

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
NEW YORK SCHOOL

FINAL THESIS APPROVAL FORM

AUTHOR: Michael J. Shields

TITLE: Abraham H. Friedland: American
Hebraist and Jewish Educator

Nancy Zetter
SIGNATURE OF ADVISOR(S)

2/4/08

Date

Dana Lusk
SIGNATURE OF REGISTRAR

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ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND
AMERICAN HEBRAIST AND JEWISH EDUCATOR

MICHAEL J. SHIELDS

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
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Thesis Summary

Abraham Friedland, born in 1892 in Lithuania, immigrated to New York at age 14. Friedland went on to become one of the great Jewish educators in America. He was both a Hebraist and an ardent Zionist. This thesis contains three chapters. Chapter one traces Friedland's life, chapter two details his involvement with Zionism, and chapter three analyzes his great literary work for children, *Sippurim Yafim*.

This thesis brings to light the work and life of an educator whose example could be of benefit to us today. The goal of this thesis was to uncover Friedland's synthesis of Hebrew and Jewish peoplehood within the context of the first three decades of twentieth century America. Friedland believed in the notion that American youth can better understand and appreciate their Jewishness through knowledge of Hebrew. He presented a novel approach to teaching Hebrew in America, one that went far beyond and was more meaningful than simply teaching Hebrew for the sake of liturgical decoding and which included

This project drew heavily upon the Abraham H. Friedland Papers in the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio. Contextual background was obtained from various relevant books and articles.

Introduction

Abraham H. Friedland was a pioneer of Hebrew education and an ardent supporter of Zionism during the first four decades of the twentieth century. His love of Hebrew and the Jewish people began before he emigrated from Lithuania, and continued to blossom after his family came to America and settled on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Friedland embraced his new homeland, as most immigrants did. It gave him the opportunity to spend a lifetime devoted to Hebrew education, and to strengthening the Jewish people.

In New York, he began to formulate a philosophy on Hebrew education and Zionism in the American context. Abraham Friedland felt that knowledge of the Hebrew language and the dissemination of Hebrew culture, together with support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine would strengthen Jewish peoplehood. The following chapters are about Abraham Friedland, the Hebraist and educator. It explores his goals and his accomplishments.

Friedland felt strongly that the study of Hebrew should be an essential component of Jewish education because it would yield a better understanding of Judaism and a stronger sense of connection with other Jews. He believed that Hebrew is the language upon which Jewish peoplehood stands, and that it could strengthen their connection with other Jews, both in America and in Palestine, as well as to the entire Jewish people stretching back to Sinai. Hebrew was the inextricable link to the Jewish past, present and future. Without Hebrew, there was a depth of meaning that would be missed. If Hebrew were to be taken out of Jews' lives, it would be like removing the soul of the religion.

Friedland considered himself American, but he was still an advocate for the Jewish peoplehood. America allowed Jews to practice their religion and participate fully in their own culture. Friedland believed Jews could identify with other Jews as a people without detracting from their allegiance to America. Jews could fully embrace every aspect of their Judaism and still be fully American.

The almost one hundred stories that Friedland wrote for children reflect his belief in the compatibility between one's Judaism and one's Americanism. Friedland wrote stories about America because he believed that children could better relate to them and therefore be more interested in learning Hebrew. The most interesting stories, those that invoke the Great Depression and the confrontation with American institutional racism challenge the readers to think in a Jewish way about their lives in America. I believe that the stories are more powerful because they are written in Hebrew.

The first chapter gives us a picture of one of the great Hebrew pioneers and educators of the early twentieth century. It captures his personality including his ambition and passion for Hebrew education and Zionism. It traces his childhood, his adolescence in New York, and his early professional life in New York, featuring his founding of the National Hebrew School of New York, an all-girls school. This chapter describes his rise to prominence in Cleveland as an educator and a Zionist leader, his struggles with the challenges of his day, and the last years of his life, ones in which he continued to be effective in his work even though his health was rapidly declining.

Chapter two describes Friedland's practical involvement in Zionism. He could be described as a cultural Zionist. He believed that practical support from Americans for Jewish pioneers in Palestine was important. Because of this belief, he devoted himself to

various Zionist organizations, focusing much of his energy on youth. Friedland believed that supporting peoplehood meant supporting Jews who were building Palestine as well as reviving the Hebrew language.

The final chapter presents pedagogical and literary analyses of Friedland's children's stories, *Sippurim Yafim*. These stories were an attempt to capture the American experience in Hebrew in a way that would be interesting, relevant, and educational for children. Their themes include the immigrant experience, modernity and technology, acculturation, animals, proto-civil rights, economics, the Great Depression, and ethics in formation. Friedland strove to describe American lives in the language of the Jewish people. The chapter shows how the stories integrate a Jewish approach, Jewish values, and American life in a language that children were learning.

We grapple today with many of the same issues that Friedland did in his work. We struggle to find ways for Jews to maintain a sense of Jewish peoplehood and community. We debate the ways in which we teach Hebrew and what we hope to accomplish with that education. We also encounter mixed feelings and diverse opinions about the State of Israel, just as Friedland did during his career.

Abraham Friedland found a new way to synthesize Hebrew and Zionism in the context of American Jewry. He wanted to create a more meaningful paradigm for teaching Hebrew in America, one that would help American Jewish children live their lives in America and give them tools to strengthen their connection to Klal Yisrael and build Jewish peoplehood.

Chapter 1: A Biographical Sketch

Childhood

Abraham Hayyim Friedland was born on July 1, 1892 in Gorodok, near Vilna, in Lithuania to Moses and Leah Friedland. There is some disagreement about the year in which he was born: Emanuel Gamoran, a close friend and colleague of Friedland, stated the year as 1892. His father Moses had been a scribe in Lithuania and continued this work at least on a part-time basis in New York.¹ While in Lithuania, Abraham received a traditional yeshiva education. By the age of twelve, Friedland was known as an "ilui", or prodigy, who knew several treatises of Mishnah by heart. The family immigrated to the United States in 1905 when Abraham was around fourteen years old.² With this move, the man whom some would call the "Pied Piper of Hebrew, the wonder-maker of a language" came to America.³

The family settled on the Lower East Side of New York City, joining the masses of Eastern European immigrant Jews who inhabited the tenements there during the first two decades of the twentieth century. According to the 1910 U.S. Census, Friedland's family resided in Ward 7. One indication of the living conditions in this period can be found in the census records that indicate that the population of Ward 7, an area measuring a third of a square mile, increased from 57,366 in 1890, to 102,104 in 1910.⁴ If

¹ Gamoran, Emanuel. "Abraham H. Friedland." *American Jewish Year Book* (1940):145-152.

² Introduction, ABRAHAM FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³ "Abraham Friedland." *Jewish Education*, v. 11 (Aug. 1939): pp. 79-83.

⁴ <http://www.demographia.com/db-nyc-ward1800.html>.

traditional Jewish educational setting. In their new milieu, Jewish families wanted their children to “achieve some intellectual distinction or skill that might be considered a New World substitute for the Talmudic learning which represented the highest achievement in the old environment.”⁸

Children comprised more than half of the immigrant population of the time,⁹ and parents wanted to make sure that their children received an education. Friedland began his schooling upon his arrival age 14. He attended a public school until afternoon, and then a Hebrew school until supper time. Jews in New York at this time had five main options for Jewish education: Talmud Torah, Btei Sefer Mosdiim, Religious community schools, one-day-a-week schools, or *cheder*.¹⁰ Friedland received his non-secular education at the Rabbi Yitzchak Elhanan Yeshiva, later to become Yeshiva University.¹¹

Jacob Riis wrote about that nature of one type of school, the *cheder*. “Every synagogue, every second rear tenement or dark back yard, has its school and its school-master.”¹² In the novel “Call It Sleep”, Henry Roth described the appearance of one *cheder* in the observations of his character David:

Bare walls, the brown paint on it full of long wavering cracks...a long line of benches ran to the rabbi's table. Boys of varying ages were seated upon them, jabbering, disputing, gambling for various things, scuffling over what looked to David like a few sticks. Seated upon the bench before the rabbi's table were several others obviously waiting their turn at the book lying open in front of the rabbi's cushioned chair.”¹³

⁸ Ibid. p. 43.

⁹ Ibid. p. 108.

¹⁰ הרמתי, רבקה, בחנך בראי תקופה: תרומת ח"א פרידלנד לחינוך היהודי בארה"ב בראשית המאה העשרים, Israel: 2007 הוצאת ירון גולן 30-32.

¹¹ “Abraham Friedland,” *The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*, <http://ech.case.edu>

¹² Hindus, p. 115.

¹³ Roth, Henry. *Call It Sleep*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1934. p. 212.

Manhattan were populated at the same density today, it would have over six million people, instead of its current population of just over one and a half million people.⁵

New immigrants found work in bottom-level occupations, such as peddling using rented pushcarts. Eastern European Jews, 11% of whom were tailors when they arrived, could also join the booming garment industry which had been the source of work for German Jews since the 1850's. By the end of the 19th century, 60% of all Jews in the workforce on the Lower East side worked in this industry, totaling 200,000 Jews in 1900.⁶

The Lower East Side was characterized by "abominably crowded homes, people reduced to living in cellars without windows or light, sleeping in hallways, on roofs on fire escapes, unbearable heat and stench in summer, unendurable cold in the winter, filth, noise, outdoor plumbing, endless hours of labor for everybody in the family down to the smallest, spectacles of vice flaunted for the children to see, bags of refuse flung onto tenement windows onto the hats of citizens passing below, pushcarts, curses, quarrels, vermin of all sorts, rats, beetles as big as half dollars, street fights, and gang warfare."⁷

Even with these conditions, youths such as Friedland were filled with a great sense of hope and ambition and took up the challenges of their temporary Lower East Side existence, accomplishing a great deal in a short amount of time. They may have been more quickly able to attain the resources necessary to move to more comfortable conditions.

Education was a traditional emphasis of parents of Jewish children on the Lower East Side. In Eastern Europe, a child's success was measured by their distinction in a

⁵ U.S. Census, 2000.

⁶ Epstein, Lawrence J. *At the Edge of a Dream: The Story of Jewish Immigrants on New York's Lower East Side 1880-1920*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2007. p. 68.

⁷ Hindus, Milton, ed. *The Old East Side: an Anthology*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969. p. xi.

Shortly after coming to New York, Friedland secured a position as a teacher in a local Talmud Torah or Hebrew school. Daniel Persky, a Hebrew-language scholar, recounted that Friedland, "hypnotized the students and sang with them songs till they learned them by heart."¹⁴ Friedland began using play, rhyme and song into his lessons as a young teacher. This playful approach to Hebrew education manifested itself later in his children's stories, original songs, and the lively Hebrew curriculum which he co-authored. Moses Feinstein, captured Friedland's impetus for this playful approach in his contribution to *The Book of Memory for A.H. Friedland*: "[Friedland] felt that the biggest enemy is the boring material of the old way of education, and he used his poems and songs as a tool to fight this enemy."¹⁵

While in school, Friedland joined the "Dr. Herzl Zion Club" that met at the Educational Alliance on East Broadway.¹⁶ One can see the effect of his attachment to Zionism in his early teaching. The songs he wrote, while not always following the exact rules of grammar, were meant not only for the enjoyment of the students but also to inculcate a love for Hebraic-Zionism.¹⁷

Friedland's literary accomplishments began back when he was a boy in Lithuania. Persky tells of a man from Horoduk who came to America and had a book of Hebrew songs with him that Friedland had written when he was 10 or 12 years old. Friedland deftly rhymed words from the Tanach to create the songs, and he even wrote the music to

¹⁴ Persky, Daniel. "In Memoriam," *Sefer Zikaron*. New York: Histadruth Ivrit of America, 1940, p. 17.

¹⁵ Feinstein, Moses. "The Educator," *Sefer Zikaron*. New York: Histadruth Ivrit of America, 1940, p. 43.

¹⁶ Persky, *Sefer Zikaron*, p. 22-23.

¹⁷ Feinstein, "The Educator," *Sefer Zikaron*, p. 44.

go with them.¹⁸ He continued his literary success as a teenager in America. Before the age of eighteen, he translated the Yiddish comedy *Der Fidzek* by Abraham Raisin into Hebrew and wrote an original play in Hebrew entitled "The Society is Up to the Test." In addition, Friedland was involved in literary magazines: he was the editor of the magazine, "Line," and edited three editions of another magazine, *The Zephyr* in 1910.

Friedland, while one of the early Hebrew pioneers in America, also contributed to Yiddish literature. His earliest poems appeared in a Yiddish publication called *Parvatz* in Lithuania. His poems also appeared in *C'eit Geist* and the first years of *Dos Yiddish Folk* and *Der Yidisher Kempfer*. Friedland published some humorous poems under the pseudonym, "Olympus" in the Yiddish humor periodical, *Der Gruysar Kundst*.¹⁹ *Der Gruysar Kundst* was a New York City Yiddish language satirical weekly which ran from 1909 until 1927.²⁰ Its satirical content differentiated the publication from the other Yiddish-language presses of the time. The magazine was saturated with "satirical and very expressive illustrations and caricatures." The ever-expressive Friedland would have been drawn to its playful style.²¹

Friedland studied at Columbia University concentrating his studies in psychology and language. He received a degree in Hebrew literature²² and also focused on education around 1910.²³ He undertook further study during three semesters at Teachers College

¹⁸ Persky, *Sefer Zikaron*, p. 24.

¹⁹ Persky, Daniel, *Sefer Zikaron*, pp. 24-25.

²⁰ It was entitled *Der Kibetser* for its first year of production.

²¹ Rubenstein, Aaron, "Devils & Pranksters: Der Groyser Kundst and the Lower East Side" in *Pakn Treger*, Spring 2005, No. 47, p. 16-21.

²² Feinstein, *Sefer Zikaron* p. 45.

²³ הרמתי, רבקה, יחנך בראי תקופה: תרומת ח"א פרידלנד לחינוך היהודי בארה"ב בראשית המאה העשרים, הרצאת ירון גולן 2007, Israel: 2007, p. 60.

Columbia University between 1918 and 1920.²⁴ He was a believer in a scientific approach to education and thought psychology would benefit him greatly in his educational work. His interest in language fueled his love of literature. By the time he finished at Columbia, he had added French and Italian to his Yiddish, Hebrew and English. His friend Daniel Persky said that Friedland learned these languages so he would have access to the great masterpieces of literature in their own language.²⁵ During his years in New York, Friedland began to build up his extensive private library, which included all the American classics along with other great works of world literature. A large portion of his collection consisted of poetry. Later in life, Friedland collected and bound what he thought were the 1,000 best poems of all time.²⁶ Literature in general consumed his mind and warmed his heart. Hebrew literature however, was the core of his Jewish spiritual identity and captured his soul.

Friedland appeared to be a driven and independent individual. In his early period, he did not have as many partnerships as he did later, nor did he seek them out. Friedland possessed raw talent, and people saw him as an educator with great potential. Mordechai Kaplan once wrote: "Though rather small and insignificant and seedy looking, I recognized at once that he was capable of accomplishing that upon which he set his heart. I rather liked him for his unpretentiousness as well as force of character..."²⁷

²⁴ Sloan, Brady, Associate Registrar, Office of the Registrar, Columbia University. Telephone query, 1 Feb. 2008.

²⁵ Persky, *Sefer Zikaron*, p. 29.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 29.

²⁷ Kaplan, Mordechai. *Personal Diary*, 4 November 1914.

Early Adult Life in New York

Friedland's most profound contribution to Hebrew education in New York was his founding of a Jewish school for girls in New York, the National Hebrew School of New York in 1910. This was a unique endeavor that allowed girls to get a Jewish education, of which Zionism and Hebrew were significant components. His school was the first in which girls could study Torah.²⁸ Friedland viewed his school as educating a generation of Jewish mothers who would preserve the Jewishness of the home in the American context. A number of the students were "some of the best Hebrew teachers." Emanuel Gamoran viewed Friedland's actions as courageous. "In the face of the indifference of the masses to Jewish education, despite the lack of understanding by assimilationist Jews on the one hand and by the extreme Orthodox Jews on the other, he hewed out for himself a new way in this difficult and trying undertaking."²⁹

Friedland spent ten years as the school's director. He believed that the primary focus of this Jewish school should be Hebrew language and literature. Gamoran posited that Friedland saw Hebrew as an end in itself,³⁰ and that Hebrew had two purposes: one was to tie a child to his Jewish roots and the other was to obtain a Jewish outlook.

Friedland believe that the Hebrew language in its original form was able to reflect a unique Jewish ethos and approach to life. "Therefore, a person who studies Hebrew is not learning merely different forms; he is absorbing a new view of life. A view of life as different from others as is the concept of philanthropy implied by the word 'charity' from the ideal of 'justice' and 'righteousness' implied by the word 'zedakah.'³¹ If one

²⁸ Spicehandler, Ezra. "Memories" *Sefer Zikaron*, p. 48

²⁹ Gamoran, Emanuel. "Abraham Friedland," *American Jewish Yearbook*, p. 146.

³⁰ Ibid. 147.

³¹ Ibid. 147.

translates the word 'zedakah' as 'charity', one loses the Jewish meanings of justice and righteousness. During his tenure at the National Hebrew School of New York, Friedland became an adherent of the idea that Jewish education, especially Hebrew, was the vehicle by which Jews could maintain their identity while still participating fully in American life.

One of Friedland's early contributions to Hebrew education was the creation of a list of "basic words," which he used in his New York school. Friedland believed that the words on this list were necessary in order to understand the stories in the Bible. The list was the base upon which other educators would build.³² The students also learned Zionist songs composed by the director. Some went on to become Hebrew educators themselves.

Friedland used this list of words in his school. Friedland strongly believed that, by founding a school for girls, he was filling a void in Hebrew education in New York. Friedland married his wife Yonina, a native of Palestine, in 1916.³³ She joined him in his administration and teaching duties at the school. In this time of the fight for women's suffrage, Friedland seemed to believe that women should have equal access to Hebrew education. The education of females was important in both his family life and his professional life. He saw Yonina as an important teacher in this curriculum of Jewish and Hebrew culture, and an important role model for Jewish females. This was the time of the fight for women's suffrage, and Friedland seemed to believe that women should have equal access to Hebrew education.

Friedland believed that his school could provide students with the Jewish knowledge necessary to maintain a culturally Jewish, albeit not necessarily traditionally

³² Gamoran, 147-148.

³³ "Abraham Hayyim Friedland." Encyclopedia of Cleveland History.

religious home. It is useful to look at other schools that existed in New York City at this time. The schools that were most similar were the vocational schools for girls.

Immigrant parents wanted to keep their daughters out of the factories and away from jobs as household servants. Some parents struggled to do without their daughters' wages, instead sending them to vocational schools, which would allow them to provide for themselves. Such jobs included bookkeeping and teaching.³⁴ Vocational schools were institutions that, during the first decades of the twentieth century, hoped to "reconcile the American middle class ideology of feminine domesticity with the need among poor immigrant women to earn a living."³⁵ Two schools catering to the immigrant Jewish community that attempted to train women for the workforce while also keeping them close to the home were the Hebrew Technical School for Girls and the Clara de Hirsch Home for Working Girls. These institutions recognized the fact that the East European immigrant family needed the woman of the house to work but also wanted to acculturate the immigrant woman to the bourgeois image of feminine domesticity, which "honored the role of wives and mothers in preserving and transmitting Jewish traditions."³⁶

Friedland's school would prepare women to maintain the Jewishness of the home and also find work as Jewish school teachers. The job of teaching was one that could be synchronized with motherhood and domesticity. In this way, Friedland's school filled at least a part of the role of the vocational schools during this time. A striking difference is that Friedland did not view Jewish teaching in the same way that Melissa Klapper characterizes the vocational education of the same period: "A temporary stage of

³⁴ Epstein, Lawrence, P. 70.

³⁵ Klapper, Melissa. "Jewish Women and Vocational Education in New York City, 1885-1925" *American Jewish Archives Journal*, Volume LIII, (2001): p. 112.

³⁶ Klapper, 113.

women's lives" until the time when they can "settle into the domestic bliss for which her training had so well prepared her."³⁷ While Friedland recognized the important domestic role of women, he knew that Jewish teaching would not negate that role. Although it is not evident that Friedland's school actively trained women for marriage as the contemporaneous vocational schools did, his school did create more opportunities for Jewish women to enter the field of Jewish education.

Friedland's school met with little protest in New York, probably because it involved the Jewish education of girls, which was not yet a field that garnered great interest or scrutiny. He therefore had wider latitude in his method and materials. In addition, his school was relatively small and the population he served was supportive of his educational approach. He was not involved, as he later would be in Cleveland, in converting people to his way of thinking about Jewish/Hebrew education.

During his time in New York, Friedland influenced the development of Hebrew culture in the city. At his urging, punctuated Hebrew was added to *The Young Judean*, a monthly Zionist paper that was printed in English. In addition, he was the founder and main editor of the first Hebrew newspaper for American children.³⁸

Friedland also became involved in teacher education early on. He was a member of the Coalition of Hebrew Teachers in New York and, in 1911, contributed to the first Hebrew educational paper that was printed in the United States, *The Teacher Feedback*. This publication was a forum for Friedland and others to publish pedagogical essays, thus establishing the foundation for Hebrew educational literature in America.³⁹

³⁷ Klapper, 114

³⁸ Persky. In *Sefer Zikaron*. p. 28.

³⁹ Ibid.

Friedland's ambition and passion in starting the school gave the enterprise what it needed to succeed. Moreover, Friedland's qualities affected others. "His joy of life was contagious and influenced everyone who came in contact with him." Ribalow reflected that Friedland was widely known and well-liked even before his careers as writer and leader within the Zionist movement were launched.⁴⁰

Friedland left New York in 1920 to take a job in Cleveland, Ohio, leaving the leadership of the school to A.N. Furlberg. Furlberg was a modern religious educator. Under his leadership, the school became less Zionist in orientation and more religious in its Hebrew education.⁴¹

Even after leaving for Cleveland, his friends and former students in New York would greet him warmly whenever he visited, as though he were a visiting dignitary. They even brought their children with them, "like they were receiving a rabbi."⁴² Friedland was sad to leave New York, but saw Cleveland as a place that was ripe for his Hebraic-Zionist approach to Jewish education, and a place in which he could better develop his skills as an educator and try new and innovative initiatives.⁴³

Cleveland

Friedland's rise to prominence really began with his move to Cleveland, where he continued to develop as a Jewish educator and Zionist leader, as well as a major advocate for and contributor to the Hebraist movement in America. In the 1930's, Friedland

⁴⁰ Ribalow, Menachem, "In Life and in Death," In *Sefer Zikaron*. New York: Histadruth Ivrit of America, 1940, p. 13.

⁴¹ הרמתי, 78

⁴² Spicchandler, in *Sefer Zikaron*, p. 49

⁴³ הרמתי, 78

became widely known for his expertise as a scholar and was increasingly called upon to speak on major educational issues and Jewish literature in general.

Friedland would continue his work in Jewish education beyond New York. He was invited in 1920 to become superintendent of the Cleveland Hebrew Schools. In the face of opposition from religious Jews who only wanted Hebrew taught for the purpose of prayer and the study of the holy books, and from other Jews who only wanted students to attend one day a week, Friedland was able to build a comprehensive network of schools that were attended by students from kindergarten age to adulthood, a teachers' institute. Friedland was also president of National Council of Jewish Education.⁴⁴

In 1924, Friedland became the first director of the Cleveland Bureau of Jewish Education, which coordinated institutions offering Jewish education. Its projects included establishing teacher training institutes, youth clubs, children's theater, advanced Hebrew classes and the Institute for Jewish Studies. Friedland integrated Hebrew and religious schools and created an adult institute.⁴⁵ He used his influence on the Bureau to push his Hebraist education model. In addition, Friedland used the Bureau to bring teacher training to Sunday school teachers in an effort to improve the level of education in the weekly Hebrew schools.

Friedland had a broad involvement in Jewish education in Cleveland and was "interested in all phases of education."⁴⁶ While some of his other activities seemed to predominate, Friedland saw himself, first and foremost, as a devoted teacher. He taught classes throughout his entire life and turned down speaking engagements that conflicted

⁴⁴ "Abraham Hayyim Friedland," The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Gamoran, "American Jewish Yearbook", p. 148

with teaching duties. On January 31, 1935, he wrote, "I have at one time pledged myself never to allow my classroom work to be interrupted for the sake of addressing a meeting. The best thing a teacher can do is teach and I am attempting to do that to the very best of my ability."⁴⁷

Friedland had overseen a period of growth and expansion of Hebrew education in the 1920's. With the Great Depression and Friedland's lack of economic acumen, however, the period of the 1930's saw an inevitable decline in Cleveland's Jewish educational projects. Enrollment in the Cleveland Hebrew schools fell from 1505 pupils to 716 between 1929 and 1936. Adding to the downturn were demographic shifts of population. The economic depression led to a rise in the number of welfare families who could not pay tuition. Many families chose to employ one of the increasing numbers of private Hebrew teachers who emerged during this difficult time. In some cases, parents chose to pay less to inferior private teachers than to receive welfare from the Cleveland Hebrew schools.⁴⁸

Friedland was viewed as a charismatic young leader involved in numerous organizations. He was a tenacious teacher and visionary. Friedland believed strongly in his vision of Hebrew and Jewish education, and as he gained experience, he was able to enact this vision in his work.

Friedland was one of the four main leaders of Cleveland in the interwar period. This prowess as a teacher and the warm personal relations he maintained resulted in the

⁴⁷ Friedland, A.H. Letter to Akron Jewish Center, 7 February 1935, Box 5, Folder 2. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁴⁸ Gartner, Lloyd P. *A History of the Jews of Cleveland*. New York and Cleveland: The Western Reserve Historical Society and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978, pp. 278-279

development of a cadre of loyal disciples. Abraham Friedland was a true *mensch* and a “national leader of American Hebrew culture until his early death.”⁴⁹

Friedland had a wry sense of humor and agility with wordplay. He used his wit in casual pleasantries as well to emphasize his position. Just as Friedland developed as an educator and a scholar, it seemed that he also developed a self-deprecating wit in casual pleasantries and to emphasize his position. “I shall be glad at any future time to quench the insatiable thirst of your staff for more Jewish knowledge and since you know me to be ‘an unfailing fountain of Judaism,’ there is no fear that I may run dry in the interim: so we can all wait serenely and contentedly.”⁵⁰

Menahem Ribalow encouraged Friedland to engage with writing in Hebrew. Ribalow convinced him to send some of his stories and thus Friedland returned to writing in the early 1930’s. Friedland was accomplished in the written word, producing a constant stream of writing, including stories in Hebrew for children, textbooks for educational purposes, 300 folk songs, fifty articles about a visit to Palestine and forty popular articles about Jewish poets and philosophers.⁵¹

Beginning in the early 1930’s, Friedland added to his educational agenda the publication of his children’s stories, entitled, *Sippurim Yafim*. (For an analysis of the pedagogical and socio-historical content of *Sippurim Yafim*, please see chapter 3 of this document.) Friedland was involved in all aspects of *Sippurim Yafim*, including setting

⁴⁹ Gartner, p. 278

⁵⁰ Friedland, A.H. Letter to Henry Kutash, Camp Wise Institute, 14 May 1935, Box 6, Folder 2, ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁵¹ “Biographical Sketch.” ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio

prices, distribution, and discounts.⁵² Friedland even engraved the stencils for the mimeograph machine himself.⁵³ He was a micromanager and kept a close eye on the sales and use of *Sippurim Yafim*. Marketing and sales were difficult in the 1930's because of the severe economic problems in Jewish schools due to the onset of the Great Depression. Friedland, however, tirelessly wrote to schools and organizations inquiring about their use or potential use of *Sippurim Yafim*. He saw publication as a crucial part of his Hebrew culture crusade and necessary for the good of Judaism in the United States.⁵⁴

During this time in Cleveland, Friedland worked on two significant educational projects with his close friend and colleague, Dr. Emanuel Gamoran. Gamoran was Educational Director of the Commission on Jewish Education in Cincinnati as well as Educational Director of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. The first work was a series called *Gilenu- the Play Way to Hebrew*.

The *Gilenu Primer* was written after publishing *Gilenu, Book 1*. It was intended to enable a teacher with "little pedagogical training" to teach the mechanics of Hebrew. The introduction of the *Gilenu Primer* refers to studies by Professor Arthur I. Gates, a famed researcher in the field of teaching reading, of Columbia University, who concluded that an eclectic approach to reading is the most effective. These studies showed that phonics alone was ill-advised. They also showed that reading in context alone would not

⁵² Friedland, A.H. Letter to Rabbi Jacob Singer, Temple Mizpah, Chicago. 3 March 1931. Box 4, Folder 3. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁵³ Feinstein. In *Sefer Zikaron*, p. 47

⁵⁴ Friedland, A.H. Letter to Mr. B. Rosen, Associated Talmud Torahs. 10 October 1933. Box 2, Folder 5. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. Cincinnati, Ohio.

suffice.⁵⁵ Therefore, phonetic methods plus use of interesting materials were what Friedland and Gamoran were after in teaching young children to read Hebrew.

The Primer thus includes word drill, phonetic drill, and a list of words including the names of the books of the Bible, Hebrew months, "words that have some value." The sight word approach, as advocated by Gates, was heavily used. This is seen in the exercises that give practice with words in context. This is done by first giving an exercise that has a variety of sentences including the sight words, followed by stories in which the words occur frequently.⁵⁶

The stories may have been modeled on the "Dick and Jane" series published in 1930 by Macmillan, but they had significant additions. The authors explain the inclusion of a limited amount of phonetics, which ran contrary to Arthur Gates's prescription for teaching reading, by saying that Hebrew is a more phonetic language than English. Friedland and Gamoran must have been aware that Gates had studied English language reading students exclusively and drawn his conclusions from them. Furthermore, Friedland and Gamoran felt strongly that the learning experience must also be fun. Therefore, they added "stories", to ensure "favorable attitudes" in children. In sum, Friedland and Gamoran's eclectic approach to teaching children to read Hebrew avoided the pitfalls of using either an exclusively phonetic or sight word approach.

In the introduction to the exercise book to Gilenu, the authors wrote that Gilenu was considered by them to be "a new approach to the teaching of Hebrew."⁵⁷ The

⁵⁵ Gamoran, Emanuel and Abraham H. Friedland *The Play Way to Hebrew: Gilenu Primer*. New York: Department of Synagogue and School Extension of the UAHC, 1935

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. ix.

⁵⁷ Gamoran, Emanuel and A.H. Friedland, *Torah Li*. Cincinnati: The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1939, p.ix.

workbook gives practice with the lessons in Gilenu and is presented in a separate text. The exercises involve much repetition, a game-like approach, and whimsical illustrations that serve as graphic organizers. Students can respond by pasting the label on a blank beside the matching picture, presumably before they can form the letters. They can also use these exercises to practice writing, an important objective.

Torah Li is a series that "presents a new approach to the teaching of selected passages from the Bible."⁵⁸ Half of the selections are accompanied by melodies to which Biblical passages could be sung. Vocabulary is presented first, followed by an exercise in which new words are used in sentence context. "By the time the child has studied the vocabulary and done the exercise, the reading of the selected passage should no longer be a matter of labor but rather a pleasant experience."⁵⁹ In all of his projects, Friedland wanted to encourage Hebrew fluency and sought to make its study enjoyable.⁶⁰

As he did with many of his other endeavors, he carried his sense of humor with him. In response to someone buying books from him, Friedland wrote, "I don't know whether the receipt of the check requires an answer or not...On general principles, if you send a Jew money, you may rest assured that he got every cent of it, if not more. Ask any good anti-Semite and he will agree with me. Moreover, it would do your heart good to see how rapidly the royalty vanished. This is the difference between royalty and dictatorship...you can't get rid of dictators."⁶¹

Many organizations had trouble paying for the booklets, even after a reduced price was offered. In Chicago Alexander Dushkin attempted to work out a deal in which

⁵⁸ Ibid. p.ix.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. ix

⁶⁰ "Abraham Hayyim Friedland," Encyclopedia of Cleveland History

⁶¹ Friedland, A.H. Letter to Rabbi Louis I. Egelson, 21 July 1937, Box 3, Folder 5. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

the Board of Jewish Education would subsidize the purchase of booklets and secure a loan to help cover additional costs. He reflected this financial difficulty to Friedland: "Sales of booklets in Chicago are slow going....no one has money."⁶²

There were Rabbis who ardently supported the Hebrew culture movement. One of these was Rabbi Solomon Goldman of Congregation Anshe Emet in Chicago, Illinois. Goldman asked Friedland for advice on how to help him advance Hebrew more effectively in his congregation. "Hebrew is gradually taking hold of my congregation. Eighty adults studied it during the summer. I am now thinking of opening a parochial school for the kindergarten and first grade."⁶³ Friedland's response included an offer to extend additional help with materials, curriculum development or teacher training.

Friedland was successful in many of his endeavors in Cleveland, however, during the second half of his tenure there, Friedland grappled with the severe financial strain brought on by the Great Depression and demographic changes in Cleveland. From 1929 to 1936, there was a decline in the number of students in the Hebrew schools administered by Friedland from 1505 to 716. During this time, more students were from relief families, which contributed to the financial hardship and the decreased social prestige of the schools. The Depression also led to a surfeit of alternative teachers, often untrained, who competed for students.⁶⁴

In addition to external circumstances that were out of Friedland's control, Friedland's mismanagement of the finances of the Hebrew schools amplified the severity

⁶² Dushkin, Alexander. Letter to A.H. Friedland. 9 February 1934. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶³ Goldman, Rabbi Solomon, Congregation Anshe Emet. Letter to A.H. Friedland. 9 September 1934. Box 4, Folder 4. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁴ Gartner, 278

of the difficulties. Even before 1929, the debt of the Hebrew School was more than \$60,000. "For all his talents, Friedland was not financially skillful. He preferred to employ funds available from appeals to expand the school rather than to retrench and pay debts."⁶⁵ By 1929, there were no surplus funds to help cushion the blow of the Great Depression.

Last Years

Friedland saw himself as a fighter for Jewish education. In a letter from January 17, 1934, he wrote, "It is fully worth paying the price of a few sleepless nights of giving lectures to Hebraists and Zionists and even of writing textbooks. I am well and am crusading the cause of Jewish education more violently than ever."⁶⁶

His great passion was accompanied by great frustration. He saw his work as necessary for the continuity of the Jewish people. However, he was perturbed by the indifference to education and often used his great command of language to make ironic and acerbic statements. Friedland was engaged in a lifelong struggle, and he took the apathy of others personally. "Wishing you wholeheartedly a successful onslaught upon this amorphous mass of indifference which you dignify by this pretentious title of American-Jewish life."⁶⁷ Friedland put his comments in mocking terms, probably indicating how deeply affected he was by the situation.

He also used his verbal acumen to express his displeasure at professional setbacks. Sometimes his words expressed his frustration with Jews in general and Jewish

⁶⁵ Gartner, 289

⁶⁶ Friedland, A.H. Letter to Dr. J. Golub, Bureau of Jewish Education, Cincinnati. 17 January 1934. Box 3, Folder 2, ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁷ Friedland, A.H. Letter to Mordechai Kaplan. 17 December 1934. Box 1, Folder 4, ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

teachers in particular, for their apathy, real or perceived, for Jewish education: "God knows that the appetite of Cleveland Jewry for books of this type, and for that matter, books of any type, is pitifully small. Had Dr. Marcus written a couple of detective stories, it would have been much easier to sell them to our Sunday school teachers. Books on Jewish history are too heavy a nutriment for their highly delicate Jewish stomachs."⁶⁸ This, a year before his death, expresses his unabated frustration. Friedland had ideas for improving the situation, but the perceived resistance to them caused him to voice his frustration.

Even though Friedland at times was troubled by the problems that existed in Jewish education, he was an empathetic national educational leader and commiserated with colleagues. He wrote to one, "However, you will probably have a hundred of the regular Sunday School teachers who probably do not even know the Aleph-bet."⁶⁹ Friedland also offered support whenever he could. "Whenever you are face to face with an acute problem and you want to buttress up your stand with the opinion of an outside person, I shall be glad to come and help you on behalf of our tortured cause."⁷⁰

Friedland's work was made much more difficult, especially in the last years of his life, due to his fragile health. In almost every year of his professional life, particularly the last decade, he was afflicted with various illnesses. Amidst the voluminous correspondence in his work for the Cleveland Hebrew schools and for the many Zionist organizations of which he was a member, there are numerous inquiries about his health

⁶⁸ Friedland, A.H. Letter to Rabbi Louis I. Egelson. 17 January 1939. Box 3, Folder 7. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁹ Friedland, A.H. Letter to Mr. Paul Veret, Buffalo Board of Jewish Education. 28 September 1936. Box 5, Folder 4. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 25 June 1937. Box 5, Folder 6.

and wishes for his return to wellness. As early as November 1929, Samson Benderly, a colleague and friend wrote, "How are your *tzarot* (afflictions)? Are they getting smaller or bigger."⁷¹ His health was tenuous for the last ten years of his life. It appears that his health began to more rapidly decline around 1936.

Friedland continued to be called upon to address educational conferences and groups of teachers on subjects of education and Jewish literature. However, in the last years of his life, his health limited his personal attendance. On October 11, 1935, he wrote, "More serious trouble than my eye trouble has suddenly overtaken me, which landed me at the hospital, and I am to undergo a major operation within three or four days."⁷²

It was necessary for Friedland to ration his energy in order to maximize his effectiveness. He tended to choose speaking engagements that would have the most impact and take the least out of him. Even with all of his health problems, Friedland carried on an extremely full professional life. In most cases, when Friedland was unable to attend, he contributed in written form. He always had words of encouragement for his colleagues in the field. "My heart is with you (much good it can do you) and so are my wishes...probably won't know until the last minute if I can come. This, I said, is my *sick-bedical* year (a pathetic pun on sabbatical, of course)."⁷³

Friedland actively supported the central organization for the promotion of Hebrew in America, Histadruth Ivrit for a majority of his time in Cleveland. Histadruth Ivrit,

⁷¹ Benderly, Samson. Letter to A.H. Friedland. 20 November 1929. Box 1, Folder, 1. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁷² Friedland, A.H. Letter to Emanuel Gamoran. 11 October 1935. Box 3, Folder 3. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁷³ Friedland, A.H. Letter to Israel L. Edward. 13 February 1936. Box 5, Folder 3. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

the National Organization for Hebrew Culture formed in 1917. It regarded itself as the instrument for advancing Hebrew culture among American Jewry. It claimed responsibility for "whatever achievements in the field of Hebrew journalism and literature American Jewry has to record."⁷⁴ Histadruth Ivrit published the Hebrew weekly, *Hadoar*, which at the time was the only Hebrew publication in the United States. *Hadoar* included Hebrew poetry, fiction, essays, and literary criticism. Histadruth Ivrit also published a bi-weekly youth magazine, *Hadoar Lanoar*. Youths could use this periodical to further develop their Hebrew skills and perhaps become Hebrew scholars themselves. Histadruth Ivrit also sponsored a literary contest for children, published a Hebrew almanac which included a record of major events in American life and Hebrew literature. Histadruth Ivrit also had a book publishing company and many other activities. Its goal was "focusing the attention of Jewish communities upon the Hebrew cultural context here and in Palestine, and of arousing them to a more active interest in Jewish education and Hebrew literature." They believed these activities strengthened the American Jewish community.⁷⁵

Friedland served in a leadership position in Histadruth Ivrit from 1929 to the end of his life. Upon request, he formed a Cleveland Chapter and organized a conference that demonstrated once again "his amazing powers as a speaker, a humorist, a melodist, a friend, a lover of the Hebrew literature."⁷⁶ He appealed to various organizations for financial support and inspired Jews to participate in Hebrew events such as Hebrew

⁷⁴ Brochure of Histadruth Ivrit (Promotional Literature). Box 7, Folder 9. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Spicehandler, in *Sefer Zikaron*, p. 48

Week in 1936.⁷⁷ Friedland was the Cleveland representative of the National Executive of Histadruth Ivrit from 1934 onward. Friedland's work ethic was extraordinary, causing him to work into the night on tasks.

Friedland assumed the presidency of Histadruth Ivrit in 1939 even though he was confined to his bed due to his worsening health which was diagnosed as cancer. His close friend and colleague, Emanuel Gamoran wrote, "It is indicative of the love and admiration that the Jewish intelligentsia has for you."⁷⁸ Friedland's doctors had just told him that he only a few weeks to live. However, it seems that Friedland's strength of mind was able to keep his weakness of body at bay, and he took on the presidency of the organization with more energy than anyone could have expected.

Friedland attempted to deal with the financial problems that plagued Histadruth Ivrit. After his election to the presidency of Histadruth Ivrit, Friedland wanted to find a way, at the very least, to pay the salaries of the staff. He sought creative ways to acquire loans.⁷⁹ In his capacity as president, Friedland also reached out to the Zionist Organization of America for loans to help Histadruth Ivrit pay its staff and continue its operations. Zionists throughout the country supported Histadruth Ivrit since they saw

⁷⁷ Friedland, A.H. Letter to Sisterhoods of all Temples and Synagogues. 23 May 1931. Box 3, Folder 5. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁷⁸ Hausman, Irving. Hebrew Union College. Letter to A.H. Friedland. 14 February 1939. Box 3, Folder 7. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁷⁹ Friedland, A.H. Letter to Albert Epstein. 15 March 1939. Box 4, Folder 7. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Hebrew as "the essence of the spiritual guidance and of the national entity of our people."⁸⁰

However, his tenure would be short-lived, and his work left unfinished. His health continued to worsen in the spring of 1939. On May 6, 1939, Friedland wrote, "Sorry to disappoint you all, but I am having severe attacks. Must stay in bed under morphine."⁸¹ He wrote in July, "I am very very sick. I am bedridden, and what is worse, I haven't the strength to carry on conversation lasting more than five minutes. Such is the plain, unadorned fact of my existence."⁸²

Despite being terminally ill with cancer, Friedland's passion for his work never dimmed. Menachem Ribalow reminisced about the, "soft, forgiving smile on his face; intelligent and understanding." He continued, "He had a passion for life until his last breath. His power and beauty of his soul was unmistakable by the way he carried himself.....He knew his fate and knew he couldn't run away from death." Friedland himself said: "The angel of death is sitting beside me and eats me little by little without mercy." He approached his death with serenity, even while suffering intense pain for the last year of his life.⁸³

He completed his final book entitled *Sonnets*⁸⁴, in the lucid times between two daily injections of pain killers.⁸⁵ The sonnets show Friedland's soul. They reveal insights into his illness, including his personal pain. They cover topics including religion and

⁸⁰ Press Statement by A.H. Friedland, February 1939, Box 7, Folder 7, ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁸¹ Friedland, A.H. Telegram, 6 May 1939, Box 4, Folder 6, ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁸² Friedland, A.H. Letter to Israel Berman, 17 July 1939, Box 2, Folder 4, ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁸³ Ribalow, *Sefer Zikaron*, p. 11

⁸⁴ Friedland, A.H. *Sonnets*.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11

maturation. There is the “motif of unifying death and life and one’s wish to unite with God is a returning motif in most of his poems and sonnets.”

Abraham Friedland died on August 3, 1939 at age 47 in Cleveland, Ohio. Friedland was survived by his wife Yonina and his daughter. After his death, Yonina returned to Palestine for several years in the 1940’s, and returned to the United States in June 1950.⁸⁶ She then settled, according to the 1960 Census, in Evanston, Illinois, where she lived until her death in September 1983.⁸⁷ Their daughter Aviva married Rabbi David Polish in the summer of 1938.⁸⁸

After his death, other leaders were able to step forward at the Bureau of Jewish Education of Cleveland. Friedland’s personality and views had dominated the atmosphere; after his death there was more room for diversity of opinion. At this time, Rabbi Abba Silver, another strong ideologue, was also no longer as involved with the Bureau of Jewish Education. He had been active in the Bureau earlier, however disagreements with Friedland and other members caused him to withdraw support. (There is more on the relationship between Silver and the relationship between Silver and Friedland in Chapter 3.) The absence of both men allowed the Bureau to develop in new ways.

⁸⁶ U.S. Customs Records, 1950 (www.ancestry.com)

⁸⁷ 1960 U.S. Census (www.ancestry.com)

⁸⁸ Aronson, G., Young Judaea, Letter to A.H. Friedland, 16 June 1938, Box 2, Folder 3, ABRAHAM H FRIEDLAND PAPERS, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Chapter 2 – Friedland and Zionism

Introduction:

This chapter presents Friedland's practical steps to aid the cause of Zionism in America. To Friedland, Hebrew was the "soul" of Zionism: it gave Zionism the meaning and the drive to strengthen universal Jewish peoplehood and rebuild a Jewish spiritual center and homeland in Palestine. Friedland believed that all Jews could contribute to the building of a Jewish peoplehood. Like Jewish pioneers cultivating the land in Palestine, American Jews could strengthen Zion by deepening their knowledge of and their love for Judaism through the Hebrew language. Friedland believed that Jewish children in America needed to feel "part of a universal people, no matter how flung we are."⁸⁹

To Friedland, the Hebrew language was an essential part of Jewish peoplehood because it preserved the Jewish ethos. He regarded the Hebrew language as a vessel of Jewish spirituality which conveyed a unique set of meanings and ideals. Friedland worried that American Jews who did not know Hebrew would lose access to the depth of Jewish meaning that could guide their lives.

The centrality of Hebrew and its inextricable connection to Zionism were Friedland's tenets: the most profound understanding of the Jewish people demanded a strong grasp of the Hebrew language as he viewed it as a language that connected the Jews of today to each other, and to the Jewish past. Friedland hoped that American Jews would connect with their people through Hebrew and embrace Zionism while being fully American as well. Therefore, Friedland engaged in Zionist advocacy while working

⁸⁹ Friedland, A.H. Letter to S.C. Lamport. 16 January 1934. Box 1, Folder 4. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

passionately to increase Hebrew literacy among American Jews. Given these intertwined pursuits, it seems surprising that his greatest Hebrew educational work, *Sippurim Yafim*, did not espouse a Zionist philosophy. However, Friedland saw this work as the best way to teach Hebrew, the knowledge of which would prepare young people to become American Zionists. Friedland believed that Hebrew served as a "link between the cultural forces at work in Palestine and Jewish life in this country."⁹⁰

A Cultural Zionist Worker

Abraham Friedland was a Zionist throughout his career. His belief in the Zionist cause paralleled his devotion to the advancement of Jewish culture and language, his support of Hebrew literature and his belief in community-building activities for American Jews. Friedland appeared to believe that a Jewish state would help world Jewry and that American Jews should support the creation of a Jewish state.

Most significantly, Friedland believed that a Jewish homeland in Palestine would be a cultural and Hebraic inspiration for American Jews. This homeland, where Hebrew language and culture could flourish, would enrich the lives of Jews worldwide. Reciprocally, Friedland's activities reflected his insistence that a strong American Jewish community that nurtured a rich Hebraic and cultural life would better support a Jewish homeland.

Securing a Jewish state would also provide a refuge for Jews around the world. Friedland saw that few Jews lived in places as tolerant as the United States, underscoring the importance of a safe haven for Jews in other parts of the Diaspora. Friedland even

⁹⁰ Friedland, A.H. Letter to Chairman, Welfare Fund committee of the Histadruth Ivrit, 8 June 1936. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio, Box 7, Folder 2.

purchased land in Palestine, finalizing the sale in 1930⁹¹. This expenditure was substantial for Friedland, a man of modest means whose income from the sale of his Hebrew booklets supplemented his modest salary from the Bureau of Jewish Education of Cleveland. The purchase of land also demonstrates Friedland's belief in the importance of Palestine as a spiritual center for Judaism. Friedland's brand of Zionism included Palestine as both a homeland for those who lived there and a place spiritually linked to Jews elsewhere by virtue of the Hebrew language, Jewish culture and peoplehood. American Jews might be lovers of Zion, even buy property there, but they could still live full and vibrant Jewish lives in the United States.

Beginnings and Friedland's Zionism in New York

Friedland's affiliations and communications reflected his dedication to American Zionism, which he believed strengthened the idea of a homeland in Palestine and inspired a renaissance of Jewish cultural and spiritual life in the United States. Friedland came to the United States at a time when American Zionism was just beginning to mobilize.

In 1896, Theodore Herzl's publication of the pro-Zionist brochure, *Der Judenstaat* ("The Jewish State"), coupled with his call for a Jewish congress, revitalized the Hoveve Zion⁹² (Lovers of Zion) society, which advocated colonization in Palestine as a route to establishing a homeland. Herzl, for one, was opposed to the Hoveve Zion method of colonization as being a "mere smuggling operation, a plan unworthy of a great

⁹¹ American Zion Commonwealth, Inc. Letter to A.H. Friedland, 20 November 1930, Box 1, Folder 1, ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

people and a great cause."⁹³ Herzl felt that political rights had to be obtained through the creation of a sovereign state on land ceded or purchased from its previous owners that would be recognized under international law.⁹⁴ Hoveve Zion advocates and followers were able to secure 100,000 acres in Palestine by the eve of the First World War, largely through the generosity of Jewish philanthropies established by Edmond de Rothschild and Maurice de Hirsch.⁹⁵

In America, Hoveve Zion had been started in 1882, but it needed to be recast in terms of the American experience. The rationale of the first Hoveve Zion society in New York was stated as follows: "As a refuge from cruelty and oppression, Palestine undoubtedly appealed to European Jewry; in America, however, where Jews already enjoyed freedom, a love of Zion would serve a spiritual purpose as a safeguard against assimilation."⁹⁶ It was to this new vision and message that the young Abraham Friedland was drawn. The movement grew slowly and was called Hibbat Zion. Many members "devoted themselves primarily to the study of Hebrew or of Jewish culture."⁹⁷ Friedland found these pursuits of Hibbat Zion most attractive, and his early experiences with Zionism in New York led him to see Hebrew as a path to love of Zion.

The publication of *Der Judenstaat* and the convening of the First Zionist Congress inspired some immigrant American Jews to support the Zionist cause. The Basel Conference of 1897, which took place during Friedland's childhood, helped lay the

⁹³ Urofsky, p. 25.

⁹⁴ Herzl, Theodore. *Herzl: The Jewish State*. Chapter 1, 1896. (Translated from the German by Sylvie D'Avigdor. This edition was published in 1946 by the American Zionist Emergency Council)

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Zionism/herzl2a.html>

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 30.

⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 82.

⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 83.

groundwork for the movement to which Friedland would later devote so much of his life's work.⁹⁸ During the first decades of the twentieth century, when Eastern European Jews did not join Zionist organizations in droves, the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine gradually became more palatable and began to seem more possible in the minds of many of these newly arrived immigrants. The rise of Hitler in the 1930's was the major impetus that transformed understanding and sympathy concerning the Zionist cause amongst the masses into practical support in the form of affiliation with Zionist organizations such as the Zionist Organization of America.⁹⁹

Prior to WWI, almost all American Zionist organizations were based in New York City, where Moses and Yonina Friedland settled in 1905. Living among the Zionist-friendly Eastern European immigrant population clearly facilitated Friedland's burgeoning interest and involvement in Zionism. In the early years, these organizations were poorly organized¹⁰⁰, and after World War I, a divergence of ideas existed between more recent Eastern European immigrants and the assimilated Western European Jews, the latter constituting most of the early leadership.

Eastern Europeans like Friedland defined "their Jewishness in ethnic rather than in universal terms. They sensed themselves to be a national minority, a people within peoples."¹⁰¹ Friedland's Eastern European brand of Zionism, promoting spiritual and cultural concerns such as Hebrew, conflicted with the more universal position of the

⁹⁸ Marcus, Jacob Rader. *United States Jewry, Volume 4: The East European Period, The Emergence of the American Jew, 1776-1985*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993, p. 647.

⁹⁹ Urofsky, Melvin. *American Zionism from Herzl To The Holocaust*. Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1975, p. 85.

¹⁰⁰ Marcus, p.648.

¹⁰¹ Raider, Mark and Jonathan Sarna and Ronald W. Zweig, eds. *Abba Hillel Silver and American Zionism*. Routledge, 1997, pp. 3-4.

assimilated Jews from Germany, who supported a more political brand of Zionism. This Zionism was stronger in its advocacy of a Jewish state. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, Eastern Europeans “basked in the importance of Americanized leaders whose participation added social respectability and prestige to the movement, but as the newcomers themselves acculturated, they felt freer about substituting leaders of their own.”¹⁰² They also felt more empowered to assert their Zionist ideology. As time progressed, the Eastern European Jews outnumbered the assimilated American Jewish elite that had led the movement in the first two decades of the century.

Friedland’s engagement with Hebraic-Zionism during his years in New York City was primarily through the Dr. Herzl Zion Club, which Friedland joined as a teenage student at the Yitzhak Elhanan Yeshiva. This club was formed in 1904, shortly after Theodore Herzl died, by three yeshiva students who attended a memorial service for Herzl. Abba Hillel Silver, his brother Max, and Israel Chipkin decided to honor Herzl’s efforts by forming a club whose objective was “the dissemination of the Zionist ideal and the self-cultivation of Hebrew among the Jewish youth in this city.” They collected weekly dues of five cents and gave twenty percent of their dues money to the Jewish National Fund. The Dr. Herzl Zion Club provided a place for young American Jews to gather, speak Hebrew, and cultivate their idealism and creativity. By 1909, other Zionist youth societies had sprung up throughout the country, and they united under the name Young Judaea.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Cohen, Naomi W., p. 5.

¹⁰³ “Young Judaea History,” Young Judaea, 25 January 2008.
<http://www.youngjudaea.org/organizations.html>

Friedland contributed to Zionist publications during his teenage years. He served as an editor and writer for the *Young Judaea*. He also was responsible for making sure that Hebrew was added to the publication.¹⁰⁴ It is not known if Friedland was directly involved in the formation of Young Judaea, but he continued to support the newly-formed organization throughout his professional career.

Brandeis and Friedland

Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis was the figure of this period who gave the Zionist movement both leadership, access to greater financial support, and visibility. Brandeis accepted the chairmanship of the Provisional Executive Committee for Zionist affairs at the emergency Zionist meeting at the Hotel Marseilles in New York on August 30, 1914, marking a turning point in his life.¹⁰⁵ Brandeis was quickly recognized as a “man who had the ability, determination and reputation to be their leader, and who intended to be just that.” At the close of the session, he asked that the various Zionist factions inform him about their operations, leaders, memberships and administration.¹⁰⁶ Brandeis hoped to unite the many factions and coordinate their resources and their mission.

Brandeis and Friedland both believed that Americanism and Zionism could coexist harmoniously. Friedland, like Brandeis, believed that his Judaism, specifically, his understanding of Jewish ethics, could make him a better American. Brandeis’s involvement in Zionism lent credence to the idea that a Jew could be a loyal American

¹⁰⁴ Persky, Daniel *Sefer Zikaron for A.H. Friedland*, New York: Histadruth Ivrit of America, 1940, p. 21.

¹⁰⁵ Urofsky, p. 120.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

and, at the same time, a supporter of Zionism. "To be good Americans, we must be better Jews, and to be better Jews, we must become Zionists."¹⁰⁷ Zionism gave Brandeis, a non-observant Jew, a claim to Judaism, "a style of Jewishness he could adopt as a positive commitment."¹⁰⁸ Zionism gave Friedland a way to conceive of the Jewish peoplehood in terms that allowed him to educate and nurture its unique identity.

Unlike Brandeis, Friedland believed that Zionism and Hebrew were essential components of Jewish culture and even Jewish spirituality. To Friedland, Hebrew was the key to understanding Judaism; he believed that focusing on literature, music and, most of all, the Hebrew language would strengthen the Jewish people and the Zionist movement. In contrast, Brandeis considered Zionism an alternative to the religiosity of Torah-centered and synagogue-based Judaism that failed to resonate with many American Jews such as himself. Brandeis's Zionism was one of Jewish values which would help the Jews develop a moral state. While Brandeis's Zionism was a political movement, Friedland's was more of a cultural movement. Despite these differences, both men asserted their American identity and their Judaism through Zionism.

Other Zionist leaders took up political Zionism, positioning themselves at places on the spectrum between Abraham Friedland and Louis Brandeis. Louis Lipsky, editor of *The Maccabean*, the official monthly journal of the Federation of American Zionists and later head of the ZOA, followed Herzl's agenda of creating a state. Similar to Brandeis, Lipsky was committed to political Zionism.¹⁰⁹ However, Lipsky, like Friedland, was concerned with the education of children as a needed response to a history of persecution.

¹⁰⁷ Urofsky, p. 129.

¹⁰⁸ Halpern, p. 62.

¹⁰⁹ Cohen, p. 18.

He would have agreed with Friedland that education was important to preserve Judaism in America and a national consciousness, and that these were preeminent goals. The specific ZOA position that would have mirrored Friedland's was that Hebrew was preferred to Yiddish, although Friedland was not against Yiddish, and actually gave lectures in the language.¹¹⁰ The Revisionist Party was less in Friedland's camp. The Revisionists emerged in 1925 in opposition to Britain's leniency with Arabs threatening Jewish settlements. The Revisionist stance on Zionism was opposed to that of Lipsky, who had addressed both political and cultural issues. The Revisionists were exclusively concerned with Palestine and advocated land settlement in Palestine and creation of a political entity there.¹¹¹

Louis Brandeis believed that unifying the Zionist movement was especially important. However, he was ultimately unable to bring the different groups together. At the June 5, 1921 ZOA convention at the Hotel Cleveland, the Brandeis group, which included Abba Hillel Silver, Felix Frankfurter and Stephen S. Wise, resigned from leadership. Brandeis had wanted to bring American progressivism to bear on the Zionist movement. Brandeis envisioned efficient organizations using modern methods and bankers running the financial side of the movement. Chaim Weizmann worked to ensure that the emotional and cultural work of Zionism was not forgotten amidst business operations. These differences between the two groups also involved conflicting economic philosophies with implications for immigration. After a trip to Palestine in 1919, Brandeis and his supporters believed that it was more important to first improve the

¹¹⁰ Cohen, p. 26.

¹¹¹ Urofsky, p. 357.

conditions of Jews already settled in Palestine before encouraging more immigration. Therefore, the Brandeis faction, wanted to allocate more funds for development in Palestine than for new immigration. Weizmann wanted immediate immigration for some of the Jews displaced by World War One.¹¹² This and other disagreements made it so the two groups were “unable to reach agreement”, and “they tore the movement apart, and for the next two decades American Zionism worked in vain to heal the wounds ripped open at the Hotel Cleveland.”¹¹³ This schism would hinder American Zionism from achieving a unified vision and purpose until the 1930’s.

Roaring Twenties, Feeble Zionism, Hitler on the Horizon

The 1920’s represented a time of disunity, but there were important developments during this period. The 1920s was a time of economic growth and prosperity and increased opportunities for Jews in the United States. This, combined with the 1924 limits on immigration, including the immigration of Jews, led to a reduced emphasis on the importance of the Zionist cause. American Jews wished to solidify their place in American society and secure their slice of the American dream, and consequently, redirected their interest away from the Zionist cause. American Jewry “rallied to communal efforts aimed at combating (sic) discrimination as well as consolidating their place in American society.” The Order of B’nai Brith was one organization that supported these efforts. American Jews chose to affiliate based on “anti-defamation and cultural activities.”

¹¹² Urofsky, p. 191.

¹¹³ Urofsky, p. 298.

Abraham Friedland was troubled by the lack of direction and cohesion of the 1920's. He promoted Zionism in the face of these obstacles by becoming active in Zionist leadership, education and advocacy. Friedland's new position in Cleveland made it possible for him to infuse the Cleveland Hebrew schools with Zionist ideology. His fun yet profound approach to Jewish education and his personal charisma quickly attracted student followers. He was an effective speaker whose advice and support were often solicited for Zionist causes, and he was frequently invited to address Zionist bodies, including Hadassah, Young Judaea, the Zionist Organization of America, Habonim, Masada and the Jewish National Fund. Friedland also served on their boards of directors. Friedland was an inspirational source of ideological and strategic support.

As chairman of the Zionist Cultural Committee of his local ZOA district, Friedland encouraged vigorous discussion and debate regarding the direction and goals of the Zionist movement. He arranged forums for people to discuss the many intricacies of Zionism and the problems Zionism could face.¹¹⁴ In 1932, Friedland was elected president the Cleveland district of the Zionist Organization of America.¹¹⁵ His contribution was immediately felt and appreciated. Mrs. A.H. Vixman, the Executive Director Young Judaea thank Friedland for "your guidance and cooperation that you are giving in your city....Your praises have been sung by the active leaders, and I want to

¹¹⁴ "An Attack or Bitter Truth" (Statement of Zionist Cultural Committee). May 1931. Box 7, Folder 3. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹¹⁵ Friedland, Abraham. Letter to Morris Rothenburg, Zionist Organization of America. 29 September 1932. Box 1, Folder 2. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

assure you of the gratitude of the officers of our board, for your helpful direction in raising the standard of Young Judaea in your city.”¹¹⁶

Friedland wanted a more holistic Zionism. Going to a monthly meeting would not be sufficient to engage American Jewish youth. He saw the need for a very personal commitment, so that Zionism would be integrated into a person’s Jewish identity, affecting the individual to his core.

Friedland described what he saw as a major challenge to the success of Zionism among American youth. He felt that youth viewed Zionism like a *tallit*, something “that the individual Zionist dons...upon entrance to a meeting...to be removed as soon as services are over, and the normal everyday life begins.”¹¹⁷ Friedland believed that the support of the Zionist movement among American youth and American Jews in general was not profound or enduring due to the lack of clear direction by their organizations. The movement did not seem to resonate with them on a deep level.¹¹⁸

Friedland wanted the Zionist organization to clearly define its aims and purposes. Moreover, he wanted the philosophy of Zionism to be clearly delineated so that it could be taught. Friedland specified four elements of such a curriculum: the economic status of the Jewish people in the world, the academic and vocational problems of the Jewish youth, the ethical basis of our political and territorial claim in Palestine, and the universal aspects of our Zionist ideal. Friedland believed that any Zionist agenda that was to

¹¹⁶ Friedland, Abraham. Letter to Mrs. A.H. Vixman, Exec. Dir. Young Judaea. 5 December 1932. Box 1, Folder 2. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹¹⁷ Friedland, A.H. “Individual Zionism and the American Jewish Youth.” 24 November 1930. Box 1, Folder 6. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

resonate with Jewish youth had to be given a "dramatic setting, so that it can get a proper hearing and burn its way into the heart and mind of our hitherto irresponsible (sic) youth." ¹¹⁹

Friedland sought to strengthen Zionism in Cleveland by mentoring and teaching the leaders of the Zionist youth organizations. Friedland described his interaction with the leaders of various Zionist youth organizations: "I do devote a good deal of time to Zionist education, but it consists mainly in guiding the leaders of our youth clubs in their building up of programs and in reviewing with leaders' groups Jewish current events. Around these current events, I weave a good deal of historic information." ¹²⁰

Friedland also served on the Committee on Youth Education and Organization of the Zionist Organization of America. Upon its founding, it had two projects: to help organize a Young Men's Zionist Organization in America (Masada) and to create a National Council of Zionist Youth Organizations, "aiming to coordinate, in so far as possible, the programs and activities of such national youth organizations as Young Judaea, Avukah, Junior Hadassah, Hashomer-Hatzoir, Mizrachi-Hatzoir, Masada, etcetera." ¹²¹ In 1936, he was invited to join the National Advisory Board of Habonim, which sought to familiarize American youth with pioneer life in Palestine and inspire

¹¹⁹ Friedland, A.H. Letter to Dr. A.M. Dushkin, 23 March 1933. Box 4, folder 4. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹²⁰ Friedland, A.H. Letter to David W. Pearlman, Chairman of the Committee on Formal Education of the Zionist Committee on Youth and Adult Education, 19 April 1933. Box 1, Folder 3. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹²¹ Dushkin, Alexander. Letter to A.H. Friedland, 4 December 1933. Box 1, Folder 3. ABRAHAM FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

children to be interested in progressive and Jewish issues.¹²² Friedland sat on the National Governing Board of Young Judaea.¹²³

Friedland served as a consultant for several Zionist Hebrew publications. The Zionist movement in the interwar period benefited greatly from Friedland's work as a scholar and writer. He contributed numerous articles to Zionist publications such as *The New Palestine*, the official magazine of the ZOA. In his remarks in this publication, Friedland expressed his hope for the future of American Zionism and his renewed optimism for their efforts.¹²⁴

Friedland also saw the arts as a way to promote Zionism. One facet of this was films made in Palestine. He helped screen movies in Cleveland for the Palestine American Film Company.¹²⁵ Friedland's blessing and support were also solicited by the Balfour Players, which sought to express Jewish ideals through drama. This theatre company, formed under the auspices of Masada and the education department of the ZOA, aimed to be the foundation for a national Jewish theatre in America.¹²⁶

Friedland's emphasis on Hebrew education also must be mentioned in relation to his Zionist activism. He believed that Hebrew education could address the lack of

¹²² Cohen, Moshe, secretary of Habonim. Letter to A.H. Friedland. 24 February 1936. Box 1, Folder 6. ABRAHAM FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹²³ Young Judaea. Letter to A.H. Friedland. Box 2, Folder 2. 16 July 1937. ABRAHAM FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹²⁴ Friedland, Abraham H. Letter to Louis Lipsky, American Palestine Campaign. 11 April 1935. Box 1, Folder 5. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹²⁵ Haber, Julius. Letter to A.H. Friedland. 17 June 1934. Box 1, Folder 4. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹²⁶ Kaster, Joseph. Letter to A.H. Friedland. 14 February 1939. Box 2, Folder 4. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

adequate Zionist leadership and the apathy among American youth toward Zionism. The Cleveland Hebrew schools not only taught Hebrew but inculcated Zionism. Friedland worked with educators such as Emanuel Gamoran, the first director of the Joint CCAR-UAHC Commission on Jewish Education,¹²⁷ to bring new educational materials that would incorporate Palestine into the curriculum, thereby encouraging more positive attitudes towards Zionism in the younger generation.¹²⁸

Abraham Friedland hoped to grow a Hebrew literacy movement in America that would include a significant minority of the Jewish population. There were accusations of secularism from some rabbis including Rabbi Abba Silver of The Temple, a major synagogue in Cleveland, as well as criticism from other parties that Friedland's plans for Hebrew education were too intensive. As his career progressed, Friedland realized that, for most Jews, an appreciation of the Hebrew language was a more realistic goal. "While the program for the many will have only a minimum of Hebraic elements, the program for the few, however, should be embedded in Hebrew culture preferably in the original, otherwise in its translation."¹²⁹ At the end of his career, Friedland conceded: "Granted that we shall not succeed in educating a large number of American Jews sufficiently to

¹²⁷ Proffitt, Kevin. "The Reform Movement's Commitment to Jewish Education." *10 Minutes of Torah*. Week 79, Day 2. (May 24, 2005): <http://tmt.urj.net/archives/2socialaction/052405.html>

¹²⁸ Raider, pp. 3-4.

¹²⁹ Friedland, Abraham H. Letter to Dr. Jacob Singer, Rabbi Temple Mizpah, Chicago, Illinois. Box 4, Folder 8. 3 March 1931. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

enable them to master the Hebrew language, we can at least develop in them a feeling of respect and love for *Lashon Hakodesh* [The Holy Tongue].¹³⁰

Zionism and the Reform Movement

A significant number of Jews in Cleveland affiliated with the Reform movement. This was a challenge to Abraham Friedland, since the Reform movement was against Zionism as it was politically defined. This opposition was mitigated in part by Friedland's educational efforts mentioned above and also the commanding presence of pro-Zionist Reform Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver.

The Reform Movement first defined its anti-Zionist position in the Pittsburgh Platform of 1887, choosing instead to embrace a Jewish mission of Jews bringing God's knowledge to the nation in which they lived. The Reform Movement supported a position similar to its German predecessors, who wrote in a statement condemning the First Zionist Congress, "Judaism obligates its adherents to serve with all devotion the Fatherland to which they belong, and to further its national interest with all their heart and with all their strength."¹³¹ The Reform movement's members focused on successful assimilation and not the nascent Jewish nationalism.

While the anti-Zionist stance of the Reform movement was softened in the first decades of the twentieth century, the vast majority of the Reform Assembly and Hebrew Union College was still not convinced of the basic compatibility of Reform Judaism and Zionism. In 1917, the Central Conference of American Rabbis reaffirmed the Reform

¹³⁰ Friedland, Abraham H. Letter to Joseph Barat, Hebrew Youth Cultural Federation. 13 February 1939. Box 7, Folder 6. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹³¹ Urofsky, p. 31.

movement's official opposition to Zionism. However, the official stance did not reflect the feelings of an increasing number of Reform Jews who agreed with Oscar Straus's later sentiment. "I am not a Zionist, but I will cooperate with them knowing that what will be accorded to them under the Balfour Declaration will be no more than what they should have, equality for all in Palestine -- just as they and we have in free America."¹³²

The two major leaders in the Cleveland Jewish community in the 1920's and 1930's were Friedland and Rabbi Silver. Friedland and Silver were in substantial agreement on many ideological issues related to American Jewish identity and Zionism. First of all, they shared the view that Zionism could be the cure for the low spiritual and cultural condition of American Jews.¹³³ Secondly, both men believed that Zionism could do a lot for the American Jew, just as the American Jew could do a lot to further the Zionist cause. Finally, they believed that every religious school student should be required to learn Hebrew, which hopefully would serve as a stepping stone leading toward increased interest in Palestine.¹³⁴ The two men also shared a common background and upbringing. They were both born in Lithuania and immigrated to America. They settled on the Lower East Side of New York, were childhood friends, and studied at the Yitzhak Elhanan Yeshiva and were members of "The Dr. Herzl's Zion Club." Silver was instrumental in bringing Friedland to Cleveland.

However, once Friedland arrived, their relationship began to deteriorate. Both men's dominant personalities helped them enact their strong educational, Zionist and

¹³² Urofsky, p. 214.

¹³³ Raider, et. al., pp. 48-49.

¹³⁴ Marc Raphael Lee *Abba Hillel Silver: A Profile in American Judaism*, New York and London: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1989, p. 64.

Hebraic programs but they also brought them to loggerheads. One sign of this deterioration was when Silver adamantly refused Friedland and Ezra Shapiro's invitation to join the Cleveland Zionist Organization's executive committee in 1933 and 1934, citing as the reasons Friedland's and Shapiro's poor leadership and the "Talmud Torah Zionist clique" to which Friedland and Shapiro belonged.¹³⁵ There was also a conflict between Friedland and Silver regarding how the local Masada chapter should be organized. On this subject, Friedland was of the mind that the splinter group that Silver had formed was renegade and that it would not be appropriate for Masada to associate with it.¹³⁶

There is a conclusion to be drawn here about Friedland's inability to form partnerships. When in control of the intellectual transaction, he was happy. It was also said that Rabbi Silver may have been upset because he was not in charge. Critics of Silver said that if he was not in control of something, he was opposed to it. The reasons for the split between two boyhood friends highlight a major weakness in Friedland. The need to control by both men hindered them from achieving even greater successes together.

The Reform Movement began to reverse its course in relation to Zionism in the 1930's. Greater numbers of pro-Zionist East European were applying to the Hebrew Union College, many enrolling due to quotas limiting Jews and foreigners at secular universities. The influence of Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, a prominent reform rabbi and ardent Zionist cannot be overlooked when discussing the Reform Movement and

¹³⁵ *ibid.* P. 65.

¹³⁶ Friedland, A.H. Letter to Israel Berman, Masada. 4 February 1938. Box 2, Folder 3. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Zionism. Wise became Louis Brandeis's right-hand man after Brandeis assumed leadership of the American Zionist movement. He founded the second Reform seminary in the United States, the Jewish Institute of Religion, in 1922, providing an alternative to the anti-Zionist Hebrew Union College.¹³⁷ In 1937, Reform rabbis in America officially dropped their anti-Zionist stance and adopted a new platform that declared that Palestine was a center of Jewish culture.

As American Zionism began to gain more supporters in the mid-1930's, Friedland persistently encouraged the ZOA to hone their message and take action to rally even more support behind the cause. Friedland was finally inspired by the proposed ZOA platform of 1935 which, if acted upon appropriately, would give Zionism the direction it needed to be profoundly successful. In a letter to Louis Lipsky of the American Palestine Campaign, he commented on this proposed platform:

At last the general Zionists are in possession of a standard of Zionist values, a criterion against which to appraise the worth and efficacy of men, measures, principles, and policies...the general Zionists, in order to identify themselves with the adopted platform, will have to translate the platform in terms of specific activities, projects, and institutions that alone will give the seal of earnestness and sincerity to the intentions embodied in this document.¹³⁸

Eventually, time and the tragic onset of the Nazi era brought about the unity that Brandeis and later Friedland desired, albeit in a terrible way. The passage of time narrowed the ideological divide between the now second generation Eastern Europeans

¹³⁷ "Stephen S. Wise."

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/wise.html>.

¹³⁸ Friedland, Abraham H. *A Long Felt Need Fulfilled* (Comments by A.H. Friedland). Letter to Louis Lipsky re: ZOA Platform. Box 1, Folder 5. 11 April, 1935. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

and the Jews of Western European origin. The "Arab riots, British treachery, and Hitler's 'final solution'" made any of the small ideological differences that remained irrelevant.¹³⁹

The rise to power of the Nazis in 1933 certainly galvanized American Jews into action. American Jews increased their financial support for Jews in Europe. Jacob Rader Marcus wrote that, "Hitler made more Zionists than Stephen S. Wise or Louis Brandeis."¹⁴⁰

Friedland was involved in the latter half of the 1930's in raising funds to give financial support to European Jews, helping them move to safety in Palestine. He was asked to direct the Cleveland Area chapter of the American Palestine Campaign of the Jewish Agency for Palestine. The agenda of the meeting to kick off this campaign was consideration of "plans for dealing with the problems of German Jewish refugees with a view to their resettlement in Palestine in substantial numbers under international Jewish auspices."¹⁴¹

Leaders of this campaign were asked in 1933 to convert theoretical, philosophical support for the cause into funds for the resettling efforts in Palestine of German refugees.¹⁴² The issue of supporting European refugees remained important throughout the 1930's. Because of his position on the executive committee of the Midwest region, Friedland was asked for assistance in recruiting volunteers, soliciting donations, and providing a forum for Palestine literature and educational films for the United Jewish

¹³⁹ Urofsky, p. 298.

¹⁴⁰ Marcus, pp. 752-3

¹⁴¹ Invitation to the National Emergency Conference, American Palestine Campaign of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, 4 December 1933, Box 1, Folder 3, ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁴² Ibid.

Appeal for Refugees' Overseas Needs.¹⁴³ Friedland made other contributions to Zionism in the mid-1930's.

As part of his duties on the ZOA's Committee on Youth Organization, Friedland was asked by Alexander Dushkin, a prominent educator, to investigate ways to coordinate various Zionist youth organizations and assess the possibility of consolidating these groups. This committee was also charged with inspiring unaffiliated youth to join Zionist organizations. As mentioned earlier, there was a desire to create an inspirational platform around which these youth could unite.¹⁴⁴

Friedland wrote to Dushkin, showing a mix of idealism and realism. He reported that combining organizations would be useful, particularly if they were folded into Masada, which was the ZOA's youth organization for young men 20-30 founded in 1933. Friedland believed that having a men's youth organization named Masada would complement the young women's organization, Junior Hadassah. Friedland predicted that the program of this newly enlarged Masada would be virtually identical to that of Junior Hadassah and could provide a place for all young men under the Zionist youth umbrella. If Masada became the official young men's organization, it could then embark on a national enrollment campaign with Junior Hadassah.¹⁴⁵

Friedland conceded that it might be difficult to combine some of the organizations and even expressed doubts that it was possible to create such a unified group. In spite of

¹⁴³ Friedland, A.H. Letter to S. Pereira Mendes, United Palestine Appeal, 6 March 1939, Box 2, Folder 4, ABRAHAM FRIEDLAND PAPERS, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁴⁴ Dushkin, Alexander. Letter to A.H. Friedland, 20 March 1933, Box 4, Folder 4, ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁴⁵ Friedland, A.H. Letter to Alexander Dushkin, 23 March 1933, Box 4, Folder 4, ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

these possible barriers. Friedland stated that he was up to the challenge and that, if the initiative was a success, the expanded Masada would be better able to face the challenges of the future. To inspire its members, he suggested getting prominent Jews such as Albert Einstein and Louis Brandeis to sign the proclamation expressing their support for the new alliance.¹⁴⁶ Despite these efforts, a unified youth organization under the moniker Masada never truly came together.

Friedland was also a contributor to Avukah, the American Student Zionist Organization. Avukah's mission was to educate American college students about Zionism. It operated a summer institute for this purpose. Avukah asked Friedland to help bolster the ranks of its Cleveland group and requested his assistance in educating members of the chapter about Zionism. They invited him to teach at their summer institute in 1935, in the midst of the Great Depression, and could only afford to pay his expenses.¹⁴⁷ This financial limitation reflected the pall of the Great Depression. Friedland was most heavily involved with the Western Reserve chapter of Avukah, which consistently invited him to address its annual conventions. Avukah saw Friedland as an important ally in strengthening the Zionist movement in America's efforts on behalf of European Jews.¹⁴⁸

In 1937, Masada, invited Friedland to speak in its lecture series, which took place in various cities along the eastern seaboard. Masada was looking for Friedland to deepen

¹⁴⁶Friedland, Abraham. Letter to Alexander Dushkin, 23 March 1933. Box 4, Folder 4, ABRAHAM FRIEDLAND PAPERS, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁴⁷ Avukah Correspondence, With Abraham H. Friedland, 5 August 1935, Box 7, Folder 1, ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. Correspondence of The Western Reserve Chapter, 28 December 1936.

the chapter members' understanding of Zionism. Its leaders believed that Friedland's presence could strengthen weak chapters.¹⁴⁹ On this and other issues, Friedland was seen as a regional leader who could help to guide Masada's steps. In his communication with Israel Berman, executive secretary of Masada, Friedland seemed to want to lecture on Jewish literature and cultural achievements in Palestine.¹⁵⁰ However, Berman appeared to have other topics in mind that were not to Friedland's liking. Friedland viewed these suggestions by Berman as "propaganda" talks meant to rally the troops to the cause of Zionism. Nevertheless, Friedland agreed to the tour, and Masada viewed his talks as successes.¹⁵¹

In 1938, Friedland was elected to the executive board of the Zionist Organization of America. This appointment was further evidence of his prominence as a leader in the American Zionist movement. Although occurring just one year before his death, this was in many respects the high point of his influence and involvement.¹⁵² He regularly attended meetings unless prevented by poor health. He took upon himself many speaking engagements on behalf of the ZOA and was involved in recruitment efforts.¹⁵³

When Friedland was appointed to the executive board, the ZOA was attempting to unify and organize Zionist organizations in the United States. The ZOA believed that

¹⁴⁹ Friedland, Abraham. Letter to Israel Berman, Masada, 27 October 1937. Box 2, Folder 2, ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 24 December 1937.

¹⁵¹ Berman, Israel. Letter to Abraham Friedland, 12 January 1938. Box 2, Folder 3, ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁵² Berman, Israel. Letter to A.H. Friedland, 14 July 1938. Box 2, Folder 3, ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁵³ Minutes of Meetings of the ZOA. Box 7, Folder 13, 1938, ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio. 1938

there needed to be coordination and consolidation in order to reduce waste of both manpower and funds. In the hopes of becoming more efficient, the ZOA also reorganized its committees.

Appropriately, Friedland was appointed chairman of the new Committee on Hebrew. This position allowed him "to tie up the Zionist Organization of America with Histadrut Ivrit," to garner more financial support for the latter, and to promote even more effectively the language that he loved. He believed that Hebrew was the bridge between Jews throughout the world. Friedland saw the work of Histadruth Ivrit on behalf of Hebrew culture as, "a link between the cultural forces at work in Palestine and Jewish life in this country."¹⁵⁴ Among the duties of the Committee on Hebrew were the selection of literary prize winners and preparation of a list of Hebrew terms indispensable to every Zionist, which was published in the ZOA's magazine *The New Palestine*. A central aim of the committee was to get Histadruth Ivrit included in the budgets of welfare funds across the country.¹⁵⁵

More people were joining Zionist causes: between 1938 and 1939, the membership of the ZOA nearly doubled. As the need for support of a Jewish homeland grew, Friedland proved to be a key leader in all of these efforts. The ZOA wanted to increase its political power and planned to move its operations from New York City to Washington, DC. This political bureau was to be supported by all recognized Zionist organizations in proportion to their numbers.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Friedland, A.H. Letter to Welfare Fund Committee of Histadruth Ivrit. 8 June 1936. Box 7, Folder 2. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Minutes of ZOA Executive Committee Meeting. 8 February 1939. Box 7, Folder 14. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

In an effort to be closer to the levers of political power in the country and thereby have greater political influence, some members of the ZOA leadership wanted to relocate the ZOA to Washington D.C. There was increased urgency to take action against Nazism in Europe and because the British were reconsidering their position on Palestine. The Balfour Declaration had expressed England's support, effective in 1917, for a Jewish national homeland within Palestine. The British government changed the position it had established by revoking the Balfour Declaration and restricting immigration to Palestine in 1939.

Friedland was involved in conversations about strategic planning. He expressed reservations and suggested that "the organizational work and the political work be moved to Washington: the coordinated propaganda and education, and the *shlimmung*-creating forces must remain in New York City."¹⁵⁷ In February 1939 the ZOA decided to establish a political bureau in Washington, D.C. to influence political change. The headquarters of the ZOA remained in New York.¹⁵⁸

In 1939, Friedland also served on the national committee representing American Jewry at the World's Fair of 1939. The goal of this committee was to design and build the Palestinian Pavilion, an exhibit that would "reflect the essential spirit and the extensive achievements of the Jewish people in rebuilding the Jewish national home."¹⁵⁹ Friedland

¹⁵⁷ Minutes of ZOA Executive Committee Meeting, 21 December 1938, Box 7, Folder 13, ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁵⁸ Minutes of ZOA Executive Committee Meeting, 8 February 1939, Box 7, Folder 14, ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁵⁹ Letter from The Palestine Exhibit Committee for the New York World's Fair to A.H. Friedland, 14 February 1938, Box 2, Folder 3, ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

attended the meetings, but was unable to attend the World's Fair due to health problems.¹⁶⁰

Abraham H. Friedland continued to be involved in the work of Zionism until his death in 1939. One can see by the number of organizations in which he was involved, and the admiration they had for him as an educator and as a friend, that Friedland had a profound impact on American Zionism. He believed it necessary to inculcate a love of the Hebrew language in all Jews as a way to strengthen peoplehood, but he also willingly toiled at the more practical administrative details of organizational life. Friedland's tireless work on behalf of Zionist organizations reflected his belief in the need to build the Jewish homeland in Palestine, as well as his faith that Hebrew could increase the spiritual health of the Jewish people and build a universal Jewish community.

¹⁶⁰ Friedland, A.H. Letter to Israel Berman. 17 July 1939. Box 2, Folder 4. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Chapter 3: Sippurim Yafim

One of Abraham Friedland's most important accomplishments was his series of modern Hebrew children's stories called *Sippurim Yafim*, written between 1931 and 1937. In those years he wrote nearly one hundred stories. These stories were not Zionist in orientation. Rather, they reflected the American social realities of Friedland's world and were designed to attract students' interest and engagement. He believed pupils would best learn Hebrew through his stories, and that knowledge of the language would then promote identification with *Klal Yisrael*, a shared sense of Jewish peoplehood.

Friedland used the Hebrew language to explore and express the American Jewish experience. Friedland's Hebrew stories are representative of Robert Alter's characterization of Modern Hebrew prose as being, "an attempt to bridge-or to measure-the gap between the old and the new, between the world of Jewish tradition and the realm of upheaval and confusion that the modern era so often seems to be."¹⁶¹

Friedland initially published his stories with a small printing machine at a Cleveland school and later used a mimeograph machine. There were numerous reprints during the 1930's, and the Cleveland Bureau reprinted a number of the stories in color in 1959. He engraved the stencils and did all of the proofreading and editing himself. In addition, he was involved in the promotion and marketing of his stories. They were compiled into booklets and then into volumes which were later reprinted. The majority were published between 1932 and 1940 by the Cleveland Bureau of Jewish Education. His stories were widely circulated and purchased by many bureaus of Jewish education for use in Hebrew schools throughout the United States. The Bureau of Jewish Education

¹⁶¹ Alter, Robert, *Modern Hebrew Literature*. West Orange, New Jersey: Behrman House, Inc., 1975, p. 11

in New York was one of the biggest buyers of the booklets. In the fall of 1933, the Bureau bought 150 copies per week for a period of four or five months.¹⁶² Books were purchased in Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and Chicago, but also in smaller towns and cities such as Rochester, New York.¹⁶³

Friedland had come up with a way to make learning Hebrew an enjoyable experience. He conceived of his stories being used in Hebrew schools, but also encouraged their use as part of Sunday school programs. Sunday schools were less likely to use *Sippurim Yafim* as their curricula were focused on liturgy and bible.

The stories in *Sippurim Yafim* were “intentionally built on a limited vocabulary.” Emanuel Gamoran, a leading figure in Jewish education who collaborated with Friedland on a number of educational projects and was a personal friend, praised many of the stories for being, “filled with the joy of life. Many of them are written in the spirit of play, at times even, in a spirit of childlike naughtiness, which the young readers enjoy.”¹⁶⁴ Gamoran went on to describe these stories as dealing with American Jewish life, and characteristic of Friedland in that “he was full of the love of life and the joy of life.”¹⁶⁵ Friedland wanted the stories to serve various pedagogical, inspirational, and ideological purposes. As teaching tools, they were consistent with his overriding goal of inculcating a love of Hebrew in young American Jews. Friedland also wanted the stories to speak to the condition of the families of the young people who would read them. The tales provided descriptions of and insight into the Eastern European immigrant

¹⁶² Friedland, A.H. Letter to Mr. B. Rosen, Associated Talmud Torahs. 10 October, 1933. Box 2, Folder 5. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁶³ Rochester Hebrew School, Letter to A.H. Friedland. 4 March 1934. Box 1 Folder 4. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁶⁴ Gamoran, p. 149.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 150.

experience in the early decades of the twentieth century in the United States, and while many did reflect the playful side of Friedland, some reflected the serious challenges of the era, with a number ending in tragedy. Each booklet of *Sippurim Yafim* contained a separate story of 10-15 pages, and included one picture on each page, printed in black and white.

A.H. Friedland showed the interrelationships between traditional ways of life, modernity and Americanism. The acculturation of American Jews had a lot to do with the incorporation of technology into their daily living, and Friedland emphasized this process in his stories. One can infer that he saw technology as something that would continue to be a part of the lives of American Jews, and that their ability to incorporate modern American tools would be a measure of this group's success. Moreover, technological wonders such as the airplane would be exciting to a child.

While Friedland's stories reflect his dedication to Hebrew in America, they do not deal with Zionism. Friedland viewed the Hebrew language and its literature as integral components of Zionism and Jewish culture. The omission of the topic of Zionism from his stories is somewhat surprising, in light of Friedland's commitment to developing Zionism and Zionist leadership among young American Jews. It is possible that Friedland believed that infusing the stories with Zionism would cause some communities to reject them for ideological reasons. He might have hoped that these communities would embrace his stories as a means to achieving their goal of adequacy in liturgical Hebrew, and in doing so serve his mission of reaching his goal of a Hebrew renaissance in America.¹⁶⁶ That American Jews be educated in Hebrew and have access

¹⁶⁶ Blumenfeld, Samuel. Letter to A.H. Friedland. 6 February 1939. Box 4, Folder 7. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

to Hebrew literature was his foremost desire. Moreover, Friedland believed that knowledge of Hebrew, "initiate children into our literature at a very early stage of their Hebrew careers," and thus would connect students to the Jewish people and facilitate later Zionist involvement.¹⁶⁷

Pedagogical Aspects of Friedland's Stories

A.H. Friedland's stories incorporated four pedagogical principles, according to their author. The first was that the stories "were taken from child life and have a stirring appeal to the imagination of the child. A story once started, the child would be impelled to proceed to its close." The second caveat was that "the copious illustrations go to liven up the Hebrew page before the child's eye. The style is extremely simple and has a spritely rhythm, enabling the child to move rapidly from line to line and from page to page." Thirdly, "the frequent translations placed immediately after the Hebrew words and phrases make it possible for those who are practically beginners in the language to enjoy the stories and in addition to enrich their Hebrew vocabulary with hardly any conscious effort." Finally, the numerous repetitions of the essential words and phrases which the stories afford make for almost automatic retention."¹⁶⁸

Language

Friedland included a minimal amount of phonemics in his stories, as his was principally a sight word approach to teaching reading. Rather than rely on the study of the sound system of Hebrew and an analysis and classification of its phonemes, he gave his

¹⁶⁷ Friedland, A.H. Letter to M. Margolis. 16 March 1932. Box 1, Folder 2.
ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁶⁸ Friedland, A.H. Letter to M. Margolis. 16 March 1932. Box 1, Folder 2.
ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

readers opportunities simply to enjoy the sounds of that language in rhyme. One example is his story, "Nudi Galmudi."¹⁶⁹ In this story, Friedland wrote, ("hakh, hakh, delet patah"), הַךְ הַךְ דִּלֵּת פָּתַח, which means "hakh hakh, door open." He had the mystery man in the castle answer Nudi, ("Bim bam mi sham?") בִּם בָּם מִי שָׁם which means "Bim Bam, who's there? After Nudi enters the castle, he meets Neilat Glilat, the princess who happens to have rhyming names. A comparison of Friedland's pedagogical methods and those in some secular primers in the English language appears later.

Occasional use of Biblical Hebrew lends variety to the syntax of *Sippurim Yafim*. In the brief story, "And You Shall Love Your Neighbor,"¹⁷⁰ the vocabulary reinforces the Jewish value of loving one's neighbor. The use of biblical language refers to the kind acts of a little boy for the neighborhood dogs. This usage gives religious meaning to a simple story in a contemporary setting. At times, Friedland reversed noun-verb word order, perhaps reflecting the fact that Modern Hebrew was still developing at that time.

Another aspect of grammar that Friedland purposely varied for teaching purposes is verb tense. In "Nightingales,"¹⁷¹ a story about a young boy musician and some singing nightingales, one sees that Friedland used different verb forms. For example, he refers to the same verb in its feminine and masculine genders and in its singular and plural forms:

¹⁶⁹Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim: Nudi Galmudi*. Cleveland: Cleveland Bureau of Education.

¹⁷⁰ Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim: And You Shall Love Your Neighbor, Vol.* Cleveland: the Cleveland Bureau of Education, 193.

¹⁷¹ Friedman, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim, Book 2. Nightingales*. Cleveland: Cleveland Bureau of Education, 1959, pp. 5-16.

אחרי כן חזרו אל העיר. אמו חזרה אל העיר.
אחותו חזרה אל העיר ודוד חזר אל העיר.

Verb tense may play an important role both as a grammar teaching tool and as a signifier of meaning. The future tense is used in the story "Haboker Or,"¹⁷² a story that reflects the hardships of the Great Depression, perhaps to show that that period of economic ruin would at some point come to an end. The stories present similar sentences in varied cases, including declarative, interrogative, and imperative.

Friedland's stories also teach vocabulary. Also in "Nightingales," we see categorization of new words. One category is that of the house, and includes the Hebrew words for "house," "roof," "window," and "windowsill." In the story, "In the Streets of Boston,"¹⁷³ we see words that refer to places in a city, such as "house," "store," "road," and "address." Other stories include weather terms and furniture names. Friedland used frequent repetition of words and phrases in order to give students an opportunity to practice. In "Alice Reads a Book,"¹⁷⁴ the word "book" is repeated numerous times in a variety of prepositional phrases. "The Talking Ball"¹⁷⁵ describes a ball moving "to the wall," "to the ceiling," etc. Other important groups of words are pronouns, questions words, and words describing emotions. Friedland sought to give students a meaningful context as possible for learning Hebrew vocabulary.

Friedland designated certain words for students to learn at particular levels. Friedland inserted English translations of specific words into the body of the text, words

¹⁷² Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim: The Morning Dawned*, Vol.59, Cleveland: Cleland Bureau of Education, 1932.

¹⁷³ Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim: In the Streets of Boston, Book I*, Cleveland: Cleveland Bureau of Education, 1958, pp. 41-48.

¹⁷⁴ Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim, Book I: Alice Reads a Book*, Cleveland: the Cleveland Bureau of Education, 1958, pp. 5-16.

¹⁷⁵ Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim, Book I: The Talking Ball*, Vol. Cleveland: Cleveland Bureau of Education, 1958, pp. 17-30.

that he may not have expected students either to know or to learn at that point. Some criticized his choice of including English insertions in the text on the grounds that it was not following conventional practices and would prove distracting. However, Friedland's brother Isidore, also an educator, defended this choice: "Some can't reconcile themselves to the adjacent English. They'd rather have it as foot notes. I assured them that while it might be a concession to the purists it would make the booklets quite useless."¹⁷⁶ It appears that both Abraham and Isidore believed that having the English within the text would better aid the student.

Friedland transliterated some English words rather than using the Hebrew word or finding some way of using the closest Hebrew equivalent. In the story, "Merry Go Round,"¹⁷⁷ he referred to "sentim" when designating "cents", adding the Hebrew plural. This is in contrast to Eliezar Ben Yehuda, the strong advocate of Modern Hebrew, who like Friedland, was an advocate of Ivrit b'Ivrit education. Friedland appeared to have been more comfortable than Ben Yehuda with transliterating American words into Hebrew. Unlike Ben Yehuda, Friedland did not create new Hebrew words. Ben Yehuda was creating a spoken language for a country. Friedland never imagined that Hebrew would become an everyday spoken language of Jews in the United States.

Friedland appears to have organized his stories in several types of formats. These chiefly included problem and solution, as in "The Morning Dawned," and vivid

¹⁷⁶ Friedland, Isidore. Letter to A.H. Friedland. 14 March 1932. Box 1, Folder 2. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁷⁷ Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim: The Merry-Go-Round*. Vol. 96-98. Cleveland: Cleveland Bureau of Jewish Education. 1940.

description, as in "The Fireflies."¹⁷⁸ The link to children's lives is very strong. Fantasy was also included, as in "The Merry-Go-Round."

Friedland felt that for Hebrew education to be successful there needed to be an interesting corpus of literature. "He felt that his greatest enemy was the boring material of the old ways of education."¹⁷⁹ Friedland's stories engaged his students' imaginations as they learned the new language. Friedland wrote to Rebecca Goldstein of New York, describing the content of his stories as being as relevant to children as to take hold of their imaginations and keep them involved. "This accounts for the unprecedented success with which these booklets have met."¹⁸⁰

Entertainment and Fantasy

"Nudi Galmudi" is a story that seems to be purely fun. It contains descriptions that allow children to visualize the events. It also teaches numbers. Nudi's adventures involve a long period of aimless wandering followed by a quest for a desired goal. There are parallels with other fairy tales such as "Sleeping Beauty" that share the theme of waking up a princess in order to live happily ever after in romance and wealth.

Nudi Galmudi is a strange recluse who, like the American folk hero Johnny Appleseed, loves to walk. He wanders through many cities and numerous lands, and after three years enters a territory shrouded in darkness. It is without a sun, moon, and stars. This story takes us back to a time before "the creation." Nudi eventually reaches a palace that is atop the highest of seven mountains. The palace has seven windows and one door.

¹⁷⁸ Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim: The Fireflies*, Vol. Cleveland: the Cleveland Bureau of Education, 193.

¹⁷⁹ Feinstein, Moses. "The Educator." In *Sefer Zikaron for A.H. Friedland*. New York: Histadruth Ivrit of America, 1940, p. 43.

¹⁸⁰ Friedland, A.H. Letter to Rebecca Goldstein, 15 March 1932. Box 1, Folder 2. ABRAHAM H. FRIEDLAND PAPERS. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Inside there are seven chains with seven candelabras and seven lit candles. He wishes to enter the palace but is told that he must first rescue a princess.

Nudi leaves and sees a firefly, the only light he has seen in the dark land. He asks the firefly to help him find the princess, who is asleep somewhere in the forest. The firefly asks him to wait but promises him he will return and lead him to the princess. This large and rare firefly returns and they proceed to the princess with more fireflies joining them. As Nudi seeks his goal, more light comes from even more fireflies. The farther he journeys, the more help and enlightenment he receives. When he finally finds the princess, she is sitting under a tree directly beneath a nightingale. Nudi Galmudi has found his princess, and they live together happily ever after.

Another story that fits into the fantasy genre, "The Merry Go Round,"¹⁸¹ tells about a boy who rides a magical merry go round. The lion on which he is riding comes to life and proceeds to take him on a magical adventure through fields and forests. Eventually, he gets picked up by an eagle and is carried off into the sky. He is saved by a pilot in an airplane.

American Experience

A number of Friedland's stories reflect the American experience with which many of his readers would identify. In the story "From Portugal to Holland 1493,"¹⁸² one sees a historical tale that is a reflection of the American immigrant experience. In this story, a group of Jews has paid for safe passage from Portugal to Holland after the expulsion. This history parallels the experience of the Puritans. Before coming to

¹⁸¹ Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim: The Wedding Gifts*, Vol. 60, Cleveland: the Cleveland Bureau of Education, 1932.

¹⁸² Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim: From Portugal to Holland*, Vol. 62, Cleveland: the Cleveland Bureau of Education, 1932.

America, the Puritans first sought refuge in Holland. Due to lack of homes and jobs, they briefly returned to England before sailing to the New World on the Mayflower and settling in Massachusetts. American Jews could see similarities between the experience of their Jewish ancestors in the story and that of some of the first immigrants to America. Since no explicit connection to the Puritans is made, it is possible that he was using the story in part to teach about a period in Jewish history.

Another lesson emerges from the story. In the middle of their journey of redemption from oppression, an officer of the ship attempts to extort additional money from the escapees in return for continued safety. He threatens to throw their children overboard if they do not pay him one thousand *cruzadot*, Portuguese coins. The Jews do not know what to do and turn to the Rabbi. He assures them that God will protect the community. Friedland puts a verse from Psalms into the mouth the rabbi: "The god of Israel will not slumber or sleep." Miraculously, the captain, a non-Jew, emerges from a disguise and saves the Jews. In this story, we see a non-Jew playing a redemptive role. The captain is like Elijah. The redemptive image of the non-Jewish captain provides the reader with a more complex and varied image of gentiles. Just like Jews, some are good and some are bad. The story reflects Friedland's internalization of American values such as tolerance for diversity.

"The Policeman"¹⁸³ tells the story of a little girl Rachel. Every day on her way to school a policeman stops traffic so she can cross the street safely. One night while she and her whole family are asleep a fire breaks out. The policeman runs to the house and

¹⁸³Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim, Book III, The Policeman*, Cleveland: the Cleveland Bureau of Education, 1962, pp. 37-47.

saves Rachel and the rest of the family. Trusting authority figures is another new phenomenon that manifested itself in the American context.

Policeman and other figures of authority playing an important and positive role is an element that also appears in the two-part story, "Coney Island."¹⁸⁴ In the story, young Joseph travels to the amusement park with his sister and her two friends after his mother insists that the older girls take him so they can all escape the heat of their apartments. The girls give him 25 cents and tell him to go and explore on his own.

Older children taking care of a younger one would have been common in a household where the parents were busy. As such, they would have been given some measure of authority which would allow them to make decisions for the younger boy that he would accept. The girls' refusal to follow the mother's instructions and watch over Joseph foreshadows the problem that will arise for the protagonist and pique the curiosity of the students.

Joseph finds himself in a hall of mirrors, allowing him to see the twisted images of himself and perhaps feel pangs of conscience for separating himself from the older girls against his mother's wishes. A security guard helps Joseph escape the hall of mirrors. The experience of being a newcomer in a strange place is mirrored literally and figuratively in this story.

The theme of freedom also emerges from this story. The girls' decision to send the boy off with a quarter represents some of the rebellion of the second generation American Jewish youth against the hovering protectiveness of their immigrant parents.

¹⁸⁴ Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim: Coney Island*. Vol.84 & 87. Cleveland: the Cleveland Bureau of Education, 1939.

Put another way, in America, parents felt safe sending their children off on their own, and children embraced this freedom in their actions and in their social relationships.

Coney Island itself was more than just an amusement park. The doors to Coney Island were thrown open to the masses in the 1890's with the advent of lower railroad fares and electric trolleys which provided a ride to Coney Island for a nickel. Coney Island represented the greatest of the amusement parks that were built in this period. It provided a low cost alternative to a summer vacation and a respite from the heat of the tenements. It was like a "summer resort for the multitude...It provided a new way for people to participate in mainstream American culture on an equal footing....A world apart from ordinary life, prevailing social structures and positions."¹⁸⁵ As Friedland wrote in the story, "Coney Island called to all people," thereby giving the essence of Coney Island. It was a realm of possibility and fantasy where everyday concerns could be forgotten at least temporarily. Coney Island also became a place for single young men and women to meet each other outside the context of the Lower East Side and away from the watchful eyes of their parents and community.

Coney Island was the largest and most famous of a number of amusement parks, including Cleveland's Euclid Beach, Boston's Paragon Park, and Chicago's Cheltenham Beach.¹⁸⁶ It was likely that readers of Friedland's stories would be familiar with the images of such parks. Coney Island represented an institution that developed rapidly at the turn of the century due to societal changes and the need for recreation for all. It would have been for Friedland and other youth on the Lower East Side a new kind of amusement unlike any to be found in Eastern Europe. In the 1959 reprints published by

¹⁸⁵ *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century*, American Century Series, New York: Hill & Want, 1978, pp. 39-40.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

the Cleveland Bureau of Jewish Education, the story "Coney Island" does not appear. With the decline of Coney Island in the 1950's and 1960's, this could reflect an attempt on the part of the publishers to include stories that had more relevance Jews in the postwar suburban Jewish world.

General Modernity/Technology

Jewish community & traditional ways/old vs. new

The story, "Dr. Siegel"¹⁸⁷ tells how Dr. Siegel conquers a disease. Friedland emphasized the prestige of being a doctor. We perceive the doctor being able to triumph over an illness that had previously been a plague. The condition that the doctor treated in the story was Anthrax. Anthrax was much more prevalent in the more rural communities of the old world than in the urban Jewish milieu of America, however first generation immigrants might remember the fear of such a disease. "Anthrax is as old as pastoralism and the origins of civilization. It might be the Sixth Plague, the sooty "morain" (sic) in the Book of Exodus that kills livestock and affects people with black spots."¹⁸⁸

The doctor travels in a horse-drawn carriage through a lightning storm to the wife, whom he believes he can cure of the disease, which he has identified as Siberian Plague or anthrax. He acknowledges the danger of being struck by lightning and soon perceives another danger, an army of murderous thieves hiding in the forest through which they are traveling. Sure enough, the bandits accost him and threaten his life. The reader contemplates a host of dangers that would have plagued people in the "old country:" sickness, lack of shelter, and an absence of rule of law. Just as the murderer is about to

¹⁸⁷ Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim: Dr. Siegel*. Vol Cleveland: Cleveland Bureau of Education, 193.

¹⁸⁸ Guillemin, Jeanne. "Anthrax- The Investigation of a Deadly Outbreak." University of California Press. (1999) Regents of the University of California. <http://ucpress.edu/books/pages/8835/8835.ch01.html>.

kill the doctor, the doctor notices a black spot on the murderer's throat, the same symptom as the farmer's wife. He treats him and is thus allowed to continue on his way.

Dr. Siegel represents the image of the trusted doctor. Doctors in America could generally be relied upon, and in the story, we see this reliability taken to the extreme. The doctor ventures out to save the farmer's wife while a ferocious storm is raging. He is then accosted by murderous thieves but outwits them in order to carry on his mission as well as save his own life. After all this, he continues on to tend to a patient in need. This image of a heroic and trusted doctor could be used to convince a child that going to the doctor was not the most horrible of experiences.

Friedland was sometimes nostalgic about the past but still infused stories with modern elements. "The Rabbi Arrives"¹⁸⁹ does just this. In the story, a rabbi reaches a small Eastern European town likely very similar to the one in which Friedland grew up for the first part of his childhood. The rabbi wants everyone to dance, but people are sad because if they do not pay a 20,000 piece gold tax to the local gentile rulers of the town, they will be evicted from their homes. They dance and listen to the teachings of the rabbi in order to forget the evil decree during Shabbat, but after havdallah, their concerns begin again. When the local municipal ruler comes, they are truly afraid. The rabbi is able to explain to the mayor that the tax is not fair in a way that touches his heart, and the tax is reduced. The story ends with Jews and gentiles dancing together in celebration.

In this story, one really sees an intersection between the old and new. The story is set in a small Eastern European village; however, an American way of resolving the conflict is presented. The positive outcome of the story illustrates the American

¹⁸⁹ Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim: The Rabbi Arrives*. Vol. 99. Cleveland: Cleveland Bureau of Education, 1940.

phenomena of political or social change through peaceful advocacy and protest. At the same time, the story preserves the value of respect for rabbis and nostalgia for a shared religious experience. It is curious that Friedland includes stories about the Old Country and not about the Yishuv. Both would have been far removed from the experiences of the immigrant child. It is possible that Friedland did not want to insert Zionism as it was more politically contentious.

Another way in which old and new intersect in Friedland's stories is his use of technology. Technology is an element that can be found in many of the stories. "The Last Honor"¹⁹⁰ tells the story of a horse named Barkay, who sees himself being supplanted by a Studebaker. In the 1930s, the Studebaker was an automobile that epitomized high class personal transportation. The ability of an immigrant family to purchase such a car was a sign of economic success.

Friedland also invokes technology in his story, "The Phonograph Wouldn't Sing."¹⁹¹ In this story, a teacher is using a phonograph, a relatively new invention in her teaching. The teacher calls the janitor to fix the machine and gives the students a creative assignment to finish the story. It is possible to view this action as reinforcing the gender roles of the 1930's in which men were viewed as having more mechanical skills relative to machinery.

The problem-solving aspect of technology is also seen in the trilogy, "Merry Go Round." In the final episode, an eagle snatches a boy from a tree, and then flies around with him. A man in an airplane finally saves the boy, freeing him from the talons of the

¹⁹⁰ Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim: The Last Honor*. Vol. 57. Cleveland: Cleveland Bureau of Education, 1932.

¹⁹¹ Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim: The Phonograph Wouldn't Sing*. Vol. 56. Cleveland: the Cleveland Bureau of Education, p. 1932.

eagle and returning him to his parents, thus illustrating the dominance of technology over nature. We see a plane as the vehicle for redemption in the story, "The Little Star of Hollywood." The students of a Talmud school that is slated to close due to financial hardship appeal to a Jewish Hollywood star. He agrees to help them and flies in an airplane to save the day. Air travel allows him to arrive in time to perform in the charity benefit that permits the reopening of the school. Other stories feature trains, trolley cars, Ferris wheels and other technological advancements of the period.

The onset of modernity brought advancements in other areas. "Wedding Gifts" is a story that deals with the incorporation of bourgeois attitudes and materialism into the Jewish mindset. In this tale, a couple collects all of their wedding gifts in one room. The boxes containing the gifts all begin ringing, and the couple discovers that they have received ten different clocks. The couple decides to exchange all but one of the clocks.

The poverty of the shtetl and the times of scarcity are gone for Jews in America. Instead, many Jews encounter the welcome "problem" of surplus. This ability to return items was an innovation in itself. In the Old World the couple might have felt obligated to keep the presents on display, but in the new setting, both the giver and the recipient knew that an unsatisfactory gift could be exchanged for something of equal value. Historian Andrew Heinze writes about this phenomenon in his volume *Adapting to Abundance*. "If there is any single factor of consumption that unifies Americans, it is the emphasis on consumption itself, the belief that individuals should expect an increasingly rich choice of products."¹⁹²

¹⁹² Heinze, Andrew. *Adapting to Abundance: Jewish Immigrants, Mass Consumption, and the Search for American Identity*. Irvington, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1992, p. 2.

Clocks in the old world were often family heirlooms and highly valued. What was once valuable and scarce in the old world is now easily available in their new environment, so much so that ten people decide to bring a clock as a gift. In addition, one might see a wisp of nostalgia for the old country, where the concept of time was not as rigidly marked. America represented great economic opportunity, but everyone had to synchronize their lives with the clock. One no longer rose at sunrise to milk the cow, but instead rose to the chime of the clock telling them it was time to report to the factory, shop, or office. In some ways, the rigidity of time made the new world a more impersonal place. Friedland, a Shakespeare aficionado, might have felt that, in some ways, the new American life was akin to, "a woman that is like a German clock,"¹⁹³ devoid of passion, but precise and proper.

Acculturation

For the Jewish family of the 1920's and 1930's, it was extremely important to acculturate, and some of Friedland's stories dealt with acculturation. Using the same paradigm, Friedland tried to make his Hebrew stories similar to ones that students would see in public school primers and other collections. The story "Spinach"¹⁹⁴ shows a boy who cannot be converted to eating this hated vegetable. Spinach as a commonly despised food had become a target of the popular comic hero, Popeye. The battle between parent and child over eating vegetables was also a battle in the kitchens of new Americans. The cartoonist Elzie Crisler Segar improved the image of spinach in 1933 when his Popeye

¹⁹³ Shakespeare, William, *Love's Labour's Lost*, 1598, Act. III, Scene 1, 191-196.

¹⁹⁴ Friedland, A.H., *Sippurim Yafim- Book III: The Boy Who Didn't Like Spinach*. Cleveland: Cleveland Bureau of Jewish Education, 1962. pp. 25-36.

cartoons featured the helpful sailor pulling out a can of spinach and eagerly consuming it in order to instantly multiply his strength.¹⁹⁵

By the 1930's, the nutritional benefits of vegetables were recognized, in part because of the discovery of the importance of vitamins to the diet. In addition, the availability of home refrigerators, refrigerated modes of transportation, and canned fruits and vegetables, were all factors in decreasing the amount of starch in the diet of Americans and increasing the shift towards processed foods. These new advancements also helped shorten the amount of time needed to shop for and prepare food. Children in the 1930's had a plethora of well-advertised options that were preferred over vegetables. Manufactured foods introduced in the 1920s include - Baby Ruth Candy Bar (1920). Wonder Bread (1920). Yoo-Hoo Chocolate Drink (1923). Reese's Peanut Butter Cup (1923). Welch's Grape Jelly (1923). Popsicles (1924). Wheaties (1924). Hostess Cakes (1927). Kool-Aid (1927). Peter Pan Peanut Butter (1928). Velveeta Cheese (1928).¹⁹⁶ In this milieu, one could understand why spinach and other such vegetables would lose some of their grandeur amongst the younger population.

Another story allows American Jews to recognize elements of culture that go along with their "American" outlook. "The Little Star of Hollywood"¹⁹⁷ is set in a city that exemplifies a specific facet of American life, Los Angeles. The 1930's was a time of great growth for movies because the technical innovation of sound, and the demand for cheap entertainment that was needed as diversion during the Great Depression. In addition, Jewish involvement in the movie industry continued to thrive during this time.

¹⁹⁵ Grandinetti, Fred M. *Popeye: An Illustrated Cultural History*. 2nd ed. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004, p.5.

¹⁹⁶ "1920's Food" *Bon Appetit Magazine*, 26 January 2008. www.1920-30.com/food.

¹⁹⁷ Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim: The Little Star of Hollywood*. Vols. 70-74. Cleveland: Cleveland Bureau of Jewish Education.

The story could also have served as inspiration for the reader. It provides an example of a young boy who has achieved the American dream and rose to become an American icon. There is discussion between the children in the story about the true identity of the child star to make the point that the child star and his handlers were not emphasizing his Jewishness. Considering the time, this strategy was a prudent one. The 1930's was a time of heightened anti-Semitism.

It would appear that the child star is modeled on Jackie Cooper, a child actor of the 1920's and 1930's who starred in the very popular series of comedies for children, *Our Gang*.¹⁹⁸ The character in Friedland's story ends up embracing his community and helping them at great expense and much personal effort. The situation is surreal: a prominent movie star helping out a small Talmud Torah. The enormity of the movie star as opposed to the obscurity of the school makes the situation amazing and entertaining.

"Gedalia the Sexton"¹⁹⁹ deals with some of the worst aspects of acculturation. In the story, an Eastern European immigrant, Gedalia, goes around collecting annual fees for the synagogue. Harsh economic times have struck and Gedalia must go from person to person to collect dues. He comes to the office of Dr. Strauss, a thoroughly assimilated Jew and a well-known doctor in town. The choice of a recognizably German name makes the character immediately recognizable as an acculturated Jew and directly contrasts him with Gedalia.

Gedalia is treated rudely by the doctor's secretary and the doctor clearly dislikes listening to this patient because he cannot speak English. The image of the old man who

¹⁹⁸ Cooper, Jackie. *Please Don't Shoot My Dog: The Autobiography of Jackie Cooper*. New York: William Morrow & Co., 1981, p. 22.

¹⁹⁹ Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim: Gedaliah the Sexton*. Vol. 61. Cleveland: Cleveland Bureau of Jewish Education, 1932.

must disrobe before the doctor will even listen to him emphasizes the split between old and new. The undressing of Gedalia is significant in that a pious man literally wears his piety. His clothing identifies him as a Jew. Dr. Strauss forcing Gedalia to remove his garments before even giving him any attention or thought reflects a lack of respect, perhaps mirroring the way in which assimilated German Jews viewed the newer immigrants.

Dr. Strauss has made it as a cut-throat businessman as well as doctor. His exorbitant fee scale and his curt treatment of Gedalia exemplify the “time is money” philosophy of American business, and reveals a Jew who has incorporated the American business value of expediency and efficiency over the Jewish values of *tzedakah* (justice, righteousness) and *kavod* (respect, honor).

Animals

A recurring motif in Friedland’s stories is animals. The best examples in *Sippurim Yafim* are the stories involving Zifi the monkey.²⁰⁰ While lacking ideological import, these stories reveal Friedland’s desire to create entertaining tales, much in the vein of Curious George. This could have been the author’s attempt to create a “brand name” character. Friedland had created a character that is reminiscent although pre-dates one of the most famous characters of children’s literature of all time.

An interesting element in the story “Zifi at the Theater.” is the use of the name Dr. Doolittle. In this story, the children take Zifi the monkey to see a fictitious movie titled, *Dr. Doolittle and his Monkeys*. Hugh Lofting had recently released the first series of Dr.

²⁰⁰ Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim: Zifi the Monkey*. Vols. 64-69. Cleveland: Cleveland Bureau of Jewish Education. 1932-33.

Dolittle in the 1920's²⁰¹ and Friedland must have considered the doctor an easily recognizable character.

A number of Friedland's other stories also include animals and children. These include "A Story about Two Goats"²⁰² and "The Golden Chain". In the former, two children want to have their picture taken with two goats, and the goats eat their clothes. In the latter, a boy who loves animals meets a beautiful black dog. Not knowing the value of the jewelry, he gives the dog his mother's gold necklace. In the story, "And You Shall Love Your Neighbor,"²⁰³ there is a child, Shlomo, and some neighborhood dogs. It is important to note that Friedland incorporates animals in his stories in much the same way as many English-language stories.

Proto-Civil Rights

In the midst of stories about Ferris wheels, Coney Island, and a monkey named Zifi, Friedland places the profound two-part story entitled "Tooney."²⁰⁴ After a neighborhood dog is stolen in Chattanooga, Tennessee, a group of white high school students accuse a black student, Tooney, of stealing the dog.

The narrator says that, "בדרום. כאשר נגנב דבר מיד חושדים בפושעים" ("In the South, when a thing is stolen, they suspect the Negroes.") The gang of youth gives Tooney three days to return the dog, 'Blanca', or they will lynch him. Tooney goes into hiding. After three days the white students hatch their plot. A Jewish student from

²⁰¹ "Dr. Dolittle." A Dr. Dolittle Website - <http://members.tripod.com/~Puddleby/>

²⁰² Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim: A Story about Two Goats*. Vols. 70 & 71. Cleveland: Cleveland Bureau of Jewish Education. 1933.

²⁰³ Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim: And You Shall Love Your Neighbor*. Cleveland: Cleveland Bureau of Jewish Education.

²⁰⁴ Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim: Tooney*. Vols. 82 & 83. Cleveland: Cleveland Bureau of Jewish Education. 193.

the same school sets out to save Tooney and does so by giving him fifty dollars for travel to New York City. The story ends with Tooney moving to New York to escape harm from the white teens. New York City is pictured as a place where black Americans could be relatively safe at a time when they risked lynching in Southern cities.

The story "Tooney" seems to reflect the tension that Jews felt in the first decades of the twentieth century, during which time the Jews who had emigrated from Eastern Europe found themselves racially identified by other Americans and struggled to assimilate themselves into the white majority. They shared skin color with most Americans, but they were nevertheless identified racially in some of the same way as blacks. However, because they were white in skin color Jews did have the opportunity to join the white majority. The tension between being accepted by the wider society and the discrimination of blacks must have been a source of great discomfort.

One arena in which this tension was played out was the form of vaudeville entertainment called minstrelsy. The Jewish entertainers who donned black face were able to express shared themes such as slavery and oppression, while at the same time asserting their membership in the empowered white majority. Jews could pretend to be blacks while blacks could not pretend to be as Jews, and no other whites would want to pretend to be black. Jews occupied a middle ground in which they were both empathetic to the plight of blacks, but also were representatives of the white majority. In this arena, Jews created a space in which African-Americans were depicted.²⁰⁵

Tooney was a diligent student, extremely well read and carrying one or more books in all of the pictures, and he had dreams. However, because he lived in

²⁰⁵ Alexander, Michael *Jazz Age Jews*. Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001. p. 136.

Chattanooga, those dreams could never become a reality. The Jewish protagonist of the story makes it possible for Tooney to pursue higher learning and all things he could not have in Tennessee. The illustration of the public library in Chattanooga, with its lion in front, may have symbolized for Friedland the public library in New York City which would have allowed a black to enter and, therefore, would have been truly public. It is interesting to note that Tooney is always depicted in the most formal of attire, in contrast to the preppy monolithic uniform of the white "gang" of teens and the Jewish classmate. Moreover, Tooney is the one character given a name, affording him the respect that Friedland believed he deserved, and that American society did not afford him.

The conclusion of the story reveals Friedland's moral position. This story could be viewed as a proto-civil rights story. Friedland holds up New York as a promised land in which Tooney can receive the safety from bodily harm and the respect he deserves. Friedland also paints New York as a place where perhaps Tooney and his Jewish classmate can one day form a real friendship, crossing the boundaries of race and skin color. On the last page of the story, the reader sees the Statue of Liberty and the New York skyline in the background, as if Friedland is exhorting them to embrace and work towards making a reality the ideal of equality that he believes America should stand for and American Jews should fully embrace.

Economics: the Great Depression

"The Morning Dawned," הבקר אור ("Haboker Or"), which was also the name of a monthly late nineteenth century Haskalah journal, is a story that speaks to very poor children. It is about a school boy whose father has been out of work for six months. Their family has barely enough milk to feed the little sister and the whole family is hungry.

The boy decides to seek employment wherever he can find it and begins his search one early morning.

This story can be compared to Henry Roth's great novel, *Call It Sleep*.²⁰⁶ Both reflect the extreme poverty that existed on the Lower East Side of New York City and nationwide during the Great Depression. Friedland and Roth both accentuate the helplessness and dire situations that many immigrants found. The main breadwinner in both stories, the father, is without a job. In both stories, milk represents hope. Many immigrants viewed America and not Israel as the land of opportunity, "milk and honey" if you will. However, the Great Depression called all of that into question. In *Call It Sleep*, this promise of milk, of sustenance goes largely unfulfilled while in Friedland's story, "Haboker Or," the protagonist is able to get a job assisting the local milkman. The father in the Roth novel also drives a milk truck and David occasionally helps out. In this way the story could be an inspiration to those who read it.

Both *Call It Sleep* and "Haboker Or" are tales of second generation childhood in which the younger generation must adjust to the severe realities of the Great Depression and in the case of David in *Call It Sleep* to the inevitable conflicts with his father.²⁰⁷

In "Haboker Or," Friedland writes a story that he hopes will be read widely in the Jewish community. In it he tells this story of resilience and hope. The story is not only meant to teach Hebrew, but perhaps even more importantly is a parable about surviving the most difficult of economic situations. The story is responding to the emotional needs of students, concerned about their future. Like the Horatio Alger stories, "Haboker Or"

²⁰⁶ Roth, Henry. *Call It Sleep*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992.

²⁰⁷ Guttman, Allen. *The Jewish Writer in America: Assimilation and The Crisis of Identity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 49.

replays the recurring American theme of the young boy who, in the face of adversity, succeeds through optimism and persistence, and often the help of a stranger.

This concern for the well being of others and the efforts of people to give support to institutions in time of need appear in other stories as well. The story "The Little Star of Hollywood" begins with a forced closing of a Hebrew school or Talmud Torah because of lack of funds. There is no warning of this: the children simply go to school one day and see that it is closed. Their response, led by an enterprising child named Asher, is to work together and solicit support from a Jewish movie personality who is himself a child. His name is Jackie Cooper, perhaps referring to the child star with the same name whose father was Jewish. At age 9, Jackie Cooper was nominated for an Academy Award as Best Actor in 1931. Cooper also starred in "The Champ," "The Bowery" and "Treasure Island," all of which were contemporaneous with the publication and use of Friedland's stories.²⁰⁸ Friedland takes time to emphasize that the star is not widely regarded as being a Jew. Asher informs them that he is a Jew. By outing the star as a Jew, Asher can rally his friends and inspire hope that the famous actor might help them.

Asher and his friends ask the child star to perform in order to help them raise money to re-open their school. "The discussion of the dangers to the Jewish public image posed by motion pictures became especially intense in the early 1930's."²⁰⁹ Situating this story clearly in the American context shows an acculturated film star as a Jewish community supporter and stresses the importance of Jewish community and Jewish

²⁰⁸ Cooper, Jackie. *Please Don't Shoot My Dog: The Autobiography of Jackie Cooper*. New York: William Morrow & Co., 1981.

²⁰⁹ Herman, Felicia. "American Jews and the Effort to Reform Motion Pictures, 1933-1935." *American Jewish Archives Journal*, Volume LIII, Numbers 1 & 2, ISSN 002-905X.

education even in the face of possible anti-Semitism, and severe economic conditions. It is not clear if Friedland took this from an actual even in Cooper's life.

Another story that reveals the effects of poverty is "A Story about a Doll."²¹⁰ The story tells of a girl of the privileged class contrasted with a poor girl. In this story, the wealthy girl has many dolls. She cannot take all of her dolls with her on a family trip to the seashore, but can only bring one, which she loses while swimming. The poor girl is out fishing with her father. She is lonely, and must entertain herself on her father's boat by gazing at clouds and identifying their animal shapes. In juxtaposition to the spoiled rich girl, she does not even have one doll with which to play. She sees that her father has pulled in a big catch of fish and delightedly notices the now-bedraggled doll amongst the fish. She lifts the doll from the net, and the story concludes with her singing songs with her new doll friend. The story might have resonated with people because of other stories of the time, such as the story of Orphan Annie and Shirley Temple's role as the Little Princess.

Economic hardship is a theme that recurs in a significant number of Friedland's stories for children. Rather than sugarcoat this difficult time, Friedland presented a realistic picture of situations that children might have recognized. In many of these stories, Friedland seeks to inspire hope by showing that with hard work, some help from others, and even some imagination and luck, the future can still hold much promise.

Ethics in Formation

In addition to the above themes, many of Friedland's stories achieve their relevance by teaching children how to act in a moral way. One example is the story.

"Remorse,"²¹¹ in which a dilemma in the life of many a child is described. It is the story of Ephraim Goodman, a student who takes a school test. While taking the test, he thinks that he sees another child looking at his test paper. He is disturbed by this and requests to change his seat. Afterwards, he mails his teacher a letter telling of the incident. At the moment that the letter drops irrevocably into the mailbox, he meets the boy outside of school and learns from the accused boy that his father is gravely ill. Ephraim begins to have nightmares caused by worry over what he has done. He resolves to retrieve the letter before his teacher can read it. When the postman comes to pick up the mail, Ephraim requests of the mailman to give him back the letter, but he is instructed to go to the post office. This postman and his colleagues listen to his request, "as if standing in judgment".

Ephraim's emotions are the central focus of this story of personal growth. The teacher and principal of the school notice Ephraim's emotions and respond to them. Friedland questioned what the greater value was: truth about the test or the needs of the schoolmate? He answered the question for his readers: we should be nice. There are more important things in life than test grades. Friedland provides models in the teacher and principal in how to encourage the formation of proper ethics. He believed that his moral education was one crucial facet of a teacher's responsibility. Friedland thought that proper Jewish education would shield students from the corrupting influences of American society and live out their Jewish values.

There were times in which Friedland saw that Jewish values should guide American Jews. He may have seen that there were negative aspects to American culture, such as the cut-throat businessman with a "time is money" philosophy, as was the case

²¹¹ Friedland, A.H. *Sippurim Yafim: Remorse, Vol. Cleveland*: Cleveland Bureau of Jewish Education, 193.

with the character Dr. Strauss in "Gedaliah the Sexton." "Fooney" was an ethical exhortation for Jews to battle a great evil. American institutional racism. Jewish ethics should preclude standing idly by while others are suffering from racism. Overall, he viewed Judaism and Jewish education as reinforcing values that were in line with American values and could really help Jews live in America and contribute to society.

A Comparison

It is important to view Abraham Friedland's stories alongside of ones used during the 1920's and 1930's in secular schools. Friedland's stories, while unique as Jewish stories, were in some ways similar to American readers and primers of this time. It is clear that Friedland was trying to tap the same sources of interest as authors of secular readers. He wanted to create stories that would appeal to the second through fourth generations of American children who studied at Hebrew schools.

American children were taught to read using basal readers, beginning in the early 1800's. These included McGuffey's Eclectic Readers, published from 1879 to 1920, which contained poems and stories by various authors including Charles Dickens, Thomas Gray, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Often, these stories were tragedies dealing with death of a family member. After 1920, stories in basal readers were softened by removing such disturbing topics.²¹² The basal readers as conceived in the 1930's had carefully controlled vocabulary to be learned as "sight words", without phonetic analysis and practiced intensively.²¹³

²¹² Moran, Edward. "Dick and Jane Readers." *St. James Encyclopedia of Pop Culture*. January 21, 2008. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_g1epc/is_tov/ai_2419100382

²¹³ Weaver, Constance. *Reading Process and Practice-from Socio-Psycholinguistics to Whole Language*. 2nd ed. Portsmouth NH, Heinemann, p. 54.

One of the most famous readers in American school history was the Dick and Jane Reader, by William S. Gray, Zerna Sharp, and Harry B. Johnson of Scott Foresman and Company, which began to be published in 1930 and which were used by half of American school children by the end of the 1930's.²¹⁴

Gray et. al. worked with teachers and school psychologists to develop their limited vocabulary technique. The Dick and Jane books used a limited vocabulary, rhyme, and frequent repetition of words and phrases. The Dick and Jane Readers reflected what the authors believed was a scientifically sound approach to education. Friedland, with his background in psychology and language, also attempted to utilize a more scientific approach in *Sippurim Yafim*. This emphasis on learning language sometimes resulted in Friedland's stories being devoid of deep meaning, just as the Dick and Jane stories were. It is not possible to know if the Dick and Jane readers were the main inspiration for Friedland's stories.

In earlier generations, educators used Shakespeare or the Bible as their significant sources of literature. "With an emphasis on methodology over content, the *Dick and Jane* series was conceived in part as a rebellion against then in-vogue didactic traditions that relied heavily on moralistic and patriotic texts drawn from the Bible, Shakespeare, and American historical legends."²¹⁵ Dick and Jane books were criticized for being boring. However, contextually the simplicity in language for which they were striving necessitated this shallowness of story.

There are some important differences between Friedland's stories and the Dick and Jane stories. *Sippurim Yafim* tends to be richer in realism. They employed a scientific

²¹⁴Moran, Edward "Dick and Jane Readers," St. James Encyclopedia of Pop Culture.

²¹⁵ Moran

approach to language but also painted a very real picture of children and adults, their situations, culture, and problems. Friedland's stories probably exist somewhere in between the earlier basal readers and the Dick and Jane series. In contrast to the basal readers after 1920, from which tragedy had been removed, Friedland's stories still included topics that would be considered disturbing to children. The Dick and Jane stories, completely cleansed of the tragic plots, stood in stark contrast to the earlier basal readers but were lighter and happier in tone than Friedland's stories. They reflect middleclass white values. Regarding phonemic approaches which were beginning to be abandoned in at this time, Friedland chose to adhere to the valuable parts of this method to a small extent because Hebrew is primarily a phonemic language. However, Friedland mainly followed the course set by educational leaders of the day, who advocated a sight word approach.

The characters in Dick and Jane existed in a separate universe where the greatest problem could be the loss of a red ball. The latter would never deal with the poverty in a home or a boy going out to sell milk in order to sustain his family. Friedland's stories reflected the realities of his time, such as the Great Depression. However, some of his stories are akin to the Dick and Jane genre by including innocent tales such as the ones featuring Zifi, the mischievous monkey. Friedland's stories always contain at least a shred of the socio-historical conditions of his time.²¹⁶

Friedland's stories are marked by diversity. Dick and Jane books had the same setting throughout. All took place in the same period in a small town with homogeneous characters. It was only in one of the final editions of Dick and Jane that a black family

²¹⁶ <http://www.bookrags.com/research/1930s-print-culture-bbbb-02/dick-and-jane-readers-bbbb-02.html>.

was introduced. On the other hand, Friedland tried to make his stories for a broad base of people to relate to. Their settings ranged from Eastern Europe to America. Some may regard this as a lack of unity, Friedland would consider this as attempting to reach and connect with as large a population of Jewish students as possible.

It is useful to contrast a story from Dick and Jane with one from Friedland's *Sippurim Yafim*. One of the Dick and Jane stories from the 1930's is a story about Dick, Jane, and their dog Spot:

Come, Dick	Look, Spot.
Come and see.	Oh, look.
Come, Come.	Look and see.
Come and see.	Oh, see. ²¹⁷

One can plainly see that the early Dick and Jane stories have the simplest of plots. The number of new words introduced on each page is small and they were repeated over and over. Similarly, Friedland used repetition, but it is clear that he also put some thought into the nature of the story. The Dick and Jane readers present an idyllic picture of middle-class life during the time of the Great Depression, failing to recognize the reality of their day. Friedland's stories usually portray the economic and social problems of time in which they were written, but they often present solutions that make room for children to hope that a better day was coming. On a linguistic level, Friedland's stories assume a basic vocabulary and therefore are capable of conveying more meaning. Readers practice reading phrases and sentences by encountering them repeatedly on the stories' pages.

דוד צריך לקום.
הוא צריך לקום.
אולם הוא חפץ לשכב
במטה טוב ונעים.
דוד אומר: "אני צריך לקום. אני צריך לקום.
אני צריך ללכת לבית הספר.

²¹⁷ "Early Dick and Jane." <http://faculty.valpo.edu/bflak/dickjane/spot.html>.

כּוּ. אֲנִי צָרִיד לְלֶכֶת לְבֵית הַסֵּפֶר.
אוֹלָם בְּמָקוֹם טוֹב וְנָעִים."

There were other readers that reflect some of the same characteristics as Friedland's stories. One such primer was called, "Read Make and Play, an Easy Primer" by Louise Villinger, published in 1934 by Harr Wagner Publishing Company. The purpose of the primer, as described by the publisher was, "to teach reading to beginners through simple and interesting material familiar to all young children."²¹⁸ The primer was arranged around pets. This fits with Friedland's desire to make content fun and interesting for the target population because the concept of a pet was something children could relate to.

Similar to Friedland, many children's stories incorporated the emerging technology of that time. In "New Stories, a Reader" written by Alberta Burton and published in 1927 by Wheeler Publishing Company, stories include a modern letter sorting machine, trains, the workings of an engine, a Chicago street with automobiles, a merry-go-round, a radio and a phonograph.²¹⁹ We see identical images in numerous stories by Friedland, including the "Phonograph That Wouldn't Sing" and "Coney Island". We see a common trend in *Sippurim Yafim* and the *New Stories, a Reader*. Both incorporate the exciting new technology of the era. They also include other common images of the time, such as a horse-pulled milk wagon and plow horses, representing that this was a time of technological transition in America.

²¹⁸ Villinger, Louise. *Read, Make, and Play, an Easy Primer*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1934, p. 2.

²¹⁹ Burton, Alberta. *New Stories: A Reader*. Chicago: Wheeler Publishing Company, 1927.

Another example of stories for children was a book entitled "Jean and Jerry's Vacation" by Mabel Hubbard Johnson, written in 1931 and published by American Book Company. The book contains a series of stories which detailed Jean and Jerry Valentine's experiences with an automobile, an airplane, and a steamship on Lake Erie during their summer vacation. A further story series from 1934 is called "Trains", and includes numerous stories about steam engines in early America.²²⁰

Friedland's stories were contemporaneous with the first award-winning books known as Newbery Award winners. Newbery Awards were begun in 1922 in order to celebrate excellent children's fiction. The award was named for John Newbery, the 18th century publisher who wanted to create stories that were amusing to children by presenting them in beautiful editions.²²¹ Friedland was also a strong believer that reading should be fun and be able to capture the excitement and imagination of children.

Sippurim Yafim was used in hundreds of Hebrew schools across the United States during the 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's. The stories in the collection were Friedland's ambitious attempt to provide a novel way to teach Hebrew to American Jewish youth. He based the stories in the American experience thus providing literature that bridged the gap between their American identity and their Hebrew-Jewish identity. The stories were meant to teach Hebrew, but they also succeeded in entertaining young minds and even helping students of Hebrew face the struggles of their time.

²²⁰ Johnson, Mabel Hubbard. *Jean and Jerry's Vacation*. New York: American book Company, 1931.

²²¹ "Newbery Medal Home Page." *ALA American Library Association*. 1 February 2008. www.ala.org/alsc/newbery.html.

Conclusion: Poems Written in Abraham Friedland's Memory

Approximately one year after Abraham Friedland's death, a book in his memory was published by Histadruth Ivrit of America: ספר זכרון לז"א. פרידלנד. *A Book of Memory for A.H. Friedland*. The book captured the personal and professional life of an extraordinary man. He was a master-teacher, a scholar, and a good friend. He was a lover of the Hebrew language and a steadfast supporter of Zionism.

The second section of the book, שירים לזכרו. Poems for His Memory, mostly focused on the astonishing inner power that Friedland had in the last months of his life. The poems speak of the ways in which he continued to embrace his work for the Jewish people wholeheartedly, even while cancer devoured his body from the inside out. It seemed a fitting conclusion to share those poems.

The contributing poets were some of the great Hebrew poets of the time period: Shimon Ginsburg, Ephraim Lissitzky, Moshe Feinstein, Hillel Bavli, and A.S. Shwartz. The poetry is both poignant and beautiful, but more profoundly, in the unity of message, it paints for us a portrait of a man who was truly one of the great חכמים, scholars of his generation. He died too soon and in too much pain, but in those final months he found strength to labor on for the Hebrew language. The poems on the next pages try to capture those final months and honor a great Hebrew man.

Lost
Shimon Ginsburg

The place he laid was upholstered.
Hellish pain a dear brother is subject.
The angel of death proceeds slowly.
With spider-like appearance, he looks at a hopeless brother.

To the yellowish skin of his face that has turned black.
His chest cavity which is almost square.
A web of terror that cannot be expressed, cancer
has woven itself, he is without any hope of recovery.

Oh my brother, oh Friedland! Once the epitome of joy.
A vital man. Versatile, author of sonnets –
How have you fallen into the hand of a demon so horrible?

The most tormented of the tormented. You continue to
struggle quietly. While suffering silently at the doorway of
sheol: lingering, gripped with shaking –
you cried voicelessly, all alone, on the brink of the abyss.

אבוד!

ישבתי על ידו : משכס רבוד
חכלי-השאול, בם אח יקר נתון.
מלאך-המות שם מתון, מתון
בעין-שממית צופה אל אח אבוד :

אל עור-פניו, צהבהב הפך שחור,
וארגז-חזהו, שכמעט מרבע
בו ארג האימה שלו תבע
רקם סראן, לבלי עוד שוב אחור.

הוי אח והוי פרידלנד! עין-הגיל, איש חי
ורב פעלים, ובעל-הסונטות -
איכה ביד שד נפלת פה איום!

מענה-מענים, נאבקת עוד בחשאי,
על פתח-שאול שוהה, תוהה ברטט-
ותבך אין-קול, בדד על שפת התהום.

You Struggled with Death
Ephraim Lissitzky

You struggled with death, brutal, ferociously raging.
So many years now, day by day, hour by hour.
A poisonous snake spitting venom without compassion
Into the limbs of your body and your soul – the angel of death,
injecting terror.

You transformed this venom into poetry, in which you were
bound up. The strains of your verse and a generous spirit.
You caused to shine into the darkness of death's terror
which has many eyes (facets) – like a rainbow.
Such agonies are to be welcomed.

You fought against death and overcame it in the past.
Man of wonder, you have converted the agonies into a
glorious sunset. A sunset that is burning through a
cloud of majestic colors.

Until the shadow of night darkens, they crawl, we will stand.
Let us be quiet in wonderment opposite the fear of its glory
and the sublime nature of its beauty.

נפתלתה עם מות

נפתלתה עם מות, אכזרי, גדל חמה,
זה רבות בשנים, יום יום, שעה שעה,
מרורת צפעוני בלי רחמים קאה
ביצרי גויתך, ובנפשך - אימה.

הפכת מרורתו לשירה בה צוררים
נעימי צלילך, ורוח נדיבה
הזרחת בחשכת אימתו, מרהיבה
עינים כקשת - חביבים יסורים!

נפתלתה עם מות ותוכל, בן-רשף!
כי הפך הפכתו לשקיעת-תפארה
יוקדת בענן, אדירת-צבעים;

עד יזחלו, יקדרו צללי-נשף -
אל מול מורא הודה ושגב הדרה
נפעמים נעמדה, נחרישה משתאים.

How You Have Been Tormented My Brother Moshe Feinstein

Your body (lit. house of clay) battered by agony
Has collapsed slowly. To the sound of levels that are crying
In secret. Silently, out of your soul they went out alone into a
Private room, bedecked in a tallit of grace, your soul prayed
Tremblingly. Your soul whispered silently its life-song.

And when the last echo of the destruction and torment grew
Intense, the thresholds of your body started failing, and the
noise became something you couldn't ignore any more.
So then, the radiance that God blessed you with flared up.

Scorn the body, the flesh, we cried out triumphantly.
"long live the spirit." We hoped this time a miracle would
Occur. And when upon earth, before all of our eyes, two
Cosmic forces will defeat the forces of his afflictions.
Woe it will be.

Alas, alas my brother! When surely the
wick and the oil have been used up, then in vain will the flame
cling to its source which is empty, and how heavy the
sadness when that flame is extinguished amidst its longings,
seized by pain and trembling.

מה ענית, אחי!

בית חמרך מקרקר דוי התמוטט אט
לקול נדבכים בוכים במסתרים,
אך מפשך בדמי אז פרשה לחדר חדרים
ועטופת טלית חסד התפללה ברעד
ותלחש שיר חייה בחשאי.

וכאשר גבר הד ההרס והענות
של ספי דבירך נופלים, כן התלקח בעוז
הנוגה בו ברכך אדני.

הבז לגוף, לבשר, "קראנו בנצחון, ויחי
הרוח!" ונקו, הפעם יקום פלא
ועלי אדמות לעין כלנו ינצחו אראלי
אדם את מצוקיו. ותהי.

אך אללי, אללי, אח! עת כלזה כלו פתיל
ושמן, אז לשוא תתרפק השלהבת
על מבועה ריק, ומה תכבד העצבת
עת תחב בגעגועיה אחוזת כאב וחיל.

By Virtue of the Golden Verses
Hillel Bavli

By virtue of the golden verses you that you sang,
In the waning of your days, my heart has become bound
to yours. By the droplets of sorrow that you have stored up
I see your image bedecked in a precious garment.

You were afraid of the landscape of poetry, your sword in
its scabbard. You began fluffy and light (not good) on the
roads of this generation. However when you stood alone at
nightfall, the road of your soul sparkled like a dagger of light.

All the veils which you had worn flew away.
In the flaming sunset, only one image was revealing itself.
A man digging the grave for his life which had been
consumed in flames. And in the crucible of poetry,
his spirit was seeking redemption.

בשל שורות-זהב

בשל שורות-זהב אשר שוררת,
כנטות יומך, לפי בד נקשר ;
בשל נטפי יגון אשר אגרת
אראה דמותך עוטה לבוש-יקר.

יראת נוף-השיר, על ספו חרב,
ותט גמיש וקל בארחות-דור,
וך פי עמדת בודד עם ערב
נצנץ שביל-נפשך כפגיון-אור.

כל הצעיפים עדית התעופפו,
ביקוד-שקיעה נגלית רק אחת דמות :
איש כורה קבר לחייו נשרפו
ובכור-השיר רוחו מבקש פדות.

About a Dead Poet

A. S. Schwartz

Pursuer of many deeds, powerful with strength of heart, in his lips song.
And with death he then walked humbly with death:
With a pure hearted chuckle, goodhearted, forgiving, he covered over
The stabbing pains and over the prolonged dying.

Daily he peered int'l the great abyss, the terrible,-
But he only cushioned it with buds of light.
He miraculously strengthened the devotion to his work.
In a framework of a minute he was able to pack in a year.

Into goblets of the choicest gold which a jeweler had made.
Into goblets of pure crystal with death waiting in ambush.
From the flask of his heart he emptied out his beautiful wine.
A wine of beauty, which had the appearance of gold.

A poet of great suffering who died with poetry and strength
While in his heart there was still pent up a living poetry.
How the heart will cry over his death and all his suffering.
And remember the chuckle that was closeted away upon his death.

על משורר מת

רב פעלים, כביר כח לב, בשפתיו רנה,
ועם המות אז התהלך לו בצנעה;
בבת-צחוק תמימה, טובה וסולחת כסה
על מדקרות חרב מות ועל גסיסה.

יום יום הוא הציץ אל התהום הרב, הנורא,-
אך הוא רק רפד אותו בנצני-אורה,
אך הוא רק הפליא-הגביר פעליו הנאמנים,
ובמסגרת-רגע הרבה לדחק שנים.

אל גביעי זהב נבחר אשר צרף צורף,
אל גביעי הדלח זך, לעיני מות אורב,
מנאד-לבבו הריק, מהר לשפך יינו,-
את יין-היפי, אשר עין הזהב עינו.

משורר רב-ענות, שמת בשיר וגבורה,
ובלבו שירה חיה היתה עוד עצורה -
מה-יבך הלב על מותו ועל כל ענותו,
ויזכר בת-הצחוק, שנגנוה במותו.

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