Thomaskevsky were associated with this theater. The Thalia presented many of the Gordin's realistic plays. Bertha Kalich

acted there. Professor Hurwitz, renowned for his historical operas, worked at The Windsor.

3) In the early 1880's, the Yiddish Theater was influenced by Goldfaden and his disciples, Lateiner and Hurwitz. The late 1880's were dominated by the realists - Jacob Gordin, Leon Kobrin and Z. Libin. Around the First World War, the followers of Peretz - Sholem Asch, David Pinski and Peretz Hirshbein - came on the scene.

4) An entire 'sub-culture' revolved around the Yiddish Theater. The theater cult entailed arguments in coffee houses, reviews in newspapers, and family disagreements on the relative merits of 'the show' or the playwrights.

5) The Yiddish audience was composed of the factory worker, peddler, shopkeeper, anarchist, socialist, scholar, journalist, and rabbi. The Orthodox frequented the theater and on Shabbat too! They eased their troubled consciences by heckling an actor whose role desecrated the Shabbat.

6) The theater had a socialistic bent. There were countless benefit performances to assist charitable organizations. It became a mitzvah to support a cause.

7) Initially, the Yiddish stage was cluttered with operas, melodramas, adaptations, translations, and historical plays. Not until Jacob Gordin did the theater assume a realistic air. Gordin depicted the poverty, the types of character, the dialect and the humor of New York. A major theme of his was that of conflict. Vogele is a satire that pits the rich Jew against the poor Jew. In Muina the laborer father is ridiculed by his wife and daughter. The Slaughter tells about parents who force their fragile daughter to marry the rich man she despises. In Merek Dfros the strong willed Jewish mother finally consents to turn the family affairs over to her children. She is neglected by them and is reduced to rags. They live luxuriously.

The conflict of generations is a main element in Gordin's work. He portrays old fashioned parents struggling to maintain a semblance of control over their Americanized children. Gordin and the Yiddish Theater were sympathetic to the viewpoint of the parent. However, the pathetic and burlesque endings of these dramas convince me that Gordin was really advocating the cause of the younger generation.

The issues of parental control and the independence of the child are still in the lime-light. How these subjects were treated on the stage should be of interest to the class.

ASSIGNMENT - Read about Yiddish newspapers in The Spirit Of The Ghetto or go to the following chapters in Sanders's The Downtown Jews: "The Yiddish Press Begins", "The Founding Of The Jewish Daily Forward", and "Lords Of The Press".

UNIT 4

Socio-Cultural Aspects

Lesson 20

The Press

OBJECTIVES - 1) Next to the theater, the Yiddish Press wielded the greatest cultural influence over the lives of the Jewish immigrants. The press's origins go back almost three centuries. The first Yiddish journal was Die Kurantin which was published in Amsterdam around 1686. It carried local items as well as international stories. Within its pages, a reader could learn about an auto-da-fe in Lisbon, a curfew for Jews in Rome, and the existence of Jews in India. Eastern Europe waited until 1823 before it had a Yiddish periodical. Russia's first Yiddish publication was in the form of a supplement to the Hebrew paper Hamelitz (1862). In America, the Yiddish press flourished as a socializing agent. Its scope included everything from science reports to lessons in etiquette. It taught a whole generation of immigrants how to live in the new country. Make a study of the Yiddish press in America.

2) Describe the values which the press tried to instill within the arrivals.

METHOD - 1) The fact that the Yiddish press persisted despite overwhelming odds is remarkable. Two incidents from Russia indicate the difficulty encountered. Alexander Zederbaum, a Jewish editor, obtained permission to publish a Yiddish publication only because he convinced the authorities of its assimilationist possibilities! To circumvent legal obstacles, Russian Zionists used a printer in Cracow, an editor in Odessa and a main office in Warsaw to publish Der Yud (1897). Use Sol Liptzen's The Flowering of Yiddish Literature to share this amazing story with your class.

2) In The Downtown Jews, Ronald Sanders concentrates on the journalism career of Abraham Cahan. Sanders follows Cahan from the Arbeiter Zeitung to the editorship of the Jewish Daily Forward. The politics and rivalries that developed in the press make fascinating reading. Take a look at the following chapters: "The Yiddish Labor Press Begins", "The Founding of the Jewish Daily Forward", and "Lords of the Press".

3) Newspaper men like Cahan, Morris Winchevsky, Philip Kranz and Louis Miller were the contemporaries of Hutchins Hapgood. These were the giants of the Yiddish press and Hapgood lets us into their world. Go to The Spirit Of The Ghetto

for an on the scene report.

4) Let the source speak for itself. Once again we run into a language problem. Fortunately, Isaac Metzker translated parts of "The Bintel Brief". The class has used this extensively in other lessons I'd merely remind them at this point that "The Bintel Brief" was a column in Cahan's paper. There are several other courses to pursue.

(a) Ask the Jewish Daily Forward for some back issues and have them translated for the class.

(b) Invite in a Yiddish speaking person to read and summarize an issue that reports about an important event in our area of study (eg. The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire).

(c) Select a topic and see how the Forward reacted - then and now. You could do this by making a survey of the paper's editorials.

By working with the original you can get a better idea of the press's attitudes and values.

5) For those in the New York City area, make a field trip to the Forward Building. A tour would create interest

6) If some members of the class can read Hebrew, let them struggle with a current edition of the Forward. They'll be thrilled to

discover they can read it. Get a Yiddish-English dictionary and see what your pupils come up with in terms of translation.

FACTS - 1) The papers on the Lower East Side represented a spectrum of viewpoints. The Tageblatt (Jewish Daily News) was organized by Kasriel Sarasohn in 1885. This was the most conservative of the dailies. Its platform was nationalistic and Orthodox. It bitterly opposed Reform Judaism and the Socialistic tendencies of politics or economics.

A coalition between Philip Krantz, Louis Miller and leaders from the United Hebrew Trades produced the socialist weekly Arbeiter Zeitung (1890). Cahan joined the editorial board later. The Arbeiter Zeitung campaigned for a socialistic policies, encouraged strikes, printed realistic stories and dramatic criticisms.

A split within the ranks of this paper led to the formation of two dailies - The Abendblatt and the Jewish Daily Forward (1897). Krantz became editor of the former. Cahan directed the latter. The Abendblatt was devoted to the interests of the Socialist Labor party, while the Forward

supported the Social Democrats. The Forward favored Reform movements in general like the trade unions. The Abendblatt insisted that allied organizations join the Socialist camp.

The year 1901 saw the establishment of two papers - The Varheit (Truth) and the Jewish Morning Journal. The former was absorbed by the Toq (The Day). The latter was the spokesman for the Orthodox, non-radical community. For years, the Jewish Morning Journal supported the Republican state and national candidates. (By 1928, the Jewish Morning Journal merged with the Tageblatt and eventually consolidated with the Toq. The Toq-Jewish Morning Journal stopped publishing in 1971. That left only the Forward of all these Yiddish papers!)

2) I find the personalities of these newspaper greats just fascinating. They were motivated by personal ambition, but also by a sincere love for their people.

3) The world of the Yiddish press was one of furor and debate. Sanders conveys this sense well. The Anarchists played a catalyst role. I have left them for the unit on politics.

4) While some papers adopted a 'radical' position in politics, when it came to personal

matters; their line was often conservative. They upheld the virtues of the Jewish family and its social life-style. They allowed intellectual pursuits, but frowned on the disbeliever.

ASSIGNMENT - Suggest several poems from Joseph Leftwich's The Golden Peacock, A Worldwide Treasury of Yiddish Poetry. An alternative would be to have the class read selections from Emma Lazarus's works.

UNIT 4

Socio-Cultural Aspects

Lesson 21

The Artists

OBJECTIVES - 1) "Smash your pen, wretched poet!
Who needs your song, your lyric art,
In this discordant, frantic land
Which clamors like a noisy mart,
Where frenzied people rush about,
Where every sound's a hue and cry,
Where every man lives by his wits,
And barely has the time to die!"
(from Morris Rosenfeld's "All For Naught")

Adversity challenges the creative spirit in man. When the preoccupation of a society is survival, artistic expression becomes a dispensable luxury. Yet it was exactly this frustration and disenchantment with America that bred a ghetto literature.

American Jewish literature possessed a distinct character. This was illustrated by its choice of themes. There were protests on behalf of the sweatshop worker, cries against child labor,

and pleas for starving families. The East Side material assumed a realistic tone unparalleled in East European writings. Get a feeling for what was said by going to a variety of sources - prose and poetry.

2) Note the issues which the ghetto writer raised. Are these subjects discussed in modern Jewish literature? What does this contrast say about the situation of Jews in America, and the values Jews espouse?

METHOD - 1) Work out a type of role play. Ask your students to imagine themselves as artists or writers from this period. What developments might attract their attention? Let them write or sketch something to express their feelings. Then hold a class presentation and discuss how authentic these compositions could be considered. Do your students capture the mood of the artists?

2) In order to appreciate the turn Yiddish literature took in America, you have to understand its European development. Refer to Sol Liptzin's The Flowering of Yiddish Literature for an analysis of the trends in Yiddish writing.

3) Yudel Mark's survey entitled "Yiddish Literature" (in Louis Finkelstein's The Jews, Their History, Culture, and Religion) is helpful.

4) Hutchins Hapgood left us with personal impression of ghetto literary figures (eg. Zunser, Abraham Wald, S. Likin, David Pinsky, and Leon Kobrin). Through research, I discovered that Hapgood was an occasional guest at Eliakum Zunser's home. His remarks about Morris Rosenfeld are taken from an interview with the poet. Hapgood is worth looking into because his is an eye-witness account.

5) The following books are only a sample of the vast amount of available material. My choices were guided by what I found appealing. For instance, in Donald Sanders's The Downtown Jews, there is a chapter on "The Sweatshop Poets". Here you will find some excellent selections for class discussion.

I have spoken about the disappointment the immigrant felt. Eliakum Zunser conveys this sentiment:

"Six months wandering around day and night, suffering hunger - my education was of no use to me; until sheer need forced me to become a presser in a (sweat) shop, there to burn myself up for sixteen hours (a day), clod-clopping with the iron. Then the

boss gets some more workers from
the greenhorns for next to nothing
(in wages), but I won't work for less-
so now he calls me a 'socialist'..."

(The Downtown Jews, p. 133)

The oppressive working conditions in the city drove Zunser to adopt a Labor Zionist ideology. This was the solution he foresaw: "Better that you become a farmer and betake yourself to the land!" (The Downtown Jews, p. 134)

The pathos of the ghetto was portrayed by Morris Winchevsky:

"Near the Stock Exchange, the Temple of swindle, I see every day a poor child standing still and silent as a puppy near an old man who is blind; carrying matches, quietly saying, imploring: 'Buy matches from me, sir! Two boxes, etc'" (The Downtown Jews, p. 143)

Morris Rosenfeld is considered the poet of the sweatshop. Here he captures the terrifying fate of the worker in a few lines: "The machines in the workshop whir so loudly that I often lose my senses in the din; I sink into myself and lose myself, my "I" is obliterated - I become a machine."
(The Downtown Jews, p. 134)

6) If its variety you're after, go to Joseph Leftwich's anthology The Golden Peacock, A Worldwide Treasury of Yiddish Poetry. There are many moving pieces in this book. For example, Abraham Reisen weaves a poem out of the fact that a family of eight must share only two beds! The consequences are more than the mother can bear:

"When the night comes,
Time for going to bed,
The mother wishes
She were dead

She knows the grave
Is narrow too.
But at least you lie separate
All of you."

(The Golden Peacock, p. 40)

Israel Schwartz's "No Sabbath Candles" dramatically illustrates the loss of religion's fervor.

"Your children grow like strangers,
For our faith they have no thought,
They never pray to God, for you
Such things never taught..."

Therefore when you come to die,
 No angel will mourn,
 And there will be no Kaddish said
 By your first or later born."

(The Golden Peacock, p. 318)

And where else could you find a
 tribute to The Wild West written by A. H.
 Rosenblatt?! (The Golden Peacock, p. 341)

7) "Give me your tired, your poor,
 your huddled masses yearning to
 breathe free, the wretched refuse
 of your teeming shore. Send these,
 the homeless, tempest - lost
 to me, lift my lamp beside the
 golden door!"

These words are from "The New Colossus"
 by Emma Lazarus, a Jewess. This poem adorns
 the Statue of Liberty. There seems to be a
 controversy over Miss Lazarus's Jewish loyalties.
 Some critics cite the phrase "wretched refuse" as
 an indication of her aloofness. Others say her
 cooperation with Gustav Gottheil, Rabbi of Temple
 Emanu-El, in writing a hymnal shows her early
 Jewish ties. Whatever the case, Emma Lazarus
 developed a strong sense of Jewish awareness after
 the Russian pogroms of 1881. When The Century

printed an article by a Russian writer (a Madame Ragozin) justifying the pogrom, Emma Lazarus reputed the charges. Lazarus's stance is truly remarkable in view of the fact that she came from one of the older Portugese families in New York. Read some of her fiery poetry: "The Banner of The Jew", "The Crowing of The Red Cock", "The Feast of Lights", and "Bar Kochba". These are included in Morris Schappes's Emma Lazarus, Selections From Her Poetry and Prose. Lazarus is a good example of an emerging interest in the welfare of world Jewry.

8) The artists in the class will enjoy Jacob Epstein's Autobiography. His sketches of ghetto life are famous.

9) Menachem Dolitzki was associated with the revival of Hebrew literature. Sponsor a class reading. Some of your students might not have heard Hebrew poetry. The material might be a little abstract. Don't be discouraged! Use parts from Kol Shire or Shire Menachem.

10) Those who want to follow the career of the ghetto's marriage bard can read Sol Liptzin's Eliakum Zunser, Poet Of His People.

FACTS - 1) As the social status of the American Jew changed so did the emphasis of his literature. During the sweatshop era and the struggle for labor rights, Yiddish literature was cause oriented. There were messages from the union organizers, socialists, Zionists and social workers. Each camp sought to reform and improve his brother's condition. Now that most Jews are middle class, our literature has become introspective. I find that it's concerned about the quality of our family life and the type of people we've become.

2) It is ironic that Yiddish literature contained the cries of the poor, while modern Jewish literature reflects the anguish of the well off.

3) The situation of the author is different. The ghetto writer associated and identified with the masses. He was one of them. Now the author's link to the reading public has diminished. Where could you find a Morris Rosenfeld today?

4) Certain themes and values are common to both Yiddish and modern Jewish literature. For instance, there is the concern for the well

being of the family. We still worry about the absence of the hard working father. We wonder about communication and interaction. The threat that a mechanized world poses to the individual occasionally comes up. The appeal of Zionism and the whole ideology of returning to the land is popular. We read so much about failing marriages and rising divorce rates. Eliakum Zunser sang about what went into making a lasting relationship. Jewish writers are still aware of the plight of the oppressed. Witness Arthur Waskow's The Bush Is Burning! The pogroms of 1881 focused attention on the necessity of protecting Jewish interests. Modern authors, like Rabbi Meir Kahane, still issue this call.

ASSIGNMENT - I might assign parts from Lillian Wald's The House On Henry Street. Margaret Sanger's My Fight For Birth Control would certainly create interest. And excerpts from Red Emma (Goldman) Speaks would stir the feminist elements in your class!

UNIT 4

Socio-Cultural Aspects

Lesson 22

Feminine Activism

OBJECTIVES - 1) Attention 'male chauvinists': This is the lesson you've been waiting for! We're now going to look at the Feminist Movement of the 1900's. Be prepared to give up pre-conceived notions, the contributions of the Feminists were substantial.

2) Contrast the first signs of Feminist activity with today's. How do present Feminists demands effect the Jewish community?

METHOD - 1) The name of Lillian Wald is frequently associated with this movement. Miss Wald, a Jewess, graduated from nursing school and founded the Henry Street Settlement. This was a neighborhood service agency. Wald's commitment to the Lower East Side stemmed from an incident which epitomized the plight of the immigrants. A little girl came to Henry Street enlisting Wald's assistance:

"The child led me over ... dirty mattresses and heaps of refuse...

between tall, reeking homes whose laden fire escapes, useless for their purpose, bulged with household goods...past odorous fish stands; for the streets were a market-place, unregulated, unsupervised, unclean; past evil-smelling, uncovered, garbage cans...

The child led me through a tenement hallway, across a court where open and unscreened closets were promiscuously used by men and women... "

(The House On Henry Street, pp. 4-6)

Finally, Miss Wald came upon a mother, who had given birth, lying on a bed stained with a hemorrhage two days old. This was the beginning of Lillian Wald's campaign on the East Side.

Wald's activities covered a broad spectrum. She set up a system of "Housekeeping Centers". Classes in cooking, cleaning, disinfecting, and nursing were offered. When one young woman announced her engagement, she added "and I am fully prepared because I have been through the Housekeeping Center." (The House On Henry Street, p. 109) To us this emphasis on domestic chores seems to be the anti thesis of what Women's Liberation is about. But you have to consider

the times in which Lillian Wald lived. The area of public health had been dominated by men. No medical expert had provided extensive care to the ghetto. In this, Wald was a trail blazer. Often ridiculed by male doctors and politicians, she persistently drew public attention to the desperate conditions of the immigrant.

Lillian Wald was politically active. Her work paved the way for the New York Child Labor Committee which protected children from exploitation by the employer. She was instrumental in organizing a union at the time of the cloak trade's strike. Remember that this preceded the Women's Trades Union League! After the tragic Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire (1911) in which 143 girls were burned or leaped to their death, there were strikes. Judges sentenced young women to jail where they were forced to associate with criminals and prostitutes. Many involved with the settlements provided bail or paid fines for arrested girls.

Lillian Wald also created clubs and drama groups to take potential delinquents off the streets.

She was in the forefront of social change doing what many never dared. She op-

erated in a field dominated by men and this is why she belongs to the Feminist camp.

Lillian Wald's The House On Henry Street is the best account of her work. There are two biographies that are suitable: Lillian Wald, Angel Of Henry Street by Berryl Williams and Lillian Wald, Neighbor and Crusader by R.L. Ruffus.

2) Margaret Sanger was more in the mold of today's Feminists. She waged a crusade for birth control and the right of women to limit the size of their families. In the process, she was jailed eight times. The medical profession, the churches, and the press denounced her. Even the liberal reformers shunned her. Yet Margaret Sanger was driven on by a firm belief in her cause and the conviction that as a woman she had the right to share events instead of watch them happen.

Once she determined her course of action, she plunged into the fight. Her tactic was to directly confront the law which prohibited dispensing birth control information through the mail. As long as Anthony Comstock was assistant to the Postmaster General, Sanger had nothing but trouble. Her paper The Woman Rebel was prohibited.

She was constantly being arrested for passing out information at birth control clinics.

Comstock died, and Sanger was arraigned in court for violating the law. To avoid an unfair trial, Sanger escaped to Europe. There she did research and learned about the latest methods of birth control. In a year, she returned to America. Her appearance made national news. Eventually, the trial began but was anticlimactic as the prosecution didn't press charges. The session was adjourned. It wasn't until 1934 that the Comstock Bill's censure on the dispensing of birth control information was struck down. Since 1916, Margaret Sanger had fought the government, and at last, she achieved her goal.

Margaret Sanger was a prolific writer. I guarantee that selections from some of her books are bound to cause an uproar. See: My Fight For Birth Control, Motherhood In Bondage, Woman and The New Race, The New Motherhood, and her Autobiography.

From my point of view, Sanger's involvement in the Feminist Movement might be explained somewhat by the relationship she had with her father. In the Autobiography, Sanger admits an intense hostility for her father. She describes

him as an unreliable type who caused her mother much suffering. This might account for her unhappy marriage, fleeting love affairs, and a belief that the successful individual had to be singleminded of purpose without the distractions of family. Someone in the class might want to look at Sanger from this perspective, and see if her early upbringing didn't account for her feminist opinions.

If you want a good biography, get Margaret Sanger, Pioneer Of The Future by Emily Taft Douglas,

One sidelight is that the Orthodox Jews opposed Sanger's clinics because they felt them a plot to "do away with Jews." This charge was carried in the tabloid press. (Margaret Sanger by Douglas, p. 112)

3) On August 26, 1970, militant young women marched down New York's Fifth Avenue chanting: "Emma said it in 1910, now we're going to say it again..." Emma Goldman is a symbol for today's radicals and Feminists.

Emma Goldman was born in czarist Russia. She emigrated to America in 1886. Her marriage to a fellow immigrant was shortlived. The conviction of eight anarchists after Chicago's Haymarket Square riot threw her into the radical

ranks. She became a protege of Johann Most, editor of the anarchist paper Freiheit. This association was terminated because Emma wanted to strike out in new directions. Goldman became involved in the Homestead Pennsylvania strike against the Carnegie Steel Corporation (1892). She purchased the gun for the would-be assassin of the chairman of the company. The plot was foiled when McKinley was shot, Goldman sought refuge from the ensuing repression of anarchists.

She emerged again as the editor of the radical monthly Mother Earth. In 1917, she was arrested for conspiracy to obstruct the draft. The outcome was that she was deported to Russia under The Alien Exclusion Act. There she became disillusioned with the Bolsheviks. She left and settled in England. In order to become a British subject and obtain a valid passport, she married an anarchist miner from Wales named James Colton. The ceremony was a mere formality, and Goldman finally settled in Southern France to write her autobiography Living My Life.

What made Emma Goldman sensational was her views. She felt that the goal of anarchism was to free the creative and naturally beneficent

nature of man. Institutions like religion, government and schools eliminated this freedom. Here are a few provocative quotations for the class.

Goldman actively fought the laws against birth control. Margaret Anderson, editor of The Little Review, wrote "In 1916 Emma Goldman was sent to prison for advocating that 'women need not always keep their mouths shut and their wombs open.'" (Red Emma Speaks, edited by Alix Shulman, p. 105)

ON MARRIAGE

"Marriage is primarily an economic arrangement, an insurance pact..if, however, woman's premium is a husband, she pays for it with her name, her privacy, her self-respect, her very life," until death doth part." Moreover, the marriage insurance condemns her to life-long dependency, to parasitism, to complete uselessness, individual as well as social."
(Red Emma Speaks, p. 159)

"The important and only God of practical American life" Can the man make a living? Can he support a wife? That is the only thing that justifies marriage." (Red Emma Speaks, p. 162)

ON SCHOOL

"It is for the child what the prison is for the convict and the barracks is for the soldier-a place where everything is being used to break the will of the child, and then to pound, knead, and shape it into a being utterly foreign to itself." (Red Emma Speaks, p. 105)

ON SEX EDUCATION

"Puritans build a high wall around this great human fact (the sex force); not a ray of light is permitted to penetrate through the conspiracy of silence, To keep the child in all matters of sex in dense ignorance is considered by educators as a sort of moral duty. Sexual manifestations are treated as if they were tendencies to crime.." (Red Emma Speaks, p. 166)

LOVE

"Free love? As if love is anything but free!... Yes, love is free; it can dwell in no other atmosphere. In freedom it gives itself unreservedly, abundantly and completely. All the laws on the statutes, all the court's in the universe

cannot tear it from the soil, once love has taken root." (Red Emma Speaks, p. 166)

PROSTITUTION

"What is really the cause of the trade in women? Not merely white women, but yellow and black women as well. Exploitation, of course; the merciless Moloch of capitalism that fattens on underpaid labor, thus driving thousands of women and girls into prostitution."

(Red Emma Speaks, p. 144)

4) Here's an ideal opportunity to employ current resources. Invite into class a representative from the Feminist Movement. Listen to her criticism of our social structure. You could also ask a sociologist to explain why Women's Liberation has suddenly caught on. The sociologist might be able to say something about the future role of the woman in the family and society.

5) Collect several copies of Ms. Magazine. Ask several students to report on the views of the feminists as represented in these issues. Are there substantial differences of opinion between the movement we know and that

of the 1900's?

FACTS - 1) The Feminist Movement of the 1900's was created under the leadership of a few. These women had been exposed to the squalor and miserable conditions of the ghetto. They knew of the countless immigrant women who tried to perform their own abortions. It was a sensitive leadership that formed what was to become a general movement. As I see it, the present moment is ripe for something like feminism. Such activity is really a groundswell protest by most women who are dissatisfied with their status.

2) The demands of Women's Liberation are nothing new as you see by reading Emma Goldman.

3) Now let's talk about the values Goldman expressed. Her view of marriage as a parasitic state needs airing. Nothing in Judaism says that a wife must not earn a living. Goldman lived in a commune and believed in free love. This certainly threatens the contractual nature of the Jewish marriage. Loyalty to one's spouse is the cornerstone of any marriage relationship. Goldman's view that the environment and capitalist system determined sexual misbehavior has a modern sound. I'm not sure that Judaism would totally agree. After all, Lot was saved from Sodom exactly be-

cause he didn't fall into the decadence surrounding him. I would say that Judaism relies on the capacity of the individual to shape his own destiny. Environment is a minimal factor. The strongest determinant of course is what God wills in terms of behavior. This is the significance of our ethical mitzvot. Goldman's remark about a potential husband - 'can he support a wife' - is still heard from concerned Jewish parents. Is it a valid worry or can love conquer material hardship?

4) The tactics of the early Feminists were no less radical. Sanger stood trial, Goldman was arrested and deported.

ASSIGNMENT - Read "Jewtown" in Jacob Riis's How The Other Half Lives.

UNIT 4

Socio-Cultural Aspects

Lesson 23

Civic Reform

OBJECTIVES - 1) Whenever we remember the Lower East Side, nostalgia clouds our vision. The tendency is to recall only the 'romantic'. Yet there is another angle to the ghetto story. I'm referring to what the social reformer witnessed. His perspective included over-crowded tenements, dens of thieves, prostitutes, and infested alley-ways. Newspapermen like Lincoln Steffens and Jacob Riis constantly battled Tammany Hall to get the East Side cleaned up. Acquaint the class with their efforts.

2) Talk about the condition of our Jewish city dwellers. Is Jewish involvement in the city still strong? Do we, the children of these immigrants, have a moral obligation to those minorities trapped in the ghetto?

METHOD - 1) Jacob Riis left us a priceless gift-- his collection of ghetto pictures. These are among the photographs found in Schoener's Portal To America. Concentrate on the last sections which concern the sweatshops and tenement dwellings.

It's amazing to see the hovels people called 'home'.

2) Jacob Riis created stories about children based on his excursions into the ghetto. He compiled these in Children Of The Tenements. Have the class collect several sketches and present them as skits!

3) Teddy Roosevelt called Jacob Riis "The most useful citizen of New York." Riis was born in Denmark, and came to America in 1870. After a series of jobs, he wound up as a police reporter for the New York Tribune. This is how his career of civic reformer began. If for nothing else, Riis was known as the man who tore down Mulberry Bend, which was the 'combat zone' of the East Side.

Riis's book How The Other Half Lives originally appeared as an article for Scribner's. Its contents were a revelation to the public. Riis characterized the 'Hebrew quarter' "by the whirl of...sewing machines, worked at high pressure from earliest dawn till mind and muscle give out together." (How The Other Half Lives, p. 80) Riis conducted his own inspection tours. The results were similar. There was a room littered with half sown garments. A combination

of adults and children slaved over machines. The children were obviously under the legal working age. A group of nine could turn out 120 dozen knee-pants a week. The manufacturer paid them 70¢ a dozen. Hiring the machines cost two dollars per month. The monthly rent for two small rooms amounted to twenty dollars. Food was also expensive. Bread was 15¢ a day, milk 4¢ a quart, one pound of meat was 12¢, and a quarter pound of butter cost 8¢. There was no refrigerator and blocks of ice were needed to preserve the food! With these expenses, a family struggled just to get by.

For further details, read the section entitled "Jewtown" in How The Other Half Lives. The Battle With The Slum relates Riis's fight to correct these conditions.

4) Lincoln Steffens was born in San Francisco. He received a college education, and became a police reporter for the New York Evening Post in 1891. His friendship with Riis contributed to his muckracking instincts. He was the city editor of the Commercial Advertiser, and from there went to McClure's Magazine as managing editor.

His association with the Jews is indeed curious. Apparently Steffens was fond of Jewish liturgical music and frequented services. In his Autobiography, he admits fixing a mezuzah to his office door. He proudly remembers when he was asked to justify his paper's large coverage of the East Side Jews. "I had the satisfaction of telling her (a prominent, Uptown Jewish lady) about the comparative beauty, significance, and character of the uptown and downtown Jews. I must have talked well, for she... tried to have me fired..." (Autobiography, p. 243)

Steffens was aware of the generation conflict in the ghetto. He saw boys sitting hatless on the synagogue steps, smoking cigarettes as their fathers, dressed in high black hats and with side curls, would pass through to pray. The older men wept, and tore their garments in mourning. (Autobiography, p. 245).

Read about the moral depravity of the East Side in the chapter "The Ghetto" of Steffen's Autobiography.

5) Have a segment of the class research Jewish involvement in your city. Is it mostly the Jewish poor and aged who have been abandoned in the city? Are there Jewish landlords? How

would you describe the relations between Jews and other city groups? Invite representatives of ghetto organizations to speak about their needs in housing, welfare, education, economic aid, etc.

Why should we as Jews help them? What must be done to help the Jews of the inner-city? These issues could also be handled through a class debate.

FACTS - 1) The reformers were alarmed over several trends.

(a) There was tremendous over-crowding.

According to a police census of 1900, a city block (this included 61st to 62nd streets, and 10th to 11th avenues) held 9,254 persons, or 1,158 to one acre!

(b) The rooms were death traps. They were filthy and lacked proper plumbing. There was no ventilation for those living in the middle of the building. Air had to pass over the partitions which separated rooms. There was no source of light for these tenants as well. The stairs were

wooden and fires could spread rapidly.

(c) The tenements harbored disease.

The rate of tuberculosis rose. Riis wrote the following:

"The health officers are on constant and sharp outlook for hidden fever nests....It has happened more than once that a child recovering from smallpox, and in the most contagious stage of the disease, has been found crawling among heaps of half-finished clothing that the next day would be offered for sale on the counter of a Broadway store.." (How The Other Half Lives, p. 80)

(d) Sordid conditions bred moral degeneracy. Gangs of thugs roamed the streets. Murder became a fact of life around Mulberry Bend. Prostitutes solicited in front of children. Steffens wrote that he threatened a prostitute with arrest if she didn't shut her windows so little children couldn't peer in. Saloons were centers for gambling and petty thievery.

2) Non-Jewish reformers such as Steffens and Riis did much to stir public opinion against a city government that permitted these outrages.

3) Riis's attitude towards Jews is intriguing. I ran across the comment "Money is their God. Life itself is of little value compared with even the leanest bank account." (How The Other Half Lives, p. 78) Later, Riis exhibited an appreciation and respect for the Jewish family (The Children Of The Poor, p. 43). That same year, he reported: "If the East Side would shut its mouth and the West Side get off the saloon corner, we could get somewhere; said a weary philanthropist to me the other day, and made me laugh, for I knew what he meant." Riis exhibited ambiguous feelings which is certainly human. Further study might prove interesting.

4) This lesson on civic reform raises the issue of Jewish commitment to social justice. Prior to the Six Day War, the rallying cry of Reform Judaism was "Justice, justice, ye shall pursue."

Failure of church groups and minorities to support Israel caused a backlash in the Jewish community. Tension between blacks and Jews in

urban areas heightened this conservatism. We have seen an attrition of Jewish activity in liberal causes. Our stance at best could be described as cool.

UNIT 4

Socio-Cultural Aspects

Lesson 24

Social Welfare

OBJECTIVES - 1) An intricate network of welfare organizations sprang up to help the immigrants. The American Jewish community suddenly was faced with the tremendous responsibility of providing adequate housing, clothing, financial assistance and cultural activities for the East Europeans. Survey the groups that sought to meet these needs.

2) Do we still feel a strong responsibility for the well-being of our fellow Jews? Is contributing to Jewish causes high on our list of personal priorities?

METHOD - 1) Major organizations such as The Joint Distribution Committee or ORT have films about the services they render. Obtain a recent edition. Old clips can be disastrous. Its valuable for the class to realize that organizations created in the 1880's to aid victims of pogroms are still championing the rights of Soviet Jews!

2) Take a field trip to a local Jewish welfare organization. What types of people are seeking help? Note the services these groups provide. Do they fulfill a necessary function?

3) Have a representative of an organization come in to tell you about his job.

4) Select several students to play the role of a needy immigrant or modern Jew. Let them decide on the proper agency to contact. Some other students might want to act as workers in this organizations. Observe how the helping process might go on.

5) An interesting approach might be to read the minutes of the landsmanshaften or fraternal groups. This way you could find out about their programs.

6) These welfare organizations publish printed matter which could be made available to the class. Post pamphlets on the bulletin board.

7) Evaluate the attitude of young people towards contributing to Jewish causes. Refer to Leonard Fein's "Reform Is A Verb". The data outlined in Chapter Two might indicate that we are hesitant in assuming our responsibilities to specifically our group.

FACTS - 1) There is some debate over the organizational tendencies of the East Europeans. Dr. Abraham Sachar characterized the arrivals as "'pogrom Jews' who felt no obligations to Jewish institutions." (A History of The Jews, pp. 396-397) Professor Jacob Marcus remarked "The Jews of today cluster together around their Jewish institutions," (The American Jew: A Reappraisal, p. 14) The situation in 1920 was markedly different: "even though there were over 3,500,000 Jews in the country, one could not speak of a genuine American-Jewish community. Such a community simply did not exist." (The American Jew: A Reappraisal, p. 9) Milton Doroshkin strongly disagreed and pointed to the immigrant's tendency to establish the religious and social institutions of the old country. (Yiddish in America, Social and Cultural Foundations, p. 28)

2) A landsmanshaft is a group organized on the basis of kinship or common place or origin. (ie. shtetl, city or province) The landsmanshaft provided mutual aid and benefits to its membership.

It carried out services for those 'sitting shiva', paid funeral and burial costs. The landsmanshaft levied special taxes to give endowments

to the bereaved. Arrangements for burial was one of the strongest motives for joining a landsmanshaft.

It was a family center and a gathering spot for the 'greenhorns' who were finding their way in America.

In addition, the landsmanshaften offered religious, social, and educational activities.

3) There were different types of landsmanshaften:

(a) Anshes or chevras - were primarily interested in religious duties.

(b) Vereins - were self-help societies which provided small loans and paid funeral 'benefits'. The principles associated with the vereins have become accepted notions in American society; social security, unemployment benefits, community chest, sick leave and medical insurance. See what Harry Golden remembers of the vereins in The Spirit Of The Ghetto, pp. 14-15.

(c) Ladies Aid Societies - carried out activities of benevolence among landsleit women.

(d) Fraternal Orders

(e) Family Circles - kinship was the uniting bond here.

(f) Relief Organizations - sped aid to victimized landsleit overseas.

4) There were three important Yiddish labor fraternal orders founded:

(a) The Workmen's Circle (Arbeter Ring)

(b) The Jewish National Worker's Alliance (Yiddishur Nazionaler Arbeter Farband)

(c) The International Worker's Order (Internazionaler Arbeter Orden)

A Yiddish labor order fulfilled a threefold purpose: mutual aid, an amiable social and educational environment and the advancement of basically socialist and labor ideology.

Doroshkin's Yiddish In America has a good explanation of the development of landsmanshaften and fraternal orders.

5) This period saw the formation of important welfare organizations:

(a) The Educational Alliance (1889) - supplied immigrant aid, taught classes in English, furnished recreation and religious activities. The Alliance was

accused of purging the immigrant of his peculiarities and 'Americanizing' him.

(b) Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society

(HIAS, 1885) - located relatives for immigrants and played a part in settling some of the population in farming regions.

(c) B'nai B'rith (1843) was established because the Knights of Columbus refused membership to Jews. It sponsored English classes, trade schools, and relief programs.

(d) The American Jewish Committee

(1906) was started by greats like: Jacob Schiff, Louis Marshall, Cyrus Adler, and Oscar Straus. The Encyclopedia Judaica, said that a sense of "noblesse oblige" motivated such men in their philanthropic activities and quiet diplomacy. The Committee was instrumental in liberalizing American immigration policy. It conducted a successful campaign for the abrogation of the Russo-American Treaty of 1832.

(e) The American Jewish Congress (1918)

was formed by the religious and Zionist

elements for the Committee. It worked for the upbuilding of Palestine and tried to place Jewish concerns on the agenda of The Versailles Peace Conference, (1919).

(f) The American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC, 1919)-aided persecuted Jews throughout the world. For instance, it assisted survivors of the Polish and Ukranian pogroms of 1919.

(g) ORT (Organization for Rehabilitation Through Training, 1921) - promotes vocational training of skilled trades and agriculture among world Jewry.

(h) The Kehillah was an attempt to join different segments of the New York City Jewish community into a single organization under the leadership of Judah L. Magnes. It was primarily responsible for creating The Bureau of Jewish Education for New York.

For more information, write directly to these groups or refer to The Jewish Encyclopedia or The Encyclopedia Judaica.

8) Consult Leonard Fein's "Reform Is A

Verb" for some startling facts about what Jewish causes young people favor. Backing Israel is high on the list. However, the young don't agree that charitable contributions to specifically Jewish groups is most necessary. This is a significant change from the attitude exhibited by the immigrants. The latter felt a keen responsibility to the group and its welfare. Our young are richer and more self-reliant. The reason for donating is less apparent. Rarely do they see Jews less fortunate than themselves. How do your students feel about Fein's data? Is this feeling towards social welfare a new trend emerging in Jewish circles?

Now that we have finished with the socio-cultural facets of the ghetto, let's consider the political scene.

U N I T F I V E

POLITICS

UNIT 5

Politics

Lesson 25

Labor Begins To Organize

OBJECTIVES - 1) The vast majority of immigrants were employed in the garment industry and subject to its evils. The workers had legitimate complaints: sweatshops were unsanitary and unsafe; the hours were long, the pay too low; the contract system fleeced employees; unfair shop practices abounded - workers paid for electricity, and rented machines from the company; fines and dismissals were issued indiscriminately.

Striking laborers often got black-balled or became an easy target for a policeman's night stick. Scabs were hired to break strikes, and manufacturers sent work elsewhere. Despite obstacles, the labor force struggled to get a fair deal. Major groups like the AFL and the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union rose to the challenge. Jews were active in these organizations. What role did they play?

2) The labor movement evolved out of certain basic assumptions. What were these values, and are they reflected in the Jewish community?

METHOD - 1) Wage a strike against your employer!

Designate some students as owners and others will be union workers. Have the latter submit a list of grievances. The employers will resist, and you're in a strike situation. Import scabs, hold protest rallies - go through the whole process until an eventual settlement. See if the students were impressed with the muscle the union flexed.

2) A Bintel Brief contains letters from troubled workers. Two center around the famous Cloakmakers Strike of 1910. Refer to pages 64, 72, 84, 113, and 114.

3) Isaac Raboi wrote about the suspicions and violence engendered by a strike in the ladies' hat trade. The trouble began when a scab threw a plaster block at pickets. Find out what happened in "Isaac Leads A Strike", Pushcarts and Dreamers.

4) Samuel Gompers was born in the slums of London, the son of Dutch-Jewish workers. He learned the cigarmaking craft from his father. He arrived in New York (1863) prior to an industrial revolution which was to shape America's future. Gompers's orientation was Marxian. He believed that the only realistic means to oppose capitalism lay in organizing skilled workers into

trade unions, which would be affiliated with a national organization.

Gompers became disillusioned with the Knights of Labor, especially because of their lukewarm endorsement of the eight hour day. After the Haymarket Square Riot, Gompers was instrumental in forming the American Federation of Labor (1886). The first ten years of the AFL involved a bitter fight for survival against the Knights, who dubbed Gompers "that Christ-sluggler". This contest continued until the order collapsed during the depression of the 90's. Gompers's leadership of the AFL lasted for about forty more years. In 1924, he collapsed in Mexico City during a meeting of the Pan-American Federation of Labor. Shortly afterwards he died.

I found Gompers's autobiography, Seventy Years Of Life And Labor, rather tedious and boring. Gerald Stearn's Gompers has a varied and interesting selection of quotations. You could distribute the following for class discussion: "Craft vs. Industrial Unionism", "What Does Labor Want?", "The Negro Worker" (some sources called Gompers a racial bigot), and "Against Imperialism".

There are the usual biographies (eg. Samuel Gompers, Champion of the Toiling Masses by Rowland Harvey). William Dick analyzes Gompers's opposition to socialism in Labor And Socialism In America. Those who are into politics might consider this for independent research.

5) The story of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union is documented in Louis Levine's The Women's Garment Workers.

A visit to ILGWU headquarters in New York City would be informative. The ILGWU has a series of leaflets about its activities.

6) The best survey of the Jewish labor movement is Melech Epstein's Jewish Labor In USA.

FACTS - 1) The almost 'primitive' fashion in which labor disputes used to be settled has a comic side for us.

"Whenever the workers of some contractor's shop were displeased with the price-rates, they would gather in front of the shop in the morning, or at noon, and one of the workers would propose that all should stop work for the day. The rest would immediately proceed to the Market Street docks, which served

as headquarters for cloakmakers on strike...The employers, not seeing their workers in the shop, would know where to look for them and usually after some negotiations, would generally agree to an increase of five cents per garment and would roll out a keg of beer for the entertainment of the workers." (A. Rosenberg, Memoirs of a Cloak-maker, p. 12)

2) Organizations such as the Knights of Labor and even more so the AFL provided the working force with a real clout that the employers couldn't ignore.

3) The Jews were at the forefront of the labor struggle. After all the garment industry was literally run and supported by Jews. The Germans owned the companies - Blumenthal, Friedman, F. Siegel, Marshal Field and Hutzler's to name a few. The Russian immigrants provided the manpower.

4) Samuel Gompers is an interesting character. Professor Jacob Marcus contends that his identification with Judaism was indeed minimal.

5) At issue here was the economic deprivation the workers suffered at the hands of employers. The immigrants were used as a cheap and dispensable source of labor. They were denied rights which we now take for granted - proper working conditions, an eight hour day, a minimum wage, payment for over-time, vacations, insurance benefits, hospitalization plans, etc. These are some of the things organized labor achieved.

6) The labor movement was motivated by the view that the proletariat should receive its fair share of the profits. It was basically anti-capitalist. Although Gompers himself, by accepting the means of production, endorsed the entire system. There was no such thing as a middle class Jewish mentality. The majority of immigrants were workers struggling for a foothold in the system. Capitalism was suspect, whereas now Jews are its mainstay supporters.

7) The use of the sympathy strike showed a brotherly concern lacking in today's human relationships. Workers were willing to sacrifice so that their counterparts might receive a better lot. Today, many of us are guided by self-interest. We

look out for 'number one', and ignore the plight of our fellow Jews. The sad situation of the Jewish poor in America is an example of our selfishness. We might do well to adopt the humanitarian-spirit and fierce commitment of the immigrant.

UNIT 5

Politics

Lesson 26

Our Jewish Socialists
and Anarchists

OBJECTIVES - 1) The political atmosphere of the Lower East Side was feverish. The vast array of ideologies caused this intensity. There were socialists, anarchists, revolutionary exiles, Marxists and Zionists. All interacted and vociferously exchanged views. Rallies, emergency meetings and debates were signs of the time. The Jewish anarchists brandished banners and threatened violence. More often than not they didn't resort to force. The socialists employed strikes against their capitalist oppressors. This was the extent of Jewish activism. It was an exciting era and one you should try to re-create for the class.

2) Jewish involvement in politics was most notable in the socialist and anarchist circles. Figures like Morris Hillquit and Meyer London became heroes to the socialist inspired masses. Now most Jewish voters register with the two major parties. Has the Jewish community repudiated the values of the socialists and anarchists? What accounts for this shift in allegiance?

METHOD - 1) The arrival of Johann Most caused quite a stir among New York's radicals. Most was an exponent of anarchist terrorism. He had spent several years in German prisons. Exiled to London, Most applauded the assassination of Alexander II, and called for more political killings. He continued his anarchist activities in America (1882). One of his writings was the pamphlet "Science of Revolutionary Warfare", an instruction manual "in the use and preparation of nitroglycerin, dynamite, gun-cotton, fulminating mercury, bombs, fuses, poisons, etc." Police authorities feared that Most might be the spark that could ignite the fuse of revolution. The influence Most exerted was widespread. For example, Emma Goldman once had been a follower of his. What were 'our Jewish anarchists' seeking? Refer to Red Emma Speaks or look into Most's Apostle of Revolution. Ronald Sanders's The Downtown Jews has a chapter called "Anarchists, Socialists, and Labor Unions".

2) There were socialist and anarchist newspapers. Hutchins Hapgood devotes a section to these publications (The Spirit Of The Ghetto, pp. 190-194).

Get photostats of back issues and have them translated. What values does your reading disclose? Can you agree with these views?

3) Morris Hillquit came to America from Latvia. Around 1888, he helped organize The United Hebrew Trades. His attitude toward trade unions, especially the American Federation of Labor, was favorable as he was convinced that socialism could win over the workers. He was opposed on this point by another socialist leader, Daniel De Leon. Hillquit became famous in the New York City mayoral race of 1917. He won the largest number of votes ever tallied by a socialist candidate. This, despite the fact that he ran on a peace platform! Read about his political philosophy in Socialism Summed Up. Would you agree with Hillquit that society's problems stem from the private ownership of our sources of production? Is there an economic fight for life between employer and worker? Can we say that the working class is exploited? If so, where do our moral responsibilities lie? Hillquit's autobiography, Loose Leaves From A Busy Life might shed some light on his development as a Jewish socialist.

4) 'Ask Meyer London about it' became a phrase coined in the Cloakmakers' Strike of 1910.

As a spokesman for the unions, London thundered:

"We cannot trust ourselves to the kind mercies of the employers. To our sorrow we have trusted them long enough. We ask for humane treatment; we demand the right to live; we refuse to be annihilated...we appeal to the people of America to assist us in our struggle".

(An East Side Epic, The Life and Work of Never London, by Harry Rogoff, p. 34)

Counting on labor support, London ran for Congress a third time in 1914. On election night, crowds gathered in front of the Foreward building where returns were posted. The Jewish Daily News published an extra edition claiming victory for the opposition candidate. The report was premature. At two in the morning, London was declared the winner. He took the oath of office promising "I hope that my person will represent an entirely different type of Jew from the kind that Congress has been accustomed to see." (An East Side Epic, p. 60)

While in Congress, London followed socialist party lines and opposed war appropriations. He proposed a settlement mediated by the United States. Opponents from the East Side picked up

this issue, and claimed that London was a menace to the Jewish future in America. London encountered further criticism from the ranks of the Zionists. They enlisted his aid in encouraging Congress to endorse the Balfour Declaration. London hedged, talked about removing civic and political disabilities of persecuted Jews and thus, lost votes. The Zionist question, in addition to attacks from Jacob Schiff, Louis Marshall, and Rabbi Stephen S. Wise contributed to his defeat in 1918.

Focus attention on London's political and Jewish loyalties. Raise the whole issue of London's failure to support a Jewish State. What were his reasons? Were your students convinced by his logic? Do you find London's position on war in general appealing? How does this compare with Judaism's view?

5) Use one of the sets to simulate a Lower East Side cafe or debating society. Have representatives from the socialists and anarchists argue their cases. Then ask how the class relates to these philosophies. Are these theories applicable to today's situation?

6) An interesting suggestion would be to obtain current socialist publications and see what they have to say about Israel and the 'Jewish vote'.

FACTS -

1) The immigrants transplanted old political rivalries onto American soil. They maintained contact with European movements, and Russian Jews actively supported revolutionary efforts against the Czars.

2) In America, radical elements shied away from terrorist tactics. Threats of violence were part of the rhetoric. The tenor of American politics was such that bombings or assassinations were alien to and ineffective against the system.

3) The socialists enjoyed the greatest popularity several years prior to World War I. The anarchists could never boast a large following. But they were a vocal minority.

4) Jewish participation in the American socialist party quickly waned because of several factors:

(a) our strong tradition of a two party system.

(b) the adoption of socialist policies by the major parties.

(c) the improving economic status of the Jew.

5) Meyer London's anti-Zionist stance would undoubtedly run into trouble today. His

feeling that "The Jew of America looks upon America as the land of promise" (An East Side Epic, p. 122) might be problematic to our cynical youth. However, Hillquit's statements about the exploitation of the worker, and the evil created by monopolies would find sympathetic ears among us. Those familiar with the ITT scandal realize the abuse of power and immoral political activities such corporations are guilty of. Hillquit seems right on target when he points to the problems these companies stir up for society. It makes one wonder if public ownership of the sources of production wouldn't be better!

6) The anarchists advocated the elimination of governmental bureaucracies. They found the presence of government agencies inhibitive and unnecessary. They felt that human relations could be regulated by man's inherent good nature. How does the class feel about this concept? Is this a value your students could accept?

UNIT 5

Politics

Lesson 27

The **Zionists** Emerge

OBJECTIVES - 1) A survey of American Zionism shows that prior to the 1920's interest in Palestine was minimal. However, there were Hovevei Zion ("Lovers of Zion") groups at the time of the World Zionist Congress of 1897.

Zionism met its strongest opposition from the Reform community. As early as 1841, Gustav Pozanski, Rabbi of Beth Elohim, Charleston, set the tone: "This country is our Palestine, this city our Jerusalem, this house of God, our Temple." Reacting to the First Zionist Congress, the Central Conference of American Rabbis issued the following: "Resolved, that we totally disapprove of any attempt for the establishment of a Jewish state..We affirm that the object of Judaism is not political nor national, but spiritual..."

There were Reform rabbis though who supported Zionism: Max Heller in New Orleans, Gustav Goltheil of New York City's Temple Emanu-el, Jacob Raisin in Charleston, and Max Raisin of New Jersey. Reform rabbinical professors Caspar Levias and Max

Schloessinger argued that the case against Zionism wasn't a closed issue. According to some sources, professors were 'purged' from the Hebrew Union College because of their Zionist leanings (The Political World of American Zionism, Samuel Halperin, p. 74)

The Balfour Declaration strengthened the Zionist cause in America, and the movement gained momentum. Review the development of American Zionism with the class.

2) The American response to Zionism varied; however, Reform Jewry was generally negative. Analyze the reasons for this. What does Reform's present emphasis on Israel reveal about our nationalist loyalties, religious priorities, and fear of anti-semitism?

METHOD - 1) If you're looking for a survey, I recommend Samuel Halperin's The Political World of American Zionism. The section on Zionism and Reform Judaism is worth attention.

An Early History of Zionism In America is a series of papers presented to the American Jewish Historical Society. The articles concerning Hadassah, the Federation of American Zionists and Labor Zionism might be helpful. You could

assign these sections for class reports or independent research work.

2) The history of Zionism in America is really a story of individuals. Take one of the more appealing figures for instance - Naptali Herz Imber. He was an East Side poet who raised the battle cry for a restored Zion. His most popular poem was entitled "The Watch on the Jordan". Here is a sample:

"Like the crash of the thunder
Which splitteth asunder
The flame of the cloud,
On our ears ever falling,
A voice is heard calling
From Zion aloud:

"Let your spirits' desires
For the land of your sires
Eternally burn
From the foe to deliver
Our own holy river,
To Jordan return."

(The Spirit Of The Ghetto,

p. 276)

When talking with Hapgood, Imber confessed: "We have had enough of lamentations. I introduced

the spirit of love and wine, the pagan spirit. My theme, indeed, is Zion." (The Spirit Of The Ghetto, p. 277) On the subject of religion Imber once stated: "The world needs cleaning up a little, particularly the rabbis. Put the Reformed and Orthodox rabbis together and some good might come of them."

I'm sure you'll enjoy sharing Imber's thoughts with the class. For your Hebrew scholars, suggest his book of poetry called Barkai.

3) As a change of pace, go to primary source material. The Zionist Idea, edited by Arthur Hertzberg, contains essays by Reform Rabbi Judah Magnes, Richard Gottheil, president of the Federation of American Zionists, Solomon Schechter, and Louis Brandeis. Xerox certain parts and talk about what directions the American Zionists sought.

4) Stephen Wise was an exceptional leader. Turn to The Personal Letters of Stephen Wise edited by Justin Polier and James Wise. Look at the photographs of Wise with famous personalities: Mann, Einstein, Straus, Brandeis, and Holmes. There's a breathtaking shot of Wise addressing a rally against Nazism (1938).

Find out about Wise's involvement with American Zionism from his correspondence. That he admired Brandeis is an understatement. He thought Weizmann "forceful and terribly clever."

5) Brandeis's contacts with Judaism before 1910 were very tenuous. Two events forced the conversion of Louis Brandeis to Zionism. First, he met Jacob de Haas, former secretary to Theodor Herzl. Second, his mediating the clothing workers' strike in New York brought him into contact with East European Jewry. Their idealism fired his imagination. By 1912, Brandeis formally joined the Zionists. He rose to assume the chairmanship of the Provisional Executive Committee for Zionist Affairs. He raised millions of dollars for the relief of war-afflicted Jews, and influenced the Wilson administration to support the Balfour Declaration. Brandeis withdrew from Zionist affairs over a difference of opinion with Chaim Weizmann in 1921.

See Melvin Urofsky's A Mind of One Piece, Brandeis and American Reform for a stimulating treatment of Brandeis's Zionist views. Urofsky argues that Brandeis was attracted to Zionism by its potential to achieve Progressive ideas.

Brandeis On Zionism includes the Justice's

discussion of the Jewish problem, national preservation and the justifications of the Zionist cause. Does the class agree with Brandeis's rationale?

- 6) "I can assure you...that I have never been a Zionist and probably shall never be one. I have, however, felt, ever since the Balfour Declaration was made... that it has become the duty of every right-thinking Jew to do his utmost to help the rebuilding of Palestine..." (Louis Marshall, Champion Of Liberty, p. 732)

So wrote Louis Marshall around 1920. Marshall forcefully rejected political Zionism, but worked tirelessly for the cultural and agricultural development of Palestine. He was a founder of the American Jewish Committee and represented Jewish interests at the Versailles Peace Conference (1919).

Get his views directly by reading Louis Marshall, Champion Of Liberty, Selected Papers and Address. Direct your attention to "Palestine, Zionism, The Jewish Agency" in volume two.

Also look up Cyrus Adler's biographical sketch of Louis Marshall.

7) Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization, got its name from a study group which met under the auspices of Rabbi Judah Magnes of Temple Emanu-el, New York. Henrietta Szold, a secretary for the Jewish Publications Society, headed the new enterprise. Hadassah's goal was to provide medical assistance to the women and children of Palestine. Szold joined the first American Zionist Medical Unit in Palestine around 1913. She spent the rest of her life in Palestine. The account of her work is remarkable. See Henrietta Szold, Record of a Life by Rose Zeitlin or Marvin Lowenthal's Henrietta Szold, Life And Letters. The most familiar biography as well as the least satisfactory is The Szolds of Lombard Street by Alexander Lee Levin.

8) Stage a debate between representatives of Reform Jewry and Zionists seeking to enlist aid for a sovereign Jewish state.

Then evaluate the arguments in light of the present situation. What changes in attitude can you point out? Discuss whether Israel has become indispensable to the Reform Jew. Will Reform

Judaism become truly Zionist oriented.

FACTS - 1) There were several reasons for the clash between Zionism and Reform:

- (a) Zionism seemed contrary to the political emancipation the Jew had struggled so long to get.
- (b) It threatened friendly relations with non-Jews.
- (c) It raised doubts about the national loyalties of Jews.
- (d) Reform differed with Zionism on theological grounds. It had rejected the idea of a return to Zion and the formation of a Jewish state.
- (e) Zionism ran counter to the universal thrust of Reform Judaism.
- (f) Herzl appealed to American Jews " (not to) forget in their own happiness in the glorious land of freedom, how heavy is the bondage of their brethren." (The Political World of American Zionism, p. 10) the call went unanswered as comfortable Jews found it difficult to empathize.

2) The Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 put Reform on record as opposed to a Jewish state:

"We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine,...nor the restoration of the laws concerning the Jewish state." (The Growth of Reform Judaism, Gunther Plaut, p. 33)

3) There were devoted workers for Palestine who were repelled by political Zionism. Their attachment to Zion was founded along philosophical grounds. In other words, they envisioned a Palestine upbuilt by persecuted Jews, who had no other haven, but they repudiated the efforts toward a sovereign Jewish state. Such men acted on humanitarian instincts. A Felix Warburg, Cyrus Adler or Louis Marshall was too weary of Gentile reaction to adopt a political solution to the Jewish problem.

4) Reform rabbis such as Gustav Gottheil, Judah Magnes, Stephen Wise and later, Abba Hillel Silver were at the vanguard of Zionist activities. They risked condemnation to realize the goal of a political Jewish existence.

5) The attitude of the Reform community towards Israel has dramatically reversed itself.

What circumstances produced this change?

- (a) Without a doubt, the Six Day War.
- (b) As a result, expression of Jewish pride.
- (c) An emerging pattern of political conservatism and fear over the problems of the inner-city.
- (d) Disillusionment with the quality of life in America.
- (e) A rebirth of traditional religious ideology.
- (f) The real possibility of anti-Semitic repression occurring in America.

U N I T S I X

WHAT IT ADDS UP TO

UNIT 6

What It Adds Up To

Lesson 28

Some Conclusions

OBJECTIVE - The purpose of this lesson is to outline the values we gained from our immigrant forefathers. In as much as it is possible, I'd like to draw some conclusions on the basis of this study. What have we uncovered?

FACTS - 1) The unit on the family gave us a sense of the solemnity which surrounded marriage. Marriage was not simply a social rite of passage. Its implications extended beyond etiquette and convenience.

2) Immigrant couples accepted the binding nature of their commitment. They didn't enter marriage with the attitude 'we'll see if it works'. They were prepared to sacrifice for the sake of the marriage. Now, certain expectations must be met otherwise the couple is reluctant to stick it out.

3) The principle of marriage itself was rarely challenged. Marriage meant living with one person and building one life. This assumption poses difficulties for some young people.

Group sex orgies and switching partners are sick games that people play which threaten the Jewish understanding of the sanctity of marriage.

4) Attitudes towards divorce are changing. On The Lower East Side, divorce was cause for shame. People view the problem more sympathetically now and say 'it could be for the best'.

5) There have been significant developments in parent-child relations. Foremost concerns our ability to communicate with one another. The East Side atmosphere was conducive to self-expression. Today the family contends with distracting influences which minimize the time we spend with each other. As a result, we live with strangers and find it difficult to share our feelings with parents. This estrangement encourages children to repress feelings that differ from parental views. This is potentially damaging.

6) A word about Jewish parents - they remain perhaps overly concerned and indulgent. Their expectations are high and they place a high priority on success. They only wish the best for us. Let's admit it - we love them for it or else we wouldn't accept their efforts on our behalf. Will you be any different?

7) The tension between the three branches of Judaism persists, although not outwardly expressed. The Reform attitude towards K'lal Yisrael has dramatically changed. More Reform Jews are seeking some kind of reconciliation with tradition.

8) The major question of our time is how can Judaism best serve a community that is economically, politically and socially secure? The answer lies in meeting the growing spiritual needs Jews are desperately seeking.

9) The rate of mixed marriages alarmingly increases. The tug of war between particularism and universalism is again felt. We must seek to preserve the unique heritage that is ours.

10) The Yiddish theater, press, and literature have all but vanished. This remarkable phase of Jewish life is only a memory.

11) Social welfare and philanthropy were distinctive features of the East Side community. There were multiple organizations that looked out for the bereaved, sick and needy. Tsedakah was just something you expected from a fellow Jew. This charitable strain is disappearing among younger Jews. Financial assistance to Israel remains a top priority. But specifically Jewish charities are having difficulty getting even pledges. Does this

mean that we've lost our feelings of responsibility to our own people?

12) I have shown that Jewish women played a major role in the Feminist Movement. Feminist views of marriage, and the role of the mother occasionally clash with values that have been nurtured within the Jewish community.

13) Jewish participation in socialism and anarchism is partially explained by the fact that Jews became critics of the societies that had excluded them. They naturally sought a world order where everyone would share the same rights. They were impatient and sometimes considered drastic measures to achieve their goal.

14) At the close of this period, Zionism emerged as a serious political option. Reform Jewry was antagonistic. Ironically, we now point with pride to those Reform rabbis who were supportive of the Zionist cause.

Many Reform Jews are still sensitive about the issue of dual loyalties and what the Gentiles might think.

15) A major problem plaguing our Reform community lies in developing a sense of religious security and a positive Jewish identity. This our immigrant forefathers exhibited, this we need to develop.

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