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A Man Against the Wind:
A Biographical Study of Rabbi Morris S. Lazaron

by

Scott L. Shpeen

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
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Referee, Dr. Jonathan D. Sarna

PREFACE

This thesis chronicles the life and activities of Rabbi Morris S. Lazaron. The first chapter begins with his family background and early childhood in Savannah, Georgia. It goes on to discuss his years studying at the University of Cincinnati and at the Hebrew Union College from which he graduated in 1914. The second chapter outlines Lazaron's tenure as Senior Rabbi of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation which he actively served for over thirty years.

Rabbi Lazaron was also an influential leader in spheres outside f his congregational work. Chapter Three discusses his involvement as a pioneer of the interfaith movement between Christians and Jews in the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Chapter Four examines Lazaron's anti-Zionist philosophy and his role in the American Council for Judaism.

The thesis continues with Chapter Five which discusses Lazaron's retirement years, particularly his interest in painting. It is followed by a Conclusion in which I summarize and evaluate Lazaron's long and fruitful career.

This thesis is based primarily on the Morris S. Lazaron Manuscript Collection which is housed at the American Jewish Archives on the campus of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati. This collection

contains forty-six Hollinger boxes of letters, other papers, and personal memoirs of Rabbi Lazaron. Of particular benefit to me was an unpublished autobiography written by Lazaron and found in the collection.

I researched this thesis in two stages. During the Summer of 1982, I took an independent reading course under the direction of Dr. Jonathan Sarna entitled, "Zionism in America." It provided a wealth of secondary material in understanding how Lazaron fit into the spirit of the time in which he lived.

During the summer of 1983, I worked at the American Jewish Archives going through the Lazaron Collection of primary sources as well as other pertinent documents which are housed at the Archives and listed in the bibliography. I was then not only able to write this thesis, but also to formulate a complete bibliography of primary and secondary materials on Rabbi Lazaron.

There are many individuals who have assisted me in this project. Without their direction, this thesis would not have taken its present form. Dr. Jacob Rader Marcus, Milton and Hattie Kutz Distinguished Service Professor of American Jewish History at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati and the Director of the American Jewish Archives, my revered teacher, instilled in me a great love and appreciation for American Jewish History, and suggested this thesis topic.

Dr. Jonathan Sarna, Assistant Professor of American Jewish History at the College, advised and directed this

project from it's beginning nearly two years ago. His support and encouragement have accompanied every step of my work. Dr. Sarna has been both a patient teacher and a good friend.

I would be remiss were I not to make special mention of the staff at the American Jewish Archives. I have had the privilege of working with them as a research assistant for three years while studying at the College. Dr. Abraham J. Peck, Associate Director, Mrs. Fannie Zelcer, Mr. Kevin Proffitt and Mrs. Wanda Reis have all been extremely helpful with this project. Their assistance and their friendship is greatly appreciated.

This thesis marks the culmination of my rabbinic studies at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. My rabbinic ordination has been a dream that I have worked toward for nearly fifteen years. At every juncture, my family has been a source of strength and love. My parents, Dr. Harold and Judith Shpeen have provided a living model of a Jewish home and a Jewish way of life which I strive to emulate. Their constant encouragement, as well as that of my entire family, has enabled me to grow in so many ways.

Yet without my wife Susan, to whom this thesis is dedicated, I doubt whether I could have ever reached this point in my career. Words cannot begin to adequately express my love and appreciation for her abiding faith in me.

"I love you, not only for what you have made of yourself, But for what you are making of me."

(-Ray Croft)

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DIGEST

Morris Samuel Lazaron, 1888-1979, was an important member of the Reform Rabbinate in the United States. After receiving his ordination from the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati in 1914, he eventually went on to serve Congregation Le Shem Shomayim in Wheeling, West Virginia for nine months before he was called to Baltimore to serve its oldest and largest Temple. Lazaron served the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation for over thirty-one years as Senior Rabbi, and for many years thereafter as Rabbi Emeritus. During this time, he emerged as a leader on the national Jewish scene.

In addition to his rabbinical post in Baltimore, Lazaron was a pioneer in the Interfaith Movement between Christians and Jews which formally began in 1928 with the establishment of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. He not only toured the United States on behalf of the Conference, but also went on speaking tours abroad.

Lazaron is best known for his involvement in the establishment and ongoing work of the American Council for Judaism, an anti-Zionist organization. This brought him into conflict both with other Reform leaders and with his own congregation, from which he eventually resigned.

The purpose of this thesis is to chronicle and evaluate the career of Rabbi Morris Lazaron. My investigation

will focus on the following areas: 1. Lazaron's early childhood in Savannah, Georgia and his years as a student at the Hebrew Union College, 2. The development of Lazaron's rabbinate at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, 3. Lazaron's involvement in the Interfaith Movement, and 4. Lazaron's attitude toward Zionism and the role he played in the American Council for Judaism.

From this analysis, it is my hope to present an understanding of Lazaron as a Reform Rabbi and as an American Jew. I also hope to provide deeper insights into the Interfaith Movement, anti-Zionism, Reform Judaism, and the general course of American Jewish History during the years of his life.

CHAPTER I

"THE EARLY YEARS 1888-1915"

A. A Rich Heritage: Family History and Background

> Men, like trees, need roots. Unlike the natural growing things, human beings cannot be healthy with physical roots only.[1]

Morris Samuel Lazaron was born in Savannah, Georgia on April 16, 1888 to Samuel Louis and Alice de Castro Lazaron. His familial roots in both Europe and America are documented for many generations prior to his birth. Ancestors from Poland, Germany, Spain, Portugal and the Netherland Antilles are all linked together through his birth.

On his father's side, the Lazaron family came to America in the early 1840's from Germany. Their family tree traces back to the marriage of Morris' great grandparents, Rosa Simon and Wolf Laseron of Konigsberg, Prussia. Great grandfather Wolf Laseron served as rabbi of Konigsberg from 1809 to 1828. He and his wife Rosa died one day apart during a cholera epidemic leaving a family of seven children, one of whom was Morris Lazaron's grandfather.

Each of the seven Laseron children were raised by different family members. The oldest, however, Michael, then 16, ran away to Switzerland and was adopted by an English-Lutheran woman. Michael later received a fine education in England and became a doctor as well as establishing the first

English-Lutheran orphanage and Deaconess Home in England.

The youngest of Rosa and Wolf's children, Morris (Rabbi Morris Lazaron was named for him) was raised in Konigsberg. He and his wife, Bertha Kantrowitz, the daughter of a famous liquer manufacturer from Prussia, migrated to America in 1849 along with the great wave of German Jews. Upon arriving in the United States, the newly-weds settled in Sandersville, Georgia where Morris' uncle, Ephraim Edward Laseron was living. Once in America, Morris changed the spelling of their surname from Laseron to Lazaron to better fit the pronunciation.

Later in his life Rabbi Morris Lazaron traced his grandfather's footsteps back to Konigsberg. Reacting to a visit to the old synagogue over which his great-grandfather Wolf Laseron presided, the young rabbi wrote:

> I felt the impact of the past as I looked out on the small auditorium with its walnut pews and ark and altar, and the clean white pillars and walls. I thought of the Laseron family which had refugeed from Spain at the time of the Expulsion in 1492, had wandered east across both coasts of the Mediterranean and finally settled in Constantinople. I visited the graves of the Laserons . . . Wolf and his wife were buried side by side. Among my most prized possessions is an oil painting of Rabbi Wolf Laseron.[2]

In 1850 Morris and Bertha moved from Sandersville to Atlanta where they opened a store. However, when General Sherman surrounded the city during the Civil War, the family was forced to flee to Savannah in 1864. Several years after the War, the Lazarons moved again, to Americus, Georgia. The youngest of their nine children, Samuel Louis, helped

his father in the store there as well as studied for a career as an attorney. Once the young Samuel was admitted to the Bar he moved with the family back to the opportunities of Savannah and set up a law practice.

It was in Savannah that Samuel Louis Lazaron met Alice Zipporah de Castro. Samuel was highly respected and successful in his practice. Alice became active in general community efforts and was a member of the Daughters of the Confederacy. Her first cousin was Judah P. Benjamin.

Alice de Castro was also of notable birth and lineage. She was the descendent of a long line of Sephardic Jews who had settled in the New World since the mid-18th century. Her great-grandfather, Aaron de Sola, was born in Curacao in 1775 after his father, Isaac de Sola left Amsterdam in 1758.

Alice's mother, Anita Hannah de Sola was born in St. Thomas in 1832 and confirmed in the Charolotte Amalie Synagogue in 1846. She was among the first on record in the Western Hemisphere to have such a confirmation. The de Sola line traces back to the 9th century in Spain. When the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, Dr. Benjamin de Sola was the court physician to William V. The de Solas first went to Holland and then set out for Curacao and St. Thomas.[3]

Alice's father, Jacob Osorio de Castro, born in Curacao in 1815, was also the protege of a prominent Sephardic line. In Spain, Dr. Isaac Osorio de Castro was a physician. The de Castros made their way to the Western Hemisphere toward the end of the 17th century settling in Curacao. Jacob and

Hannah met and were married in 1852 in St. Thomas. They then left the island for New Orleans. Jacob's brother, Isaac, had a tobacco business and the economic opportunities of that city were abundant. He became not only a successful merchant but also a leader in the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, which is now known as the Touro Synagogue.

Motivated by the same interest which took him back to Konigsberg to explore his paternal heritage, Rabbi Morris Lazaron made a journey to Curacao in 1940 to visit the locations of his maternal ancestry. Of that trip he wrote:

> My heart stirred strongly as I stood on the deck of the Santa Rosa and saw Curacao in the Caribbean Sea. My maternal grandfather, Jacob Osorio de Castro was born there 125 years ago. . . . He was Bar Mitzvah in the only synagogue still used by the Sephardic community. I made my way as inconspicuously as possible outside the building and up the stairway to the choir gallery. I asked for a book and sang with them. The psalm was over. I closed the book and as I glanced at the cover, I saw the name on a card pasted on the cover--Benjamin de Castro. I was loathe to leave but I carried the spirit which comes when we look from the present back through the past, when time vanishes and we reach down into something deeper than the roots of trees, into the virgin springs of all we think and feel, and know and are.[4]

Like the Lazarons, the Civil War drove the de Castros from their home. When General Butler beseiged New Orleans, Jacob took refuge in Mobile, Alabama and later settled in Savannah, Georgia where his daughter Alice met and fell in love with the son of Morris and Bertha Lazaron.

It was with this great sense of family heritage and accomplishment that Morris Samuel Lazaron entered this world. He was also greatly influenced by the ante-bellum years in Savannah where he grew up and was educated.

> Similar stories, longer or shorter, might be told by eight out of every ten men, Jew or Christian. Multiply these a million fold and you have the epic of America. From the far corners of the earth men of different races, cultures, nations, and creeds have come with hope in their hearts, and each has brought some gift of body or spirit and laid it upon the altar of our nation's life.[5]

B. Growing Up in Savannah

> No other city in the world has such a layout of squares as Savannah, all of them filled then as now with live oaks, white oaks, flowering bushes and benches where one would sit in serenity and peace. It was a happy boyhood to have grown up in Savannah.[6]

The peaceful and serene Savannah in which the young Morris Lazaron grew up was rich in the history of its Jewish community. Forty-three English Jews, mostly Sephardic whose families had fled the Spanish Inquisition, sailed in 1733 for the New World aboard a ship chartered by the London Sephardic Synagogue. They arrived in July of that year and settled in Savannah. This was only a few months after General James Oglethorpe had built Savannah's first settlement.[7]

These forty-three Jews brought with them a Sepher Torah, a circumcision box, and a great sense of their Sephardic heritage. Soon after they settled, Congregation Mikve Israel was organized, one of the oldest congregations still in existence today. The family of Mordechai Sheftall, the great Revolutionary War hero, was among the original families that came to Savannah.[8]

The Jewish community later grew in number and stature.

Savannah provided great economic opportunities for its inhabitants, as it was an important commercial city and the central point of the colony of Georgia. Jews prospered.

With the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, many of the men who were the backbone of the Savannah economy were scattered throughout the North defending the new nation. During the century after the War, however, Savannah returned to its prominence in commercial and industrial growth. In addition, it witnessed a resurgence of Jewish settlers. It was this spirit of opportunity which attracted both the Lazaron and the de Castro families to move to Savannah and to establish their businesses in that city.[9]

Throughout their history the Jews in Savannah were a highly assimilated group. Congregation Mikve Israel preserved a strong Sephardic influence through the 19th century. It officially aligned with the Reform Movement in the early 1900's. Its members, as well as the members of other local synagogues, occupied notable positions and offices in the general community. Herman Myers served as the Mayor of Savannah for two periods from 1895-1897 and from 1897-1907.

Samuel Louis Lazaron maintained a thriving law practice in Savannah and was one of the city's most prominent citizens. His family knew material success and his children were provided with a fine Savannah education. In addition, Samuel's brother-in-law, Rev. Isaac Pereira Mendes, led Mikveh Israel for many years which strengthened family ties to the synagogue. It was Mendes' tutelage which motivated young Morris to aspire toward a career in the rabbinate and

fueled a life long interest in his Sephardic heritage.

As Morris Lazaron grew up in Savannah he attended grammar and preparatory school. He knew friends of all faiths and races, rarely experiencing anti-Jewish prejudices. Racial bigotry directed against Blacks overshadowed any anti-Semitic feelings which he noticed during that time.

> I do not recall any experience of anti-Jewish prejudice in those early years. I remember once getting into a fight with a classmate who said something about a "damned Jew" in my presence. We exchanged blows and I believe I got somewhat the worst of it. But what sticks in my memory in connection with this incident is the sudden cessation of hostilities the boy said, "Lazaron, I don't mean a fellow like you. You're a white Jew."[10]

The Lazaron family maintained many close and fond friendships with prominent gentile familes in Savannah. Each would share in the other's celebration of holidays and festivals. Young Morris gained a deep understanding and appreciation at an early age of the religious convictions of those around him. He frequently attended church with his friends as well as taking them with him to hear his uncle preach at Temple.

> I was conscious of some vague differences, though my mother's friends, like mine, were Christians as well as Jewish. As I look back it seems to me I knew there was another world that set up certain barriers. I knew I was a part of that world yet not a part of it. Not all people in that world were the same or felt the same toward us. With some, one moved easily and naturally; with others one felt strain.[11]

When Lazaron returned to Savannah after completing his first year at the Hebrew Union College, Tom Poole, a family servant in his 80's who had been a slave in grandfather

Lazaron's home, insisted that Morris come to his little church and preach. Upon introducing the young rabbinic student, Tom told the congregation how he had been with the family all his life and had "raised" Morris. "Ah knows him inside and outside, front and back. All ah kin say is his face may be white, but his heart is black!"[12] This was a typical display of affection and friendship which the young Lazaron shared with so many people of all races and religions as he grew up in Savannah. It would hold him in good stead as he grew older, and proved critical in his desire to further goodwill between blacks and whites, Jews and Christians.

In the Lazaron home many rituals and ceremonies were observed as well as some of the laws of kashrut. Friday evening was always a special occasion. The family lit candles, blessed the wine, and a fine dinner was enjoyed by all. Passover Seders were also festive family celebrations. The family shared most other holidays in the synagogue with the congregation.

Lazaron's uncle, Rev. Mendes, had a great impact on him during his formative years. "My uncle used to chant many of the litanies on Sabbath and Holidays and I listened uncritically and reverently to his always brief sermons. He was a kind man, a consecrated man. I profoundly respected his sincere piety, his great knowledge."[13]

This great and impressive mentor as well as the ideals which his parents exemplified in their lives prompted Morris to consider seeking a career of service to his people.

> It was not so much what they said as it was what they were, how they acted to each other, to their

> friends, their talk at the table, their remarks about the world and the events of the time, the way they treated the servants and us children, their quiet acceptance of many disappointments, the easy natural way they referred to God and thanked Him in conversational tones for food, for life, for home and every blessing, it was these things, all these things which played upon my heart strings and set them vibrating to hidden melodies that came from far off lands to be imagined and felt, rather than understood and explained; it was all these things which came together in one poignant feeling, the desire to help people help themselves and each other, the desire to serve God and truth and goodness with all my heart and all my soul and all my might.[14]

Once Morris set his heart on becoming a rabbi, he began a period of study directed by a local rabbi, George Solomon. Then at the age of 16½ years old, after completing the necessary hebraic education, Morris gained entry into the University of Cincinnati and the Hebrew Union College to pursue his rabbinic studies and college degree. This was assisted by Rabbi Kaufmann Kohler, then President of the Hebrew Union College, who was a close associate of some friends of the Lazarons in New York City. Kohler later became a great source of inspiration as well as a dear friend of Lazaron while living in Cincinnati. The necessary arrangements were made so that in 1905, at the age of 17, Morris left his secure Savannah surroundings to begin his education in Cincinnati.

C. College Days at U.C. and H.U.C.

When Morris Lazaron entered the Hebrew Union College it was located in the downtown section of Cincinnati. Afternoon classes were held there in a converted mansion long

since abandoned by its owners. In addition, the students spent their mornings at the University of Cincinnati working toward an undergraduate degree. For most students this full academic schedule left little time for extra-curricular activities.

In preparatory school in Savannah, Lazaron was actively involved in many school activities. So when he entered the University of Cincinnati he spent most of the free time he did have avidly participating in whatever programs he could. In his freshman year at U.C. he signed up for debating, Glee Club, and the campus dramatic group. He also had been rushed by several campus fraternities. Once they learned that he was a student at H.U.C. as well, the rushing suddenly ceased. This, it seems, did not bother the young freshman for "many of the offers of friendship did not [stop] and my life was full and rich in companionship."[15]

Early in his childhood Lazaron developed a great love for music and singing. He played the violin and sang one year in the chorus of the annual Cincinnati Music Festival. This interest in the performing arts attracted Lazaron to the theatre. In addition to taking in as many plays as time and money would allow, his involvement in the University drama club was a great source of satisfaction.

At times all rabbinic students go through periods of doubt. Perhaps some phase of disillusionment is even needed to test ones commitment.

> During one of those periods of doubt when I was not sure that God existed and if He did, was not too concerned about human beings;

> when I questioned earnestly whether I was spiritually fit to be a rabbi or guide a congregation, or even wanted to enter the ministry, I played with the idea of leaving . . . and going on the stage.[16]

Lazaron approached the distinguished actor, E. H. Sothern, with the desire to perhaps join his company. Sothern listened to him audition and offered him a position. He suggested, though, before accepting the job in haste that Lazaron should consult one of his professors and talk through any of the doubts he was feeling. Lazaron spent a long afternoon with Dr. Kohler at H.U.C. and agreed to at least complete the year of school. Then, if his decision to enter the theatre was still overpowering, Dr. Kohler informed him that he was free to go. By the end of that semester Lazaron worked through any difficulties he was having and his desire to become a rabbi had, indeed, been reaffirmed.

Of all Lazaron's pursuits during his tenure at the University, his chief interest was debating. In his sophomore year he was an alternate on the University debate team and traveled to other midwestern universities to compete. He made the varsity debate team during his junior and senior years and mastered the skill. He was also the recipient of various prizes and won numerous debating contests. Because of this great oratory skill, Lazaron was selected to be class orator at the University graduation ceremonies in June of 1909.

After completing his bachelors degree from the University of Cincinnati, he continued there for two more years

and received a Masters in Philosophy in 1911. By that time, however, his course work at the Hebrew Union College became quite demanding and dominated most of his concentration.

It was his years of study and preparation at the Hebrew Union College, the professors and classmates he came to know and many of whom he greatly loved, which had the greatest significance in molding the career and attitudes of the young rabbi.

> I spent nine years at the college and though there was no attempt at indoctrination, only pure instruction, enough of what I heard and read stayed with me to feel the strong mystery of Jewish history as tantalizing as when one looks at the stars on a black night and the mind fails to grasp the majesty of the universe, but feels the sublimity of it. Enough of it stayed with me to make me proud and humble; proud to be a Jew and humble before my responsibilities as a rabbi.[17]

Drs. Mannheimer, Deutsch, Buttenweiser, and Neumark all had a profound impact as Lazaron progressed through the rabbinic program at the College. Each implanted a great respect for scholarship as well as a sense of devotion toward the materials they were studying. To fulfill the requirement for ordination, Lazaron wrote a rabbinic thesis translating and analyzing tractate Derech Eretz Zutta from the Talmud.

By far, it was Dr. Kaufmann Kohler who had the greatest effect on Lazaron's rabbinic development. From the moment he entered the seminary he found himself under the guidance and direction of Dr. Kohler, both academically and personally. It was an admiration which Lazaron held through his entire life.

> Kohler, of course, a scholar whose knowledge was of encyclopedic dimensions . . . He was interested most of all in trying to make students for the Jewish ministry, men who deeply believed in God. As I think of this man, I am moved to utter humbly the benediction which the pious is enjoined to say in praise of God who manifests his spirit in great and good men.[18]

Rabbi Lazaron was later given the singular honor of delivering the memorial address at the Hebrew Union College Chapel in honor of his esteemed teacher Kaufmann Kohler.

Outwardly, Lazaron expressed no sensitivity to the spirit of indoctrination at the College. He was an utterly devoted disciple of Kaufmann Kohler's. However, Kohler's tenure as President of the College was distinctively marked by an air of tyranny. Kohler ran the College with an iron fist which centered around his own personal ideology and attitude.[19]

Kohler was a great theologian. He broke from his European Orthodox upbringing to become one of the great ideological framers of Reform Judaism in America. Kohler was a student of Abraham Geiger and a brother-in-law to David Einhorn. Both Geiger and Einhorn's Reform philosophy became firmly implanted in him. At the College, he vigourously rejected any direction toward tradition and it was his view that Israel's universal mission to the world did not include the notion of a return to Zion.

As President of the College, Kaufmann Kohler saw it as his duty to help mold the characters and viewpoints of the students. "Indoctrination" was his primary goal in developing future leaders of the Reform community. The "indoctri-

nation" which Kohler practiced must have been quite subtle, for Lazaron, one of his proteges, never felt the power which was exercised over him.

While Lazaron attended the Hebrew Union College there were other significant factors at the school which contributed to the molding of his character. All of these incidents had a great impact in the years ahead as he became a leader in the Reform Movement.

In addition to Kohler's spirit of ideological indoctrination to classical reform, the College was witness to a great period of growth and expansion during the years that Lazaron studied there. The faculty of the College also changed radically as Kohler dismissed several members with whom he did not see eye to eye on certain key issues such as Zionism.

The student body of the College went through a transformation as well. In 1906, there were 29 students enrolled. By 1915, the number had risen to 93. This was due to an increase in financial aid made available to incoming students as well as the construction of a new campus adjacent to the University of Cincinnati in Clifton.

From 1906-1914, the makeup of the student body changed considerably. The majority were now native born. More than 70% of these native borns were the children of East European immigrants with an extremely high academic calibre. Students were shaped in every sense of the word in order to make them better leaders of American Jewry. Their private lives, as well as their studies, came under close scrutiny. Marriages

and gambling were taboo. Premarital sex was grounds for expulsion. Even freedom of political expression was limited. It was in this atmosphere, during the height of the Kohler years at the Hebrew Union College, that Morris Lazaron's ideological foundation was laid.

In 1907 a nationwide financial panic brought about a change in the Lazaron family fortune. Investments on which his father heavily relied were lost. So during his junior year at the University, Morris Lazaron suddenly found himself entirely on his own. He applied and received a scholarship from the College but was forced to also supplement his income with odd jobs.

While attending the University, Lazaron taught religious school on Sunday mornings and night school for foreigners. Once he had finished his academic work at U.C. in 1911, a major source of supplemental income came from student congregations which he served until his ordination in 1914. His parents had moved to Cincinnati in 1909 so the demand grew greater for extra money to assist the family. Their home also became a meeting place for many of the H.U.C. students as well as hosting the literary society of the College which was founded in the Lazaron living room.

Although Lazaron was known to be extremely hospitable and friendly to his fellow classmates at the College, he nevertheless did not enjoy a popular reputation. His peers at school found him to be unduly impressed with his family heritage, especially the fact that they were Americans for several generations. This pride in his geneology was met

with all the more hostility as so many of the students came from an underprivileged, immigrant background, with parents who rarely spoke English at home.

An incident at a particular boarding house where many H.U.C. students lived illustrates the animosity which was felt toward Lazaron. Several of his classmates constructed a huge ficticious family tree, supposedly Lazaron's, where they showed his roots going back to a primitive monkey!

For two years Lazaron served a bi-weekly pulpit at Springfield, Ohio where he went on alternate Fridays to conduct services and teach classes. In addition, for six summers from 1908 until 1914 Lazaron accompanied his family to their summer vacation home in Asheville, North Carolina. He served the pulpit there in what was a lovely summer resort town attracting people from all over the East Coast. "The vacation summers in North Carolina, the training and experience in preaching and teaching, the singularly beautiful wooded mountains, the people in cities and in the hills all stimulated my mind, watered my heart with warmth and friendliness, and linked my spirit more surely with a confident sense of the reality of God."[20]

During the two school years prior to ordination Lazaron would travel alternately to Kalamazoo, Michigan and Wheeling, West Virginia, both of which had pulpits open for a permanent rabbi. Each congregation was an established pulpit of excellent repute. They had been previously served by full-time rabbis.

This practical work proved to be a great learning

experience for his future in the pulpit rabbinate. "For the first time I began to understand more profoundly the meaning and the spirit of the rabbinical office . . . This sobered and humbled me . . . Into my heart came the sense of solemn and terrible responsibility . . . to the whole system which had put the minister in so central and powerful position in the lives of human beings."[21]

As Lazaron's nine years of rabbinic training in Cincinnati drew to a close in June of 1914, his varied experiences had molded him into a mature young adult. The years he spent at the University of Cincinnati involved in many activities and organizations exposed him to a secular environment outside of the Hebrew Union College. His years at H.U.C. under the tutelage of Dr. Kaufmann Kohler, and his multiplicity of congregational experiences enabled the young rabbi to begin his career with the full devotion of his heart and soul.

> No one appreciates more than I, the responsibilities incumbert upon the Rabbi of today. He stands between the Old and the New. There must burn within him all the yearning, all the aspiration, all the accomplishment, all the martyrdom of his people; there must glow within him as a continuous fire, the promise of the future. He is a link in the most glorious tradition of the centuries. He must stand with one hand clasped lovingly about the past, while the other, bearing the light of his faith, blazes a way into the future. His is a wondrous privilege. But it is a sacred obligation.[22]

D. Wheeling, West Virginia: The Beginning of a Career

> The rabbis who were ordained forty years ago had better opportunities and wider choices

> than they who enter the ministry today . . . the first group of H.U.C. graduates were growing older and needed assistants . . . [and] communities were springing up and new congregations being organized.[23]

Morris Lazaron was fortunate, for there were many opportunities which presented themselves to him upon his ordination in 1914. While he had been serving the congregations in both Kalamazoo and in Wheeling, each had delayed hiring a permanent rabbi. Instead, it was their hope that Lazaron would accept the post upon the completion of his rabbinic studies.

> It was a relief to me to know, however, that should I want it, either pulpit was open, that I would not spend the last months of my senior year at the college uncertain as to my future.[24]

During the winter prior to ordination, Lazaron was approached by Dr. David Philipson who was the rabbi of a prominent Cincinnati congregation as well as a leading figure in the Reform movement. Dr. Philipson presented the soon to be rabbi several attractive options once he would be ordained. They were not only attractive but were also quite challenging.

Emanuel Congregation in New York City wanted Lazaron to come there and read a service for them. This often was a prelude to an invitation to become Assistant Rabbi. In addition, on the recommendation of Dr. Kohler, Dr. Emil G. Hirsch of Sinai Congregation in Chicago, a great leader himself within the American Jewish community, wanted to meet with Lazaron. As if these were not enough, Dr. Stephen S. Wise of the Free Synagogue in New York invited Lazaron to

speak to his youth groups and meet with the Board of his Temple.

> I was flattered but more deeply troubled. It would be untrue if I did not report that the hope to make a career in my chosen profession struggled with my desire to be a worthy minister and that both these natural impulses of the heart were pitted against the promptings of my mind which called on me to appraise each opportunity carefully and to put wisdom into the final choice. I finally made the decision. On March 22, 1914, I received a telegram from Congregation LeShem Shomayim in Wheeling that I had been unanimously elected as its rabbi.[25]

Wheeling is a city, located in Northern West Virginia, in the northern panhandle of the state, on the Ohio River some 70 miles southwest of Pittsburgh. It is noted as a commercial and manufacturing city, one of the chief business centers of the State. At one time it was the largest city in West Virginia. When Lazaron came to Wheeling the Jewish population was approximately 500 out of a total of approximately 44,000.[26]

Reform Congregation LeShem Shomayim was founded in the 1860's. Many of the original f milies had descendents who were still actively involved when Lazaron assumed his new position. Prior to appointing Lazaron, the congregation had a long line of fine and reputable rabbis who served their community. Rabbi Abram Brill was Lazaron's immediate predecessor; he returned to his native Mississippi to retire. The congregation had a fine temple built in the late 1890's. Peculiar in style, it served the needs of the congregation for many years. Located on Eoff Street, it was popularly referred to as the Eoff Street Temple.

Lazaron's tenure in Wheeling, much to his surprise, lasted but nine months. Having already served the congregation for two years on a bi-weekly basis, neither Lazaron nor the congregation were new to each other. As soon as he assumed the post full time in September 1914, he spent the next nine months actively involved in various activities.

In addition to conducting regular weekly services, teaching Sunday School, directing the youth group and Sisterhood, Lazaron also undertook several new ventures. He expanded the monthly congregational paper, "The Temple Journal." He organized a YMHA as well as local chapters of B'nai B'rith and the Jewish Chautauqua Society.

Those first few months in Wheeling were not only productive, but most satisfying to the young rabbi. The congregants already knew him and he enjoyed close relations with many of them.

Lazaron became especially close with the then President of the congregation, Louis Horkheimer. Horkheimer's family were founders of the Temple and he himself was an outstanding and notable citizen of Wheeling. Since Lazaron was a young bachelor, he spent many evenings dining with Louis and his wife Clementine. Both were quite fond of their young, attractive rabbi.

Horkheimer's daughter Pauline grew equally fond of Lazaron. "Polly" studied at Goucher College in Baltimore and had just graduated from Barnard College in New York City earlier that summer. For a woman to receive such a fine education was quite unusual at that time. For both Morris and

Polly, it was love at first sight:

> Our eyes met and I knew I would ask her to be my wife! But I was frightened. Not yet. Not yet. There was so much to do here [in Wheeling] even to get started.[27]

However, by the late Spring of 1915, Lazaron's time in Wheeling was coming to an end. It was the custom in that day that when a large congregation had lost its rabbi young rabbis from all over would rotate assuming the pulpit until the congregation found a replacement. It was in such spirit that Morris Lazaron accepted the invitation to conduct services and preach before the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation on May 8, 1915. Dr. Adolph Guttmacher had died and Lazaron felt it a matter of courtesy to accept the invitation to "supply" the pulpit for that Sabbath. He did so only on the condition that the congregation did not assume that his preaching would indicate his candidacy for the job.

Shortly after his return to Wheeling a group of men from Baltimore arrived with a firm proposal for Lazaron to become their new rabbi For Lazaron, it was a flattering surprise: For a young rabbi not yet one year out of school to be offered one of the oldest and most prestigious congregations in America was quite a compliment. In the rabbinical gossip at that time, it was dubbed the "record rabbinical high jump."[28] On May 26th Baltimore Hebrew Congregation unanimously elected Lazaron to succeed Dr. Guttmacher and in the span of just three short weeks the course of Lazaron's future took a great step forward.

The season of activities in Wheeling drew to its close

at the end of June. Early that summer Lazaron would be moving to Baltimore to assume the duties on September 1st. It was at a gala congregational farewell in his honor that Morris told Polly Horkheimer that he wasn't going to Baltimore without her. They were married a year later on May 1, 1916.[29] Though his tenure in Wheeling was short, it proved to be most successful for he found the companionship and love of a wife who would share many years of joy and happiness and would bless him with three children.

Before leaving for Baltimore, Lazaron received a letter from a young rabbinical student soon to be ordained in Cincinnati, who expressed great interest in filling the vacancy in Wheeling once Lazaron moved. He hoped that Lazaron would assist him. The student, Abba Hillel Silver, did in fact assume the pulpit after Lazaron left and also married Polly's sister, Virginia, before himself moving on to Tifereth Israel in Cleveland two years later.[30] This was not the only bond the two rabbis were to share in life. For in the years ahead both brothers-in-law were to become bitter enemies.

CHAPTER II

"PASTOR, PROPHET AND PRIEST: A RABBINIC LEADER"

> If you stay with me long and patiently enough, perhaps you may find something to amuse you; surely you will find something to annoy you. At any rate you will have walked with one man, a fellow American; laughed with him, wept with him; looked out on our country and its people through some of the changes of the last century. You will enter the mind and heart of a Jew and into the home of a rabbi; you will hear what he feels about Gentiles and Christians and he thinks you feel about Jews.[1]

A. Baltimore Hebrew Congregation: The Early Years

When Lazaron arrived in Baltimore shortly before the High Holidays in 1915, he was an enthusiastic, energetic 27 year old rabbi excited by the challenge of his new position. He was duly installed and for many months thereafter widely entertained by congregants. "Soon I became wary of noodle soup and squab. . . . Any young minister who comes to a new charge must have a cast iron stomach!"[2]

The first years at a congregation are often tenuous for one young and fresh with ideas for change and added activity, and so it was with Rabbi Lazaron. "His very ebulliency and energetic approach brought him into conflict with the very conservative leaders who were not quite ready to accept his progressive ideas."[3] As much as he sparked the hostility of many senior congregants, his youthful

approach attracted a wide following among the younger members of the Temple.

This tension between Rabbi Lazaron and the older members of the Temple leadership, and in particular with the Temple President, culminated in a most unfortunate climax in 1917. It was reported to the Board that a Boy Scout Troop using the Temple facilities had broken a few chairs and a window in one of the rooms. Lazaron was instructed that he had no right to permit the use of the rooms, as he had done in this case, without prior permission from the House Committee.

This provoked the President of the Congregation so, that at the Annual Meeting which was soon to take place, he intended reporting to the congregation that he could not get along with the rabbi. Lazaron got wind of what the President planned to do and felt compelled to submit his resignation to avoid any embarrassment. Taking the advice of some of his friends who were prominent Board members he kept quite and let them handle the situation. At the Annual Meeting the President's report was given and was followed by <u>his</u> resignation! A completely new set of officers, much younger and more active, was immediately installed.

B. The Honeymoon is Over

This "coup" gave Lazaron the confidence to surge ahead and make some significant changes in the programs and activities of the Temple. It also proved to be the beginning of a new era in the history of the congregation. With Lazaron's

support firmly established among the leadership of the Temple, and with a great following of younger, vibrant members behind him, Lazaron was for over three decades able to shape a new generation under his guidance and inspiration.

"What fruitful years they were. . . . Many innovations were introduced into the worship services that were new in Reform Jewish congregations."[4] One such innovation which Lazaron initiated was the processional of the Torah Scrolls during the Simchat Torah Service each Fall. "We reinterpreted the ancient ceremony using only three processionals dedicated to the Jewish past, present, and future, the Scrolls being carried by the older men, their sons and grandsons and daughters, respectively."[5]

In addition, a series of Sunday evening lectures bringing notable personalities in various fields of religious thought, humanities, and government was formulated. They became highly successful under Lazaron's direction and many were followed by an open forum for the entire community. This Sunday series lasted for many years. It was a vital part of the educational program which Lazaron deemed necessary to make available to the congregation.

Administratively, weekly postcards were sent out to the entire membership informing them of activities, sermon topics, and various other programs. This was later followed by a more formal Temple Bulletin which was one of the first of its kind, and was imitated by many other congregations. Lazaron felt it to be most important that the Temple reach as many of its congregants as possible, as often as possible.

Lazaron's special creative and energetic talent led to the organization of Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops, a club for adolescent boys led by the rabbi, a children's choir, a theatre group, evening Bible classes, Sunday morning discussion groups for 18-25 year olds, congregational family Seders, as well as special art exhibitions, dances, and numerous social events. The Temple Sisterhood expanded under the direction of both Rabbi and Polly Lazaron, the latter serving a two year term as President, and in 1918 a Brotherhood was formed.

The Religious School was an area of prime interest to the young rabbi. "With the advent of our young, able and enthusiastic leader and by his magnetism and hustling methods, a boom had been created in the Religious School."[6] Lazaron put together a full curriculum structured for ten years of graded study. A unique feature later adopted by most other Reform Temples, was the Sukkoth and Simhat Torah parade and pageant of children.

A congregational magazine, the "Shofar," continued to appear monthly but now began to more noticably reflect the activities of the Religious School as it contained more and more original contributions from the students.

During those first few years Lazaron's creativity also centered around various liturgical additions and changes in Temple life.[7] He wrote a completely new Yom Kippur Memorial Service centering around the themes of Birth, Life, and Death and substituted reading the long list of names of all the congregation's deceased members with a printed Memorial

Book instead.

He also published a book of services for Jewish youth entitled, "Consolations of our Faith," which provided a full array of material to supplement any life cycle event or for daily meditation. This volume was later used by most members of the Reform rabbinate in the same format as the Rabbi's Manual and the Union Home Prayerbook.[8]

Lazaron introduced a service of Consecration held the evening before Confirmation for the young people about to be confirmed. The teenagers would come to the Temple, sit by themselves and enjoy music, readings, and a brief discussion with the rabbi. In this way Lazaron had hoped to highlight the significance of the event which so often became overshadowed by the lavish celebration and parties.

Each year the Lazarons hosted an evening at their home for the young people involved in the Temple's Youth Group. An outdoor service was held on their sprawling lawn in suburban Pikesville as readings and songs were enjoyed by all. In his early years at the congr gation most of Lazaron's energies centered around the young members of the Temple. Instilling a deep and firm faith in them, he felt, would surely guarantee the strength of the next generation of Temple leaders.

C. World War I

> The War years 1917 and 1918 were traumatic. Many of the young men of the congregation were among the 1600 Jews from Maryland who enlisted or were drafted into military service--a few of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation boys making the supreme sacrifice.[9]

Once the United States became involved in World War I, the entire focus of the nation shifted to Europe. Congregations had to greatly curtail the number of activities and services they offered on account of fuel rationing. Rabbi Lazaron felt compelled to contribute his part to the War effort, as did many rabbis, beyond simply ministering to the needs of his congregation or seeing to the concerns of those whose loved ones were sent overseas.

Lazaron joined the Jewish Welfare Board, the agency which coordinated military Chaplains, and he directed their activities for seven months at Camp Merritt. Camp Merritt was located in northern New Jersey and was the "jumping off place" for duty in France. Baltimore Hebrew Congregation gave Lazaron a leave of absence in order to serve this post.

In September 1918, Lazaron enlisted as a Chaplain in the Army. The congregation granted him another leave for an indefinite period. After the holidays that Fall, he reported to the Chaplains School at Camp Taylor, Kentucky, outside of Louisville. However, just as he received his orders to report for overseas duty in Europe the Armistice was signed. So, in December 1918, Lazaron returned to Baltimore to pick up where he left off in leading his congregation.

Three years later, as a Major in the Chaplain Reserve Corp of the Army, Rabbi Lazaron was invited by the Secretary of War to participate in the exercises for the Burial of the Unknown Soldier. Lazaron would be the Jewish representative to officiate at services at the National Cemetery in Arlington,

Virginia, with three other clergymen. He was asked to do this not so much because of his national prestige in the military but rather through his acquaintance with the Secretary of War. "No one who was at Arlington that day will ever forget the occasion. Cars and people jammed the then narrow road that led up the hill by Ft. Meyer to the marble amphitheatre. Representatives of all foreign governments were there."[10]

D. The Post War Years

> The Post War years saw a rejuvenescence of fruitful activity and broadening usefulness. The process of modernization and Americanization had long since changed the old parochial attitudes of the "German Hebrews". They were no longer "Germans" but full fledged American Jews . . . imbued with a strong communal consciousness.[11]

In addition to this expanded activity within the congregation, the Baltimore Jewish community itself grew to a sizeable number by 1920. From a population of 10,000 Jews in 1880, the community grew to just over 60,000 by 1920.[12]

It remained at approximately that number for much of the following decade, due to the restrictions put on immigration following World War I.

During this decade prior to the depression, Lazaron initiated several innovations which reflect similar changes which Reform congregations were experiencing throughout the United States. In 1921, "reserved" assigned seats at regular sabbath services were replaced with a system of free seating, although preassigned seats for the High Holydays remained. Double services, early and late, had to be held

on the holidays in order to accomodate the large membership.

Sunday services were substituted for Sunday evening lectures. They usually began with a short ritual service, music and a sermon from either Rabbi Lazaron or from a guest speaker. As in most congregations, this Sunday Service continued for only a few years with varied success.

As the Baltimore Jewish community began to emerge as a united group, no longer as cognizant of the German-East European split, many of the positions of communal leadership were held by Baltimore Hebrew congregants. Therefore, demands were being made on Lazaron outside of his congregational work. Lazaron soon became a great leader within the the Baltimore Jewish community participating in numerous Committees as well as appearing at social, educational, and spiritual gatherings to help direct the activity of the community.[13]

Lazaron prided himself on his creative and innovative contributions to both his congregation and to the Baltimore community. He became an especially forceful spiritual and literary figure as he appeared each week on local radio programs. Fostered by his long interest in the performing arts, he was an ever present personality on shows such as "The Wheel of Life" and in the nationally broadcasted "The Message of Israel Hour" and "Church of the Air."

The 1920's proved to be a decade of great activity for the Baltimore Jewish Community, Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, and especially for Rabbi Morris Lazaron. The country was experiencing a post-War boom which affected all aspects of

life. Firmly established as a community leader and fairly secure in his position at his congregation, Lazaron burst forth with renewed challenge and energy only to become subdued with the crash of the stock market in October 1929 and the years of the Great Depression.

During this period Lazaron became involved in many national organizations. His deep interest in interfaith (see chapter 3) led to his commitment to and participation in the National Conference of Christians and Jews. He also served on numerous committees of the Central Conference of American Rabbis which reflect his varied interests and concerns. From 1920-1929, he served on the Church and State, Finance, and Solicitation Committees, the Committee on the Falashas, the Liturgical Literature Committee, and several other C.C.A.R. groups.[14]

It was this very involvement on a national level in so many organizations that later brought Lazaron into conflict with many Board members of the congregation. He saw his activities as an integral part of his rabbinate and as an extension of his work at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. The congregation often saw these activities as deterents to Lazaron's proper performance of his ministerial duties in Baltimore. It was a tension which remained with Lazaron for the duration of his professional association with the congregation.

E. Pauline's Death and the Summons to Chicago

By the early 1930's, Lazaron had received a wide

spectrum of recognition as a leader in the American rabbinate. In Baltimore, at the helm of its oldest and largest congregation, Lazaron's leadership was undisputable. Nationally, through his National Conference of Christians and Jews Tours (see chapter 3), the rabbi became known as a prominent figure in civic affairs. In addition, because of his particular stance on Zionism, he was beginning to gain an even wider recognition.

On April 25, 1933, at the pinnacle of his career, Rabbi Lazaron's world seemed on the verge of collapse. After suffering an attack of streptococcus viridens, his beloved Pauline died. "A graduate of Barnard, richly endowed mentally, beautiful to look at and with a rare spirituality, she was comrade and helpmate, confidant and friend who brought me the deep abiding tenderness and love that only a woman can give."[15] In addition to the intense grief of her untimely death, Lazaron was faced with the responsibility of now being both father and mother to their three children, Morris Jr., then 16, Harold, 13, and Clementine, 9.

Pauline Lazaron was not only a devoted wife and mother but was an involved and active Baltimorian in her own right. She was a former president of the Sisterhood of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation and former president of the Federation of Jewish Women's Organizations. Her other associations included the Baltimore District of the Child Study Association and the Council of Jewish Women. Her death at the young age of thirty-nine left the entire community bereft of a most commited and loyal member:

> Pauline Lazaron was a rare soul, blessed with wisdom and understanding beyond her years; spiritual, charming, and gifted; giving of herself unstintingly in her efforts to develop the potentialities in her loved ones, and to enrich their lives, and giving of herself in like measure to friend, synagogue, and Sisterhood.[16]

It was not until twelve years later in July of 1945 on the eve of his retirement that Rabbi Lazaron found in another woman the companionship and love which he shared with his beloved Polly. In 1945, he married Hilda Rothschild Rosenblatt. She was the daughter of a senior member of the Baltimore Hebrew Board at the time Lazaron came to Baltimore. Hilda and her late husband were also longtime friends of the Lazarons.

In the meantime, in the aftermath of Polly's death, Lazaron submerged himself into his work to help ease his grief and loneliness.

> I needed to work. I never doubted the existence of God, I never rebelled against his will, though I was tempted to question his judgement. Some evenings as I sat out on the terrace . . . I seem[ed] to feel Polly's presence, several times it was as if her hand touched me caressingly to calm and comfort me. I needed to work, to work harder than I had ever worked before.[17]

It was at this point in his professional career that Lazaron contemplated a change. He had been in Baltimore for nearly two decades and had raised an entire generation of congregants. They were fruitful and active years. Many friendships were made, yet his ministry was not with aggravations. More and more pressure was put on him, as the time went on and as he became more deeply involved in activities

which took him from Baltimore, that he should curtail his schedule a bit.

In the Fall of 1934, Lazaron received an invitation to become the rabbi of one of the largest Reform congregations in Chicago, Temple Sholom. While on a speaking tour in the southwest for the National Conference of Christians and Jews, an active correspondence took place as the leadership of that Temple tried to convince Lazaron to accept their offer.[18] It proved to be a most difficult decision for Lazaron to make.

> I had found out very soon after her (Polly's) death that the solution for me was work and more work, keeping at it as many hours of the day and night as my body and mind could take. Everywhere I turned around the house, on the lawn, in the garden, the emptiness pressed me. . . . Not even the love and devotion of children can fill the place of a wife's love. In Chicago I might find the surcease, the inspiration and the fresh challenges which would help me to rebuild my life.[19]

The offer from Chicago proved significant in another aspect. As Baltimore Hebrew Congregation had been voicing its complaints about the amount of time that Lazaron spent on activities other than congregational work, the Chicago invitation included the assurance that once he had established himself at Temple Sholom, he could spend unlimited amounts of time pursuing the things which he saw as vital in his rabbinate.[20]

Initially, Lazaron accepted the invitation to go to Temple Sholom. Once he returned to Baltimore from his speaking trip and informed the Board there and its senior members of his decision, he was quickly persuaded to change his mind. The details of the negotiations were not made

public. However, a sense of security and continuity for his children, as well as the assurance to be able to continue his outside work had a great influence on his decision to change his mind and remain in Baltimore.

CHAPTER III

"PIONEER OF INTERFAITH"

> I was interested in everything. While I conceived of my congregation as organized primarily to serve the religious needs of its own constituency, in my mind it should also be an instrument for a greater purpose; it should serve the community and nation. Everything that concerned human welfare was germane to its work. The synagogue I believed should be the dynamo where spiritual energies were germinated and from which those energies went out to serve the larger community.[1]

This philosophy of community involvement, a commitment to a wider scope of affairs incumbent upon rabbi and congregation, was a cornerstone of Morris Lazaron's philosophy. It was shaped by his childhood in Savannah where he knew and befriended people of all faiths and races. It was a philosophy fostered while studying at the Hebrew Union College where Dr. Kohler's universal mission of the Jews was forcefully taught. Community involvement, and later participation in National affairs concerning interfaith and goodwill between Christians and Jews was a primary aspect of Lazaron's ministry.

A. History of the Interfaith Movement and the Rise of the National Conference of Christians and Jews

The term interfaith became popular in the 1920's. It evolved out of a need to distinguish between the idea of "goodwill between faiths" and "ecumenism." Ecumenism stands

for pan-Christianity. Interfaith, however, expresses a dual meaning. To some it implies "an attempt to reconcile differing religious beliefs and the harbinger of a new universal religion."[2] To others, by contrast, interfaith merely implies a "nonsyncretistic program of peaceful coexistence and cooperation" amongst religious groups. This latter definition of the term reflects a broader interpretation. It enables many different activities and programs to fall under its usage.[3]

The 1920's and the 1930's were difficult decades for our nation. The Great Depression, the rise of Hitler, and threats of communism gave way to a spread of hatred throughout the United States. The Ku Klux Klan raged the land in opposition to Negroes, Roman Catholics, and Jews. Father Coughlin attempted to make the name Jew synonymous with communism. Henry Ford's Dearborn Independent corrupted the thinking of so many in malicious anti-Semitic writings. Anti-Catholic propaganda flourished as well. Ugly suspicions, as well as social and economic unrest plagued all three great religious groups.

These factors, in addition to the spirit of wartime cooperation, the remnants of which still flourished long after the war had ended, eventually pushed religious groups together in hopes of finding solutions to growing problems. At first, each particular religious denomination chose to combat the ills of society from within their own ranks. Later, each group saw that in cooperation with other religious groups their goal could be more fully realized.

As early as 1908 Protestants organized the Federal Council of Churches (FCC). Originally this group hoped to create internal Protestant harmony but it later spread out to encompass goodwill between various other faiths. Likewise, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the American Jewish Committee, and B'nai B'rith all worked within their own organizational structure to issue statements, along with the FCC, on topics relating to interfaith concerns. These ranged from responses to K.K.K. outbreaks of violence to more formal addresses to combat the spread of anti-Semitism.

It was not until 1928 that a successful attempt was made to establish one national organization that would represent a broad program of goodwill between faiths. This new body, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, would act as a voluntary, independent body comprised of representatives from all denominations. The Conference adopted three goals as the cornerstone of its formation:

> 1. To analyze and allay prejudice arising among religious groups in the United States.
>
> 2. To establish a basis of cooperation for common ends while insuring the right of individuals and groups to differ.
>
> 3. To immunize the public mind and emotions against propagandas of misinformation and hatred by developing mutual understanding and appreciation.[4]

Dr. Everett R. Clinchy who had served as Secretary of the Federal Council Committee was appointed as Executive Director to run this new national body.

The National Conference of Christians and Jews then

became the sole organization which has as its specific purpose to promote "justice, amity, understanding, and cooperation among Protestant, Catholics, and Jews in America."[5] Under Clinchy's able direction sections and chapters were founded in cities throughout the United States in order to organize forums and discussions to promote the N.C.C.J.'s ideals.

Rabbis, ministers and priests made nationwide tours to speak to groups under the auspices of the N.C.C.J. National Conferences and seminars were held. The organization became quite successfully known even though few rabbis participated in its activities. Many were of the opinion that the N.C.C.J. was too "Christian" an organization.

A unique strategy of the N.C.C.J. was its utilization of sociology, psychology, and educational techniques along with religious doctrines in attempting to solve the problem of prejudice in America. By 1939, in fact, just prior to World War II, programs had been instituted in churches, schools, farms, youth groups, women's groups, and most importantly, on college campuses. The N.C.C.J. became nationally recognized and accepted as the organization symbolizing the highest hopes and aspirations of interfaith.

B. Lazaron's Role As A Pioneer of Interfaith

> It was not until I was ordained, had a congregation of my own and entered upon my career as a rabbi, that real opportunities came to promote interfaith understanding.[6]

As soon as Lazaron moved to Baltimore and became an

established figure in the community, he began to expand his rabbinate to include the work of promoting goodwill between the faiths. Lazaron shared a most intimate bond with Hugh Birckhead, the then rector of Immanual Protestant Episcopal Church in Baltimore. They were among the first rabbi and minister in Baltimore to occupy each other's pulpit.

This close friendship took them both, in 1921, on a mission to Palestine.

> With the unanimous consent of our wives, Hugh and I decided to make a pilgrimage to Palestine together. The announcement shook the city of Baltimore, started it talking. The late John Latane, then head of the history faculty at Johns Hopkins University could find no precedent for a Protestant minister and a rabbi making such a trip. It was strange, unique, fantastic! The late Bishop Murray of the Protestant Episcopal Diocese of Maryland was not so sure it was "the corect and proper" thing to do. Betting, they say, began in the clubs of the town as to who was coming back what. Was Lazaron coming back a Christian, or was Birckhead coming back a Jew? Finally it was decided to call off all bets because it was said, if any one converted, surely it would be Lazaron, because in his case the transition would be effected with less physical discomfort![7]

On their trip to Palestine Birckhead and Lazaron's friendship deepened as they visited the sites of the Holy City of Jerusalem together. They met and talked with Zionist, Arab, Jewish, Moslem, and Christian leaders as well as government officials in an attempt to more fully understand the tensions in the region.

They parted company in Jerusalem to meet again in London before returning to the States. In the meantime, Lazaron took a fact finding trip to Jewish centers in Italy,

Egypt, Austria, Poland, Germany, and finally to England. He did so at the request of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. Lazaron later furnished reports to the Committee which enabled them to strengthen their fundraising efforts for Eastern European relief and Palestine restoration.[8]

During his side trip to Europe, Lazaron was deeply touched by a visit to the ghettos of Poland. Seeing the misery of his fellow Jews, talking with their leaders as well as with government officials, there seemed little hope for their survival.

> The Jews of Poland had been brought to degradation by the persistent pressures of discrimination, lack of economic opportunity. The one light in the darkness of their lives was their religion.[9]

Upon his return to the States, Lazaron continued as vigourously as ever to work on behalf of promoting goodwill between Christians and Jews. It became a great passion and joy from which much satisfaction was derived. More than most rabbis, Lazaron saw interfaith as a personal mission. What prompts an individual to pioneer a specific charity, or to work for a particular organization is not always clear. But interfaith became almost an obsession for Lazaron as he saw it to be an integral part of his rabbinate. Perhaps growing up in such an assimilated American background as opposed to most of his Reform colleagues who were East European immigrants or children of immigrants. Lazaron felt especially at ease and understanding of the non-Jew. There was no innate fear of persecution or suspicion of the

gentile. The gentile way of life had never been alien to this American rabbi. Another reason which might help to understand more fully why Lazaron was one of the few rabbis to become so involved in interfaith was his need to be a leader. By blazing a path where few of his colleagues traveled enabled Lazaron to have more of a chance at being a leader in the organization.

C. Lazaron and the N.C.C.J.

By 1928 Lazaron's reputation as a devoted champion of goodwill coupled with his talent to speak and to captivate an audience, caught the eyes of the leadership of the fledgling N.C.C.J.

> One day shortly after Everett Clinchy began his work as Director of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, I received a letter from him asking me to call to see him on my next trip to New York. I did. We clicked! And what rich and happy experiences filled the following fifteen years.[10]

After Lazaron's friendship with Clinchy deepened with time, Clinchy shared a dream of his which would further spread the word of the Conference. It was his idea that a Protestant minister, a Roman Catholic priest, and a rabbi travel throughout the country to promote goodwill at meetings in major cities and towns across the nation. He envisioned the three leading discussions addressing the most crucial and even embarrassing issues of interfaith conflict. From dispelling stereotypes to explaining theological differences, the trio would be a symbol of what the Conference hoped to achieve.

Clinchy's idea was met with great enthusiasm and support within the organization. So, beginning in Baltimore on October 31, 1933, Dr. Everett Clinchy, Father John Ross, a Catholic minister from Charlottesville, Virginia, and Rabbi Morris Lazaron set out to travel 9,000 miles throughout the country. The trio spoke in 38 cities before surprising turnouts of over 60,000 people at nearly 119 meetings.

Their nationwide trip drew a lot of media attention. "The item appeared with three others in a news reel including the famous Lindy (Charles Lindburgh's historic flight over the Atlantic) and Mussolini (the Fascist dictator of Italy), so you can see in what company" they were.[11]

The Jewish Mediator dubbed the trio as the "Three Musketeers" and Time magazine called them the "Flying Ministerial Circus." Indeed, the concept of clergymen traveling together on such a mission became quite noteworthy and captured the attention of the nation.

Meetings in each city were organized by local civic groups, women's groups, churches and synagogues. The three would arrive in a town and embark on a whirlwind schedule of speaking engagements at these various places. These gatherings were always covered by the local press which seemed overwhelmingly to label their mission a success by the numbers of people it attracted.

At each meeting, the three men would address current problems and issues facing their religious groups. Group prejudices, misconceptions, and hostilities were aired and debated in an open forum style. "We want to build a tariff

wall against importation of old world prejudices and antipathies. We can always expect conflict in religious matters, but this need not be hostile or violent. It can be stimulating and rich, with all realizing the differences of the other as worthwhile."[12] Using dialogue as a tool, their hope was also to analyze the causes of interreligious as well as racial tension. It was a first attempt at devising a technique that would produce understanding, sympathy, and tolerance.

One of the most important groups the trio addressed on their trip were students on college campuses. Lazaron especially saw his role as vital in teaching Jewish students on campus how better to cope with Jewish-Christian relations.

> The Jewish student faces the job of integrating himself in the life of the campus. But the Christian student faces the same job. Only the Jew belong to a minority group; a group against which there is a recognized prejudice. When the Jewish student understands that his integration can be achieved more easily and more happily by being himself, by loyalty to the best traditions of his Jewish heritage and when he practices that loyalty, he will cease to conceive of himself as a problem. He does not have to relinquish--indeed, he cannot relinquish--his Jewish background and inheritance.
>
> Finally, it is well for Jews to realize that while anti-Semitism today is more organized, more powerful, more utterly ruthless than ever before in Jewish history, never before have Christians risen in such number; so nobly and so powerfully to our defense. We make a mistake if we underestimate the number and power of our friends.[13]

In summation of his three month journey, Lazaron wrote that "the three of us had agreed on several points: That there would be no watering down of the Catholic, Protestant,

or Jewish position; That we would make it clear we did not desire to reduce religion to a common denominator, that each would stand loyal to his own religious and cultural background and tradition."[14]

Due to the widespread success of the mission, Lazaron, Clinchy, and Ross were awarded the Richard Gottheil Medal in 1933 by the Zeta Beta Tau Fraternity. The Gottheil Medal is an award given annually to the American(s) who has done the most for Jewry. In 1935, in celebration of Lazaron's twentieth anniversary at Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, the Congregation granted him the time to devote a large part of his energies that year to expanding the work of the Conference. In 1936, Rutgers University conferred upon him the ho orary degree of Litt.D.

The energy with which Morris Lazaron committed himself to the task of promoting goodwill among all faiths was impressive. Besides the rigors of the 1933 trip, and subsequent shorter trips which followed, he spoke weekly from his pulpit and wrote several books expressing his profound devotion to this very crucial aspect of his rabbinate. At the same time, of course, he continued to lead one of America's largest congregations. "Whatever I have accomplished in this regard has been due, I believe, to my faith as a Jew. We must pool the faith that is in us that justice is real and loving kindness more than a phrase . . . Christians and Jews . . . let us be patient with each other, trusting each other, working together for human liberty and justice."[15]

Before that fateful Sunday on December 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and the United States plunged into World War II, rumblings of war had been felt for several years. Lazaron again felt the responsibility to enlist in the Army but was forced to stay out of active Chaplain duty because of an ulcer condition.

Instead, he devoted his energies to serving the N.C.C.J. in whatever way he could to assist in their wartime efforts. In the Spring of 1941, just prior to Pearl Harbor, Dr. Clinchy conceived of an idea for a clergy mission to England to study the effect of the war on religion and human relations. "No one could have been more helpful than Sumner Wells, the Under Secretary of State, who, when we placed that suggestion before him, he saw its significance and arranged all matters necessary to its success."[16]

That Fall, Lazaron, Clinchy, and Father Vincent Donovan, a Dominican priest, embarked on their European journey. In order to make the trip, it meant that Lazaron would be away from his congregation for the High Holy days. He accepted the invitation to go, but assured the Board of the Temple that it was with the stipulation that arrangements would be made for him to address the congregation by telephone from London on Yom Kippur.

By 1941, Lazaron had also gained recognition for his outspoken views as an anti-Zionist. This particular stance (see chapter which follows) did not hold him in high regard amongst the leaders of the American Jewish community. When announcement of his trip to England was made, a number of

Zionist leaders wrote to the various layleaders of the N.C.C.J. protesting Lazaron's participation. It was their opinion that he did not represent the majority of American Jews.[17]

The following editorial entitled, "Who Chose Lazaron?", appeared in the Congress Weekly, a Zionist publication:

> It may be well for the representatives of the three denominations to learn something about the world of tomorrow. But the proverbial "man in the street" is known to be possessed of the weakness that his own opinions are generally colored by the opinions of those who question him [i.e. Lazaron]. . . . [He] represents the mood of but a tiny fraction of American Jewry. . . . His appearance in England as a spokesman . . . will be a gross misrepresentation.[18]

Despite the protests, Lazaron did make the mission to England. The Conference maintained that he was not being sent as a representative of American Jewry but rather as a clergyman dedicated to human rights and goodwill. The trip was most inspiring for the trio.

> The terms of our mission were only vaguely defined, we were in a sense turned loose in England to keep our eyes open, to observe leaders and people, to bring back whatever insights, reactions, and help we could for our own country.[19]

Before returning to the States, the three met with Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of England, and Lazaron bestowed upon him the Biblical priestly benediction.

Throughout his entire active rabbinate, Lazaron played a crucial role in the early work of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Stimulated by a philosophy which included mutual goodwill between all faiths and through his friendship with Everett Clinchy, Lazaron gave of his time

and efforts on behalf of the N.C.C.J.

Lazaron also happened to live in a period of great challenge to religious groups, especially to the Jewish people. Jews were wrestling with the problem of their own identity and security as a people as well as Americans. Most Reform rabbis at that time chose Zionism as a mission to solve what they saw as the Jewish problem. For Lazaron, a disciple of the great Kaufmann Kohler, interfaith, those efforts to strengthen the American Jewish community on principles of tolerance, equality and justice was his chosen path.

After the war, Lazaron's involvement in the Conference began to slowly wane. His last official cooperation with the N.C.C.J. was in 1946 when he was a delegate to a meeting in England to lay the foundation for a world Brotherhood Movement. Unfortunately by this time Zionist pressure on the leaders of the N.C.C.J. became too great and Lazaron no longer received the number of invitations he had previously enjoyed.

> I had strongly opposed the setting up of a Zionist State in Palestine; I had spoken persistently and vigourously against Jewish nationalism . . . Zionist pressure was strong. I deeply regret the dissociation from the Conference as my heart and soul are in its work.[20]

D. Summing It All Up

> My life has been made richer because of my Christian friends. I think of them now, a long list from my boyhood days, and each one has brought some gift of helpfulness, of encouragement, of inspiration or of challenge.

> They have helped me to be myself in fuller measure. They have given me greater confidence in the things that make up the stuff of the Jewish soul and they have suggested a future for Jews and Christians and for all the children of men which for grandeur and loveliness is beyond compare. They have not sought to convert me nor have I sought to convert them. We have cared for each other, not despite our differences, but because of them.[21]

Lazaron's many years of service to the National Conference gave birth to two books. In 1938, Lazaron published his first major work, Common Ground: A Plea for Intelligent Americanism. The book was dedicated "to those friends Christians and Jews whose affection confidence and inspiration from my youth until now have helped me to be what I am, an American and a Jew."

Lazaron begins the book with a short essay on his personal background growing up in America and how that has led him to the philosophy he espouses.

> The central idea and purpose of my ministry, which have influenced these latter years, had been gathering clarity and strength. I felt myself thoroughly Jewish and completely American; and there seemed so many barriers of ignorance and prejudice--unnecessary and wrong--between Christian and Jew that had to be broken down. The friendships I had made among non-Jews, which have always been such a profound influence in my life, showed me not only how much we Jews can learn from our Christian fellow citizens, but how much we have to give them in return.[22]

Lazaron then moves on to address the key issues which he felt faced America at that time.

> The issue before the American people today is clear. It is not political; not which party shall be in power. It is deeper than the serious economic problems which face us, more far reaching than the burning question of

> government relation to business, finance, the great corporations or the average citizens. The issue is the preservation of the American tradition of freedom and the democratic organization of society.[23]

The bulk of the book addresses this problem. Lazaron offers a solution with his novel concept of a "new dynamic."

> My country needs the dynamic of a great idea that shall humanize its physical defense and by giving it a profounder meaning than that of mere survival. . . . That dynamic can come from the ancient shrines where men, through the ages, have gone to foster hope, to gather strength, to deepen faith.[24]

> We need a new dynamic in our America. It must be, it only can be a dynamic of the spirit. A dynamic that will once more make men proud to work and to give work; that will overcome the unwholesome lethargy which has infested the nation like a plague and sapped its very vitality.[25]

Common Ground is the chronicle of one man's experiences as a pioneer of the interfaith movement in America. It is an expression of one man's hopes and aspirations, and a book about one man's insights into the American scene. Lazaron expresses himself clearly with a fluid, prolific style. At times he reiterates his ideas, especially repeating in different ways the "new dynamic" concept. The book was widely circulated for Lazaron sent copies to nearly all of his colleagues. Their response was mostly complimentary. Only the chapter on Jewish nationalism drew some cautionary words (see chapter 4 for further clarification of his stance on Jewish nationalism).[26]

Lazaron's second book, Bridges--Not Walls, was published in 1959. Once again, Lazaron chronicles his impressions of the challenges of interfaith relations. He expresses his

strong feelings toward the goals of organized religion in this task.

> This is the task of religion: to see to it that peace shall be written in its spirit and underwritten by the will and fervor of believers; to see to it in the name of the living God that no basic human rights shall be ruthlessly destroyed. If men who say they believe in God--His Fatherhood--and in man's brotherhood, lived as if that belief were true, a great revival of the spirit could transform our world. That is what Moses and Jesus were talking about.[27]

Throughout the entire book Lazaron is guided by the singular theme that all faiths can live together harmoniously and creatively learning from each through openness and tolerance.

> For Jews, Catholics and Protestants there are two areas in which we may and should work together; we may and should insist upon spiritual values as the basic of human life; and we may and should insist that those values be expressed in economics and politics and in human relations.[28]

Bridges--Not Walls is very similar in scope and content to Common Ground. However, Lazaron safely sticks to interfaith and does not include any reflection on Jewish nationalism as he had in Common Ground.

Neither of Lazaron's books will ever be recorded as significant volumes. They reflect a specific challenge at a specific time in our nation's history and how one clergyman proposed to meet it. Yet, each does reflect the challenge which faced organized religions in America at a very critical juncture in our history. Lazaron was deeply involved in bridging the gap between faiths and formalized that commitment in his books. Common Ground and Bridges--Not Walls are

best judged for their perception and understanding of the problem of tolerance between faiths inherent in our democratic nation. Both offer tangible solutions to deeply felt problems.

Over twenty years have passed since Bridges--Not Walls was published, twice that time since Common Ground. Was Lazaron correct in his evaluation? Was he astute in his perception? Generally speaking, yes. Tolerance, understanding, and the firm belief in a system of democracy and justice has been the cornerstone of religious freedom in America. Lazaron among all of his colleagues stood out as a leader in promoting this goodwill and as a representative of Judaism's support for its cause.

CHAPTER IV

THE ZIONIST ISSUE

> Political Zionism, the movement to establish a Jewish State in Palestine, was the culmination of the Jewish Nationalist aspirations of the nineteenth century. It derived from sources both ancient and modern, but the result was a totally new entity. Its roots went back to age old Jewish messianic thought, in which the return to the Holy Land was central, but Zionist ideology was secularist and marked a revolutionary break from the religious interpretation of Jewish existence.[1]

In every generation, the Jewish people and particularly the leaders of the Jewish community are faced with unique and challenging issues. During the first half of the twentieth century, especially the years between the World Wars, Zionism was such an issue. Nearly all Jews in America who considered themselves to be Jews by affiliating with various organizations were involved in some way with Zionism; whether it be as diligent supporters or as active opponents of the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. As Naomi Cohen illustrates, it was an issue which transcended the realm of religion, and became increasingly a question of Jewish survival.

A. Zionism and the Reform Movement: A Critical Debate

> The story of the evolution of the official attitude of Reform Judaism in America to the Zionist movement is a stirring and at times dramatic one. Over a period of almost exactly one hundred years Reform has gone all the way from passionate and

> vehement denunciation of Zionism to steps constituting, if not an implicit acceptance of the ideology of the movement at least a full recognition of the reality of the Jewish national restoration. The change was not easily achieved, and the century was scarred by numerous skirmishes. Many, too, were the "casualties" of the idological fray.[2]

In 1885 the Reform Movement issued a set of principles reflecting its ideological and philosophical tenets. This "Pittsburgh Platform" clearly stated the Reform attitude toward any Jewish national restoration:

> . . . We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore accept neither a return to Palestine . . . nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish State.[3]

This declaration was made at a time when Jews in America were most concerned about their religious freedom and their acceptance and integration into American life. Zionism was just beginning to win adherents in Europe and the fervor to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine had not yet swept to America's shores.

As anti-Semitism in Europe grew and as pro-Zionist Jews immigrated, the Zionist Movement began to develop in America as well. By the early part of the 20th century the Reform Movement found itself facing an internal ideological conflict. On the one hand, it had formally espoused a thoroughly anti-Zionist platform, a platform which was supported by most of the prominent older rabbinic leaders of the Movement as well as the Reform seminary, the Hebrew Union College. On the other hand, more and more of the Reform constituency as well as the greater Jewish community at large actively supported Zionism, particularly after the Balfour

Declaration (1917) which won official government support. Many of the young students now seeking admission to the Hebrew Union College, especially those of East European descent, deeply supported the Zionist Movement.

Under these influences, the Reform Movement slowly changed. In 1937, in the Columbus Platform, it formally broke with the anti-Zionist Pittsburgh statement, and resolved instead that:

> We affirm the obligation of all Jewry to aid in its [Palestine] upbuilding as a Jewish homeland by endeavoring to make it not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life.[4]

The debate on Zionism in the years between the Pittsburgh and Columbus Platforms raged widely within the Reform Movement. It had a profound effect on the careers of many a Reform rabbi at that time. Ones position on the issue of a Jewish homeland could often be the deciding factor in a job offer or the reason for a dismissal. Few Reform rabbis could escape taking some public stand on the issue.

For Morris Lazaron, Zionism became the most critical issue of his rabbinate, the one that brought him notoriety. He is still bitterly remembered for his activities in opposition to the Zionist Movement, even as his important contributions to the Jewish community are overlooked. As Lazaron's career demonstrates, Zionism had become such a critical issue that it alone could make or break a successful rabbinical career.

B. Lazaron As An Early Zionist

> My earliest memory of Zionism dates back to when I was a lad. My parents took me to hear Jacob DeHaas [a noted Zionist leader--Secretary to Theodor Herzl and associate of Louis Brandeis] lecture in Savannah on the renationalization of the Jew. I sensed at that time a warmth and a glow which came not only from what he said, but from the man himself.[5]

When Morris Lazaron went off to pursue his rabbinic studies at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati he did not come from a strong Zionist background. Unlike many of his classmates at the College, his parents were not immigrants and he had not experienced at home any sense of emotional attachment toward the rebirth of a Jewish homeland. Lazaron's family was American in every sense of the word. This was a great source of pride for the young rabbinic student. He was not in opposition to Zionism, but neither was he an ardent supporter either.

> Under the influence of Dr. Kohler, I did not leave the College with any very active, anti-Zionist principles, though there had been some controversy at the College [the dismissal of professors], between Zionism and anti-Zionism, [and] some discussions as to the compatibility of Reform Judaism and Zionism.[6]

When Lazaron accepted his first position in Wheeling, West Virginia, and then his subsequent post at Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, he was neither an active Zionist nor an anti-Zionist. During his first years in Baltimore, as he became more involved with the Jewish community, he started to participate in Zionist activities:

> I went to Baltimore only moderately non-Zionist. Things happened which disturbed me, challenged my sense of what was right and just and kind.

> Dr. Max Heller, a leading Reform rabbi who was a Zionist was refused the pulpit of a Reform congregation. . . . Then came the war 1914-1918. The campaign for relief educated the American Jewish community. . . . Politics were minimized; philanthropy, resettlement emphasized. . . . I defined my conception of Jewish nationalism in an address from my own pulpit . . .
>
> "The concept of Jewish peoplehood, of Jewish nationality has no political or material purpose. It is but the means through which we may perhaps with greater surety fulfill our obligation to be a blessing to the peoples. Its program may be political, but only insofar as existing world conditions and the conduct of international relations makes it necessary.
>
> The desire for group life is dear to a large proportion of our people. The best opinion in this group dreams to establish gradually, through colonization, a majority population in Palestine and finally to achieve local self-government under the aegis of some power or concert of powers, which shall guarantee them security in life, liberty and the pursuit of Jewish idealism. They long to build up the ideal society which shall form the pattern for humanity and at the same time will be a dynamic center of Jewish life, sending out its inspiration to scattered Israel, strengthening and heartening him the world over in his consecrated cause to struggle against the forces of injustice and unrighteousness, of superstition and error. <u>They do not dream to set up an independent kingdom or republic, with standing army and ships of Tarshish up to date and ambassadors in the courts of the world</u>. They do not wish to participate in international intrigue nor expatriate any of their co-religionists whose allegiance to their present home is fixed and agreeable. <u>Local autonomy is all that is desired</u>. This is not in conflict with national loyalty or international comity, nor is it opposed to good citizenship here in America or any other country.[7]

In this statement early in his career, Lazaron defines his Zionist support as purely philanthropic in nature. He states quite clearly that his view of Jewish nationalism in no way hinders his loyalty to America. To Lazaron, Zionism merely means supporting a refuge for Jews who are oppressed throughout the world and building an ideal society as an

example for humanity. It in no way implies any desire to promote a national, political state in Palestine.

Lazaron travelled to Palestine in 1921. In the Fall of 1922 when a joint Senate-House Resolution supporting the Balfour Declaration came up for hearings, Lazaron accepted an invitation to speak before the Committee. He also spoke for the Joint Distribution Committee. Although he was not committed to any political conception of a Jewish State, he nevertheless joined the Zionist Organization of America.

C. Disenchantment

Although his activity in the Zionist organization heightened, Lazaron slowly began to experience frustration. First of all, he began to feel that "Zionism insinuated itself into American Jewish life in the guise of philanthropy."[8] Zionism, and its activities, he saw, became a substitute for Jewish identity and Jewish education.

Lazaron also felt that the strategy of World Zionist leaders, especially that of Chaim Weizmann, was not completely honest. They were more concerned with raising huge sums of money from the American public to "build the homeland," than in addressing any real goals of establishing a sovereign State. He also came to feel that the Zionist machinery did not properly inform the American public about potential problems that loomed from displaced Arabs who had lived in Palestine and from the British government which possessed a mandate over the territory.

> Disillusionment came gradually. But persistent doubts beat upon my mind. The Zionist leaders

> seemed to be less than completely frank in their discussions with those from whom they desired contributions. What they said differed from what I heard them say when speaking at Zionist gatherings and from what I read in the Zionist press. They talked about democratization of Jewish life and yet the party line and discipline were in the hands of a few who exercised an autocratic authority which no one could challenge. I began to feel there was no democracy in the movement. . . . I saw evasion, chicanery, misrepresentation of facts, and above all the most unseemly methods in controversy which indulged in cheap and vulgar epithets, rather than that calm appraisal which should characterize the discussion of such important issues. Finally and reluctantly I came to the conclusion that the Zionists were using Jewish need to exploit their political goals. Every sacred feeling of the Jew, every instinct of humanity, every deep-rooted anxiety for family, every cherished memory became an instrument to be used for the promotion of the Zionist cause. If you were not with the Zionists, ipso facto, you were against them. With these convictions crystallized after a few years, I withdrew from the organization.[9]

Soon after Lazaron offically resigned from the Zionist Organization of America the Nazi persecutions in Germany began to escalate. The American Jewish community frantically attempted to save as many of its brethren as possible. The need for a place of refuge, a place to which Jewish victims of anti-Semitism could flee, was needed now more than ever.

Rabbi Lazaron made two trips to Germany, in 1934 and in 1935, in an attempt to understand the situation and report back to Jewish leaders in the States. He spent six months in Germany through the cooperation of the State Department and the American ambassador. Lazaron was greatly affected by this experience and developed a deep understanding of the psyche of the German Jewish community.

The Zionist Organization's reaction to the German

Jewish tragedy infuriated Lazaron and fueled his growing anti-Zionism. "Zionists declared that the fate of German Jewry indicated the futility of 'assimilation'--that is the desire of Jews to live among their fellow citizens anywhere as members of a religious group only and with no other barriers setting them apart, than the tie of their common faith, Judaism."[10] This attitude, whether it was an accurate interpretation or not, enraged Lazaron, primarily because the view that Jews could not live securely among fellow citizens solely as a religious entity contrasted with everything that he believed Reform Judaism stood for. In addition, he felt that the Zionist leadership did not understand the German Jewish community as he did and therefore had no right to find it at fault.

In 1937, at the annual convention of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations held that year in New Orleans, Lazaron presented a public address. In it he publicly stated his opposition to Jewish political nationalism and to the aims and goals of the Zionist Organization of America.

It was his belief that "over emphasis upon the political aspects of the situation runs right up against two inexorable factors that cannot be argued away--Arab nationalism and British Imperial policy . . . Diaspora nationalism, which is implicit in the American Jewish Congress's Zionist idea, is a Chukkath Ha-Goyim, an imitation of the Gentiles . . ."[11]

Lazaron also expressed disdain for the exclusivity of the Zionist Organization of America. "Has the time not come for us to emphatically and publicly to repudiate that

group which calls long and loud for Jewish unity but attacks all other Jewish organizations in American life and refuses to cooperate with them, except on its own terms; which prates of democratic control, and is dominated by imitation Jewish Fuehrers!!"[12] [For complete text of Lazaron's address, see Appendix Document A.]

This public pronouncement officially placed Lazaron in the forefront of anti-Zionist activities and branded him as a traitor among Zionist leaders. Rabbis and Jewish communal leaders who had earlier been anti-Zionists or non-Zionists and then embraced Zionist were tolerated and accepted. But for a Zionist to pull rank and abandon the cause so publicly, as Lazaron did, angered and infuriated the Zionist leaders. From this point on Lazaron met with bitter hostility from many of his colleagues.

After Lazaron left Wheeling, West Virginia, he was succeeded by Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, who later became one of America's greatest Zionists. While in Wheeling, Silver married Virginia Horkheimer, Lazaron's sister-in-law. A story is told that Lazaron's daughter, Clementine, while visiting her aunt in Cleveland, asked why the Zionists hate her father so much. Her aunt replied that it was because they saw him as a traitor, once having been a Zionist and then abandoning the cause.

D. The American Council for Judaism

When the Central Conference of American Rabbis adopted its new Columbus Platform in 1937, an even stronger rift

was created between the Zionist and anti-Zionist factions within the Reform Movement. Many in the Central Conference felt that the C.C.A.R. was becoming too political an organization and feared that their positions would not be respected.

This problem came to a climax when, in the early 1940's, the Zionist Organization of America moved to create a national Conference to speak on behalf of all American Jews. This Conference supported the Zionist demand for a Jewish Army in Palestine. The American Jewish Committee, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, as well as other national Jewish groups were members of the Conference, but generally disassociated themselves from adopting any political resolutions.

In 1942, however, the C.C.A.R. did endorse the formation of a Jewish Army in Palestine, despite an earlier agreement that the C.C.A.R. would remain neutral on the Zionist issue. The decision infuriated the non-Zionists in the C.C.A.R.[13] "It was apparent that some organization was needed to present the non-Zionist position to fellow Jews and . . . fellow Americans."[14]

On June 1, 1942, the non-Zionist rabbis convened in Atlantic City and organized the association which subsequently became the American Council for Judaism.[15] The American Council for Judaism was organized in reaction to the growing discontent between the Zionist and non-Zionist factions within the Central Conference of American Rabbis. It was the goal of the American Council to promote a position which was not linked to any Zionist organization. This

new organization would be the vehicle to promote ideas which the non-Zionists felt were not being addressed within the C.C.A.R. or any other organization.

Much of the push for organizing this faction of C.C.A.R. members was in fact to scare the C.C.A.R. Some ninety odd members of the Central Conference, by breaking away and forming a new body, hoped to shake the leadership of the C.C.A.R. They wanted them to recognize the dangers involved for the C.C.A.R., a non-partisan group, to adopt partisan issues such as adopting a resolution concerning a Jewish Army in Palestine. They also wanted to prove the sincerity of their convictions which they felt were not acknowledged within the C.C.A.R. The leaders of the Central Conference were fearful that a splinter group would split the C.C.A.R. membership and cause further divisions in the Jewish community at large. Negotiations ensued between the two groups and when the C.C.A.R. re-evaluated its stance most of the original A.C.J. members went back to the ranks of the Central Conference.

Several anti-Zionist rabbis remained dissatisfied. They seized the opportunity to transform the American Council into a full fledged organization to combat the Zionist Organization of America. Rabbis Louis Wolsey, William Fineshriber, Elmer Berger, who served as the Executive Director, and Morris Lazaron stood at the helm of the fledgling Council. The rest of the Council leadership came from anti-Zionist layleaders throughout the country who likewise were in opposition to the activities of the Zionist Organization

of America. Lessing Rosenwald, one of the wealthiest Jews in America, provided the primary financial backing to run the A.C.J. and served as well in a leadership capacity.

The purpose of the new American Council for Judaism was twofold. First, it became a forum for those vehemently opposed to Jewish nationalism and the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. It believed that any Jewish nationalistic aspirations would bring into question the loyalties of American Jews in the eyes of their fellow Americans. This did not mean that Council members were opposed to aid to oppressed Jews or even assisting in resettlement in Palestine. They were in opposition to any political aspirations to rebuild a Jewish commonwealth. The A.C.J. represented, therefore, religious opposition to political Zionism. It promoted the ethical principles of Reform Judaism and stressed a universalistic interpretation of Jewish history.

A second purpose of the American Council for Judaism was to provide an alternative organization for Jews in America who did not want to affiliate with the Zionists. Council organizers sincerely felt that they represented the majority of American Jews in the conviction that no single organization, much less the Zionist Organization of America, could speak for all of American Jewry. They considered Zionist attempts to do just that as an affront to any freedoms enjoyed by Jews in America, especially since many had no representation within the Zionist machinery. Council members feared that if they opposed the majority, their opinions would be considered invalid.

Council members were equally concerned for the status and security of Jews living in parts of the world other than the United States. They feared that a nationalist movement would jeopardize their safety as well.

In August of 1942, the Council issued a formal statement of principles. Through this formal declaration, the A.C.J. clearly established their goals as an organization to combat Jewish nationalism as well as promoting their interpretation of Jewish faith:

> Racist theories and nationalistic philosophies . . . have caused untold sufferings to the world and particularly to Jews. . . . We oppose the effort to establish a national Jewish State in Palestine or anywhere else as a philosophy of defeatism, and one which does not offer a practical solution of the Jewish problem. . . .
>
> We believe that the intrusion of Jewish national statehood has been a deterrent in Palestine's ability to play an even greater role in offering a haven for the oppressed. . . . As Americans of Jewish faith we believe implicitly in the fundamentals of democracy, rooted, as they are, in moralities that transcend race and state, and endow the individual with rights for which he is answerable only to God . . .[15] [For the complete text of the Principles see Appendix Document B]

The new American Council for Judaism quickly began a national membership drive. It also began an intense publicity campaign, issuing statements and articles in a variety of journals and publications. Rabbi Morris Lazaron drafted the statement upon which the American Council's principles were based.

> Jews are a religious community. . . . We therefore reject all doctrines that stress the racialism and the nationalism of the Jewish people as inimical to the best interests of the Jews in America, in Palestine

and wherever they dwell.

> Because of the sufferings of our fellow Jews in many parts of the world, we have given and shall continue to give them wholehearted moral and material support wherever needed. We recognize Jewish historical and sentimental attachment to Palestine. Because of its high role in Jewish history and because of the special opportunities for the settlement of a large number of Jews in that land, we have supported and shall continue to support Palestinian projects of an economic, cultural and spiritual nature.
>
> We shall strive with all freedom-loving people for a world in which Jews as well as all other human beings can be citizens anywhere. Every human being should have the opportunity as of right to become citizen of the nation in which he lives, enjoying equal rights and sharing equal obligations with his fellow citizens.[16]

E. Lazaron's Involvement in the American Council

From its very beginning, Morris Lazaron played a key role in the formation and activities of the American Council. Because of his great skill as a writer, Lazaron became the ideological advisor for the group. He wrote numerous statements and articles used by the Council to promots its cause and became, partly by default, chief architect of its philosophy and direction.

The leadership of the American Council also utilized Lazaron's contacts throughout the country, especially with the non-Jewish community, to further its cause. Due to his active involvement with the National Conference of Christians and Jews and his having toured the country on several occasions, Lazaron was a valuable asset to the Council. He used his experience to conduct similar cross country excursions

to enlist support for the A.C.J. Chapters of the Council were established in major cities in much the same manner as had been done for the N.C.C.J. In addition, Lazaron's governmental contacts and acquaintances, especially in departments concerning foreign policy, enabledthe Council to formulate an active lobby in opposition to the Zionists.

Lazaron and his few colleagues active in the American Council met with bitter opposition from other rabbis. Zionist leaders perceived them as renegades and traitors. Although the larger and more powerful Zionist Organization of America overshadowed the Council, its very presence was a thorn in the Zionist's side.

The American Council provided an ideal vehicle for Lazaron to promote his strong anti-nationalism beliefs. Having been disillusioned by the Zionist Organization and ostracized by its leadership, the open and receptive arms of leadership in the A.C.J. became to him a great source of satisfaction. As a rabbi who deeply needed to be a leader of his people and who sincerely believed in his convictions, the hostility which Lazaron met only spurred him on to develop a stronger and more vibrant Council.

> It seems to me that some change takes place in the man who yields to any chauvinist nationalism, whether he be Jew or Gentile. . . . Such a man, who ordinarily would not lend himself to subterfuge or unwarranted attack upon another man, accepts these methods as a matter of course. His whole being becomes obsessed with the consuming passions of nationalism. Any means is good enough, even though it flaunts all the accepted canons of decent and honorable human relations, if he can get away with it. He attacks those who oppose him . . . by

> character assassination and by all the unworthy devices men use to try to destroy one who stands in their way. My personal experiences confirm this. . .[17]

As Morris Lazaron's involvement in the American Council for Judaism grew deeper, so, too, did the personal hostility and animosity toward him. In addition to personal attacks in the press, alleging that he brought shame to the cause of his people, Lazaron was also blacklisted from participating in many activities and organizations unrelated to Zionism.

> An editorial appeared in "Opinion" edited by my erstwhile friend, Stephen Wise, which declared that no self-respecting Jewish congregation should suffer Lazaron to continue to be its Rabbi. . . . Other incidents are not quite so pleasant to record. I received an invitation to address a combined meeting of all the Reform Congregation Sisterhoods of Boston and accepted. Almost ten days later came a letter . . . that the Zionists on the program committee had threatened withdrawal . . . if the invitation were not withdrawn.
>
> The Colsten-Leigh Bureau was interested in arranging a lecture tour for me. Flyers were prepared and a list of subjects announced. . . . After six weeks had passed . . . I had no word of any bookings . . . agents throughout the country had made every effort to place me but that invariably some Zionist member . . . had objected and protested. . .[18]

Most disheartening to Lazaron was when Zionist pressure was exerted on the National Conference of Christians and Jews to prevent his further involvement in the group.

> Moral courage and personal integrity had been beaten out of the spirit of some Jews! My own reaction . . . was not one of anger, but rather of pity for them and sadness for myself because I conceived of my work in the N.C.C.J. as one of the major functions of my ministry. It brought me joy and inspiration, and I cherished the thought that I had made some small contribution to interfaith understanding. . .[19]

When Lazaron was selected in 1941 to participate in a

mission to Europe sponsored by the N.C.C.J. to observe the effect of the war on religion and human relations [See Chapter III], Zionist leaders protested. They felt that Lazaron was a poor representative of American Jewry, for to them he symbolized only a small and insignificant faction. Although protests did not prevent Lazaron from making the trip, later invitations were rescinded. "Zionist pressure had been too great. I had disqualified myself it was said for any useful work because of my anti-Jewish nationalist stand."[20]

Once the state of Israel became a fact, the A.C.J. issued a new statement, written by Morris Lazaron, reiterating the Council's opposition to Jewish nationalism on universalistic grounds:

> The Declaration of a Zionist State and the United States' recognition of its de facto status does not change the basic issues in the Palestine question. If the American Council for Judaism were not in existence, it would have to be created to meet the graver possibilities that lie ahead for the millions of our brethren in this country and elsewhere who must perforce live outside Palestine. Let us pray that the things many of us have feared--the destruction of much that has been built in Palestine; unnecessary loss of Christian, Moslem and Jewish life in a useless civil war--will not come to pass. . . . This is not a fight for a state. . . . We who reject the philosophy of Jewish nationalism, who conceive of Jews as a world religio-cultural community . . . will continue to work for freedom for Jews and all other minorities everywhere. This is the spirit of our Judaism and the goal of democracy.[21]

This statement indicated that, to Lazaron and his compatriots, the establishment of the State of Israel in no way meant an end to their mission. There remained issues surrounding Jewish nationalism which they felt needed their

attention. The question of political security for Jews who lived outside the State of Israel, the threat of war with the Arab nations, and the insistence that no single organization could speak for all of American Jewry continued to dominate Council's focus.

Once the State of Israel had been established, however, the Council's membership began to wane. Most Jews felt that the Council was fighting a lost battle. Even Louis Wolsey, one of the founders and pioneers of the American Council for Judaism, dropped his affiliation.

To avoid appearing to be an organization without a cause, Executive Director Elmer Berger chartered a new path for the Council. The A.C.J. initiated educational programs for Jews in America. In the early 1950's, Sunday Schools were opened in Milwaukee, New York and Chicago based on Council's universalistic interpretation of Judaism. In addition, the A.C.J. established a relief fund which provided extensive philanthropic aid to Jewish, Moslem and Christian refugees from the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and Arab countries.

Lazaron remained an active member of the A.C.J. during this time. To him, the fundamental principles of the Council were not affected by the creation of the State of Israel. Later in his life, reflecting back on the work of the Council and his part in it, he still saw validity in his stance, in spite of the fact that many considered him too proud to abandon a sinking ship:

> Only one group vigourously opposed the nationalists, the American Council for Judaism. Since

> its inception in 1943 it consistently and positively affirmed the universal ethical and religious ideals of Judaism as the primary basis for Jewish unity. . .
>
> When Israel was created it was called upon to disband, as if its function had been only to oppose the creation of the Zionist State. The Council did oppose the creation of Israel but when Israel came into being, the Council bravely reaffirmed its active opposition to what it foresaw would happen and has happened. . .
>
> The Council understands that Jewish nationalism is natural in the Zionist state but declares that it should express itself within the boundaries of Israel and not attempt to control the thought and feeling of Jews here. . .
>
> The American Council for Judaism is the scapegoat because it insists on telling Jews unpleasant truths. . . . Perhaps most of all the Council is disliked because its continued and growing influence constitutes a threat to those who have conquered the Jewish communities and linked the destiny of American Jewry with Jewish political nationalism. . .
>
> No other organization than the American Council for Judaism protests against the control of the United Jewish Appeal by the Zionists. . . . No other organization than the American Council for Judaism protests against the pressures for an Israeli orientation of American Jewish life. No other organization than the American Council for Judaism opposes the Zionist habit of threatening candidates for public office who do not support Zionist aims. . .
>
> It is not popular to be in the minority. It would be much easier "to close up shop" and drift with the stream. . . As long as our religious organizations are dominated by nationalist spirit and aim. . . . As long as Zionist influences continue to build walls between us and our fellow citizens . . . there will be work for the American Council for Judaism to do.[22]

F. A Look Back

In 1973, when he was 86 years old, Lazaron published an article in Conservative Judaism [Volume XXVIII, No. 2] entitled, "Looking Back." In this essay he attempted to

re-examine his attitude toward Jewish nationalism, especially since the State of Israel was well into her third decade of existence and much of the hostility with his Zionist opponents had diminished with time.

> In 1948, vast tides of emotion moved the multitudes of our people. "Our brothers are being killed and they have nowhere to go!" What Jew with any feeling for the brotherhood of Jews could resist? Major voices like that of Judah L. Magnes, and minor voices like my own, were rejected in the aftermath of the Hitler prosecutions. We believed in and proposed the creation of a bi-national state, after the pattern of Switzerland. We foresaw the tragic problems which at the present are still unsolved. But any deviation from the Zionist solution to the tragic problem was considered treasonable, and proponents of any other solution were considered anti-Semites.
>
> I was condemned and boycotted. But my position implied no lack of concern or love for my brother Jews in their agony. I was fearful for their safety and their future in Israel, and concer ed about the effect that a Zionist state in Israel would have upon the peace of the world. . .
>
> Now, after twenty years, Israel has proved by its indomitable courage and the sacrifices of its citizens, its right to exist in peace.
>
> The accomplishments of Israel have engendered a feeling of pride, not only among Jews but among the unprejudiced everywhere. We Jews have made contributions to the intellectual and cultural life of every nation in which we have made our home. If Israel is allowed to live in peace, she will surely enhance that tradition in the Middle East.
>
> But there is danger! We constitute a small segment of the world's population. Extreme nationalism in the Diaspora will inevitably result in isolating Jews from their fellow citizens. Jews will continue to live all over the world and give their first loyalty to the countries in which they live. This applies particularly to American Jews, who have been the greatest supporters of Israel.[23] [For complete essay see Appendix Document I]

Lazaron acknowledges in this essay the legitimacy of

the State of Israel and its contribution to life in the Middle East. He still is leery, though, that nationalistic fervor in the Diaspora would create a possible threat of dual loyalty. This later position had not changed much from his earlier statements. But this viewpoint in 1973 can be accepted in a much different way than had been in the 1930's.

In the 1930's and 1940's, when Lazaron first issued warnings that Jewish nationalism in the Diaspora would create problems, he did so at a time when energy was high on securing a homeland for Jews especially in view of the Nazi persecutions in Germany. Any warnings that would have been made, no matter how valid, would have appeared traitorous.

Yet by 1973, the topic of dual loyalty was not a taboo subject. As a matter of fact, with increased ethnic awareness in America in the 70's and in the aftermath of the 1967 and 1973 wars in Israel, dual loyalty was a tension most American Jews confronted.

In addition to his essay which appeared in Conservative Judaism, Lazaron wrote a few lengthy pieces which were published in the New York Times. To many around the country, it seemed apparent that there was a considerable shift in Lazaron's anti-Zionist stance. He never outwardly conceded to a pro-nationalist stance for Diaspora Jewry, but he did become a stalwart defender of Israel and its right to exist. Lazaron, who was once vehemently opposed to the United Jewish Appeal network, seeing it as an arm of the Zionist Organization, in 1973 made headlines when he and his wife contributed

$1,000 to its Emergency Fund in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War.

Lazaron's mellowing attitude caught the eyes of several editorial columnists in the Jewish press. One noted Jewish journalist observed:

> Bygones are bygones and Jewish ethics teach us to accept a penitent in saintliness. A present day Lazaron who affirms the loyalties in Jewish life, . . . offers comfort in forgiveness and in a welcome back to the ranks of justice for the Jew, for Israel and for Zionism. . .[24]

> In the main, Dr. Lazaron now speaks not only as a penitent but also as a fairminded defender of Israel's right to exist and to sovereignty. Welcome back to Zionist ranks, Rabbi Lazaron![25]

Indeed, what is illustrated in these editorial observations is a gradual shift in Lazaron's attitude and position. In the aftermath of the creation of Israel, Lazaron continued to support the American Council. He had invested a lot of energy and pride into the organization and enjoyed the status and notoriety he received from it. To give it all up, at a time when he was also going through a bitter battle over his retirement at Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, would have been a defeat too strong to bear. Rather, he spent the next few decades of his retirement years working on behalf of Council projects, but slowly mellowing in his adamant anti-Israel position.

Morris Lazaron's involvement in the American Council for Judaism is significant for several reasons. From it a deeper insight may be drawn as to the American Jewish scene during the 1930's and 1940's. The fact that Lazaron

met with such vehement hostility for supporting an organization contrary to popular opinion, enables us to draw conclusions as to the spirit of the times. In addition, and most importantly, his years of involvement and commitment to the American Council provides a clearer understanding of his personality and his rabbinate.

The Zionist Organization of America dominated Jewish communal life in the 30's and 40's to such an extent that any deviation from its philosophy was met with bitter opposition. Although the American Council for Judaism represented a minority opinion, it did point out the problem of democracy within the total Jewish community and the tensions of dual loyalty for American Jews. The fact that Lazaron was ostracized to such an extent proved that, indeed, there was no room for a dissenting opinion nor was there tolerance or respect for any proponents of dissent. Zionist pressure was so great that even Lazaron's work with the National Conference of Christians and Jews, completely unrelated to Jewish nationalism, was thwarted.

Lazaron's affiliation with the A.C.J. also demonstrated courage, conviction and personal strength. To have been a Zionist, and then to have shifted gears so radically was not an easy decision. To then support an organization so contrary to the majority took even greater strength and conviction on his part. Lazaron risked his career and reputation for a belief he felt in his heart to be true.

Lazaron's involvement in the Council fulfilled a great need in his life. He saw himself as a leader of his people.

Not being able to achieve that status within the ranks of the Zionist Organization, and overshadowed by his brother-in-law, Abba Hillel Silver, Lazaron felt alienated. Even in Baltimore he never had a chance to be a leader in the Zionist group, for Rabbi Edward Israel was the undisputed champion at the helm of the Baltimore Zionist organization. In the American Council not only was he comfortable with its philosophy and viewpoint, he was also given a lot of status and power. The national notoriety that he received played into Lazaron's hands, convincing him that he stood at the very center of action and power.

CHAPTER V

A FRUITFUL RETIREMENT

A. Resignation from BHC

By the end of 1945, as Rabbi Lazaron was completing over 30 years of service to the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, he requested the Board to reduce his salary by a third, so he could relinquish part of his congregational responsibilities. Since Rabbi Morris Lieberman, his assistant, was soon returning from military duty, Lazaron knew that the congregation would still receive the rabbinic leadership that it needed.

Lazaron chose to begin his semi-retirement from congregational responsibilities for several reasons. For one thing, earlier that year he had married Hilda Rothschild Rosenblatt, an extremely wealthy widow from the congregation and the daughter of very old and dear friends. Her wealth now enabled them to travelmore frequently. In addition to Lazaron's summer retreat in Blowing Rock, North Carolina, and Hilda's apartment in Manhattan, the couple also enjoyed spending time in Palm Beach, Florida where they eventually bought a home.

At the same time, Lazaron's work in the American Council for Judaism was becoming quite demanding. Freed from

some of his congregational duties, Lazaron felt that he could devote more time to Council activities. The congregation had initally been quite generous in allowing him to pursue activities outside the congregation. He had been given extended periods off in order to travel on behalf of the National Conference of Christians and Jews and to speak before organizations and universities. Lazaron's outside interests had always been a source of great pride to the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. Lazaron had always convinced his Board that his involvements had a positive reflection on the Temple.

As Lazaron became more deeply involved with the American Council for Judaism, however, the congregation began to resent the time spent away from Baltimore. The notoriety surrounding his Zionist viewpoint and the controversy over the establishment of the American Council were a bit more than the congregation wanted to tolerate.

> Many new members were joining the congregations, among whom the nationalist sentiment was nascent if not active. They were easy converts to the Zionist cause. A building fund campaign was being conducted for the erection of a long delayed and much needed new Temple and religious school facilities and it was feared, rightly or wrongly, that my position would hinder raising money for the new structure.[1]

The issue of Lazaron's Zionist stance had been a problem to the congregation as far back as 1917. At that time, at a special meeting, the Board "decided to notify Rabbi Lazaron that the Board wishes him to refrain from speaking on Zionism either in the pulpit or in any public gathering on that subject."[2] Of course, Lazaron did not take their warning too seriously. He responded that freedom of the

pulpit is an essential element of the rabbinate.

As the years went on, more and more people became aggravated with Lazaron's extreme anti-Zionist position. As he drew more and more attention in the press, the Board of the congregation did not remain silent. It warned him on several occasions to refrain from speaking on Zionism, especially at High Holiday services.

In October, 1946, Lazaron requested that he be granted emeritus status to devote more time to his outside interests and writing. Knowing that his Zionist views had aroused a heated debate, for many congregants were active Zionists, he felt that only his full retirement would prevent a split in the congregation.

> They were my congregation. I had been at their sides in rejoicing and in sorrow. I know they loved me. I had thought to end my days among them. And yet this almost incredible thing happened. I was faced with the dilemma: shall I in remaining split the congregation or shall I take myself out of the picture. . .[3]

The Board accepted his resignation and unanimously elected him to the position of Rabbi Emeritus. The following proclamation was issued by President Adolph D. Cohn:

> With sincere and profound regret, but in recognition of his long, faithful, and fruitful service of almost thirty-two years, during which his leadership and inspiration have bound him to us in devotion and love, the Board reluctantly accedes to the request of Rabbi Morris S. Lazaron that he be retired as Senior Rabbi and be designated as Rabbi Emeritus. His ministry to us has been a blessing. He has enriched our homes and our lives. We are grateful that in his capacity as Rabbi Emeritus, we shall have during the years ahead the continued benefit of his counsel and guidance.[4]

As part of his Emeritus status, Lazaron was given half salary

for life. He was warned, though, that the action of one Board did not bind future Boards.

Rabbi Lazaron was succeeded as Senior Rabbi of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation by his Associate, Rabbi Morris Lieberman. Although his retirement appeared to have been handled in the most diplomatic manner, that was only a mask. In fact, resentment and hostility was brewing among the leaders of the Temple. The new generation of Temple leaders were actively involved both in the Baltimore Jewish community and Zionism. The fact that Lazaron, their spiritual leader and the representative of their congregation, was so vehemently opposed to Jewish nationalism aroused tensions not easily placated, even by his retirement.

As Rabbi Emeritus, Lazaron immersed himself in an active schedule. He spoke on behalf of the American Council throughout the country. He wrote extensively. Still, each year, he was accorded the privilege of preaching to the congregation during the High Holydays.

During the summer of 1948, after the State of Israel had been established and after Lazaron had made clear his intentions to continue working for and supporting the A.C.J., the congregation grew anxious. The Board was fearful of what might take place if Lazaron addressed the issue at the forthcoming holiday service. At his vacation retreat in Blowing Rock, North Carolina, Lazaron received a call from the President of Baltimore Hebrew requesting a meeting with him. Lazaron complied and, at that time, a few Board members asked him not to discuss the Zionist issue at the

holiday service.

Since Lazaron knew very well the reason why the President requested such a meeting even before it took place, he had taken along a prepared statement. When the Board members concluded their request, Lazaron not only acceded to their demand, but to their surprise he also announced that, for the first time since 1915, he would not be attending holiday services at Baltimore Hebrew Congregation--nor any subsequent service:

> I can make no promises as to what I shall or shall not say if I speak at the forthcoming Holyday Services or any other time. Therefore I shall not be on the pulpit this Holyday season or thereafter. . .
>
> I assure you this is what I want to do. It is best for you, for the congregation and, please believe me, I too shall be greatly relieved. . . . I am the same Morris Lazaron you knew when you were younger. I have not changed; you have not changed. Times have changed; and the picture has changed. I understand your position perfectly. . . . My work with the congregation is done.[5]

It would appear that with this statement the entire episode of his life with Baltimore Hebrew Congregation would have been put to rest. Lazaron had decided to avoid unnecessary confrontations. But it was not the end of the chapter. The next year, for reasons not made explicit, the Board reduced Rabbi Lazaron's pension by one third.

This decision infuriated Lazaron. Even though he had been warned by the previous Board that no action of one Board is binding on another, he never imagined that his pension would be jeopardized. Fortunately for Lazaron, neither he nor his wife were solely dependent on the income from his

Baltimore Hebrew pension. But a moral issue was involved, a matter of principle, and Lazaron felt aggrieved.

In reaction to this act, Lazaron drafted and sent a letter to the entire congregation not only explaining the string of events leading up to the present situation, but also declaring his resignation as Rabbi Emeritus and his resignation from membership at Baltimore Hebrew. He sent the same letter to most of the members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. This was his attempt to bring to their attention what the congregation was doing; perhaps even to destroy a bit of the prestigious reputation that it enjoyed in the U.A.H.C. [See Appendix Document F]

It took several years for the Lazarons to settle their dispute with the congregation. With the aid of Helen (Mrs. Hugo) Dalsheimer, a nationally known leader in the Reform Movement, and then President of B.H.C., Baltimore Hebrew Congregation eventually reinstated his salary and title. The congregation also invited Lazaron back to the pulpit on special occasions. On each of his significant birthdays, from his 70th through his 90th, there was a special Shabbat celebration at the Temple, and Lazaron spoke. On December 16, 1983, posthumously, the congregation was presented with a portrait of Rabbi Lazaron in a special interfaith Service marking the 50th anniversary of his nationwide tour for the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

B. Retirement

Morris Lazaron enjoyed the good fortune of living to

be 91 years old. In fact, he spent as many years in retirement as he did in the active ministry. For Lazaron, retirement was but a new phase of life. He and Hilda travelled extensively, and in later years lived year round in Palm Beach, Florida.

Lazaron also remained active. He taught at Rollins College in Florida, he lectured throughout the country, and he continued his involvement with the programs of the American Council. Lazaron also managed to write quite a bit. He began, but never published, an autobiography. He organized his memoirs which he gave to the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati. He hoped that one day they would interest researchers in American Jewish history. The greatest joy Lazaron derived from his active retirement years, however, was that which he experienced from his art work.

> It was Hilda too who started my interest in painting. I like to tease her and myself by putting it this way--"Now that I have retired you will have me on your hands and you say enough even of a good thing is enough. You say that I must have a hobby and that that hobby must be painting." I said I would give it a four month trial.
>
> So we went to France, Switzerland, England and Scotland in 1952. I painted madly and brought back to Paris about forty canvasses which I showed to Lucien Madrassi, a distinguished French painter whom I had met through Louis Kronberg, that remarkable gentleman, American painter, long friend of the family and known as the American Degas. I was not satisfied with my work. I seemed to be able to get the canvasses up to a certain point but could not finish them. Discouraged, I asked Madrassi, "Have I enough talent to go on painting?" "Sir, you have only two things to do for the rest of your life: One, love your wife; two--paint!"[6]

For the remainder of his life, Lazaron took Madrassi's

advice. He studied with Madrassi in Paris and also with Janet Folsom and Bruce Dorfman at the Norton. He held one man exhibitions at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune in Paris, at the Maison Francaise at Columbia University, and at the prestigious Van Dieman-Lilienfeld Galleries in New York City. In addition, he often displayed his works at La Petite Galerie on Worth Avenue in Palm Beach.

Painting gave Lazaron an outlet for his creativity. He had always enjoyed spending time out of doors, especially at his retreat in North Carolina. Now he was able to spend hours transforming what he saw and admired onto canvas. Lazaron's paintings never gained him wide repute, but they did receive certain critical acclaim.

In 1963, Lazaron celebrated his 75th birthday. Through the prompting of Rabbi Morris Lieberman, the Hebrew Union College decided to confer the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity on Morris Lazaron. Lazaron's good friend and compatriot on the American Council, William Fine[illegible]hriber, received a similar degree. It was the first time that any arm of the Reform Movement had recognized Lazaron's achievements since his involvement in the A.C.J.

The announcement of the degree generated bitterness among rabbis and layleaders who still remembered the conflicts prior to the State of Israel. Letters of disbelief and outrage reached the Hebrew Union College at what was seen as an affront to its reputation.

The College stood firm in its decision, but the U.A.H.C., the parent body which confirms the degrees upon the recipients,

refused to do so without issuing a prior proclamation. On May 26, 1963, at the Board of Trustees Meeting of the U.A.H.C., a resolution was adopted recognizing the achievements of both Lazaron and Fineshriber but making explicit the U.A.H.C.'s disapproval of both Lazaron's and Fineshriber's affiliation with the American Council for Judaism.

> Both Rabbi Lazaron and Rabbi Fineshriber are honorary Vice-Presidents of the American Council for Judaism. This Board of Trustees wishes to emphasize that in confirming these degrees, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, in no manner, approves of the labors of these rabbis in behalf of the American Council nor their affiliation with that organization. [For complete text of resolution see Appendix Document F][7]

In 1978, shortly before his death, Lazaron published a short essay entitled, "As I See Him," which he sent to his colleagues in the C.C.A.R. In it he attempted to re-evaluate his life's work through a third person narrative.

> I make no pretense . . . to original or profound scholarship. I speak only from the experience of an active ministry and a long life. I want to say some things before I walk up to the cashier's desk to check out for the privilege of living. This book is part payment.[8]

Lazaron reviewed his own achievements and contributions. He also attempted to put his nationalist stance into historical perspective, reiterating much of what he said earlier in his article, "Looking Back." Yet in this essay he went even further, and attempted to project an understanding of American life and what he felt was needed to inspire a new vision for the future.

> It can only be a dynamic of the spirit! A dynamic that will once more make men proud

> to work and to give work, that will overcome the unwholesome lethargy which is sapping our vitality. . . . We need some dynamic that will bind the various groups, nationalities and faiths . . . into a consciousness of their brotherhood, sharers of the American Spirit. . . . It could come from the ancient shrines, from our churches and synagogues. . . . Such a dynamic could indeed spiritualize the nation.[9]

On Tuesday June 5, 1979, less than two months after he celebrated his 91st birthday, Morris Lazaron died. He was in England where he had gone to celebrate the 100th birthday of a dear friend, theatrical producer Sir John Meyer. The following Sunday, on June 10th, funeral services were held at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. Lazaron was survived by his wife of 34 years, Hilda, his two sons, Morris, Jr. and Harold, his daughter Clementine Kaufman, the wife of U.S. District Judge Frank Kaufman, as well as 16 grandchildren, and 3 great-grandchildren.

Morris Lazaron wrote a poem in 1963 to a friend, David Stern in Palm Beach. In it he captured the essence of his philosophy and outlook on life:

> From One Aging Gentleman to Another
> On His Birthday.
>
> What can one ask of life?
> What's the best that this existence gives?
> What lasts when all else goes
> Yet leaves one rich in memory and serene?
>
> Health? We move to weakness from the day of birth.
> Wealth? That may vanish overnight.
> Love? There comes a time when this too steals away
> And leaves us in anguished loneliness.
> For death does not regard our love.
> Children? They grow and leave us for their own concerns.
> Their lives to live.
>
> All these are precious
> Aye beyond compare.
> And yet we lose them soon or late.

But where's the man who
Set his standards high.
Who raised his banner--
   Intellectual integrity and honesty
   Compassion and a feel for fellow-men;
   Moral courage, and as Kipling said
   "if you can trust yourself when all men doubt you"

Show me this man!

He has found the best in life![10]

CONCLUSION

THE TRAGEDY OF MORRIS LAZARON

Morris Lazaron was a unique and gifted individual. His life's story provides insight into the activities and challenges he faced, and also enables us to better understand the course of American Jewish History during the first half of this century.

As a rabbi, Lazaron served his congregation faithfully for over three decades. He educated and guided the spiritual developmen of nearly three generations of congregants at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. Lazaron was also a noted community leader. Few, if any, rabbis have done so much toward promoting goodwill between Christians and Jews. He divided the early years of his rabbinate between serving his congregation and travelling on behalf of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. These twin devotions symbolized Lazaron's firm belief that as an American Jew it was incumbent upon him to secure better understanding among all religious traditions.

As a person, Morris Lazaron was a caring, generous human being who enjoyed being with people and enjoyed opening his heart to others. He was especially devoted to his family. Those who knew him well shared a special bond for he was a gifted individual of great warmth. And yet it was

an aspect of his personality and spirit which became in time his own worst enemy.

Since his early years, Lazaron was driven to become a great leader of his people. So much so, that the drive to excel in all that he hoped to do became an obsession. At times even the cause toward which he was working became secondary to the drive to assume a leadership position. A motivating force in his direction toward interfaith activities, it seems, was the assurance that he could rise to great stature within the movement as there were few other rabbis in the organization. This opportunity for leadership fueled his devotion to the cause.

However, such was not the case when it came to Zionism. As an early Zionist supporter and worker for the Zionist Organization of America, Lazaron was never accorded the stature or recognition that he sought. He was but another fish in the sea. The fact that his brother-in-law, Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, rose so quickly to prominence, only exacerbated his frustration. Instead of settling for a minor role within the Zionist Organization, Lazaron's attitudes changed and he became a vehement anti-Zionist--a leader of that movement.

It is impossible to demonstrate that lack of opportunity to attain leadership within the Zionist ranks swayed Lazaron's thinking and caused his philosophical turn around. Perhaps, as he indicated in so many of his writings, he truly became disenchanted with the corruptions and hypocracies he

saw within the movement. In fact, anti-Zionism accorded well with interfaith. As a promoter of interfaith dialogue, Lazaron understood Judaism to be a creed, a religion. According to this interpretation, any redefinition of Judaism as a people or nation would threaten the groundwork laid for interfaith work.

Yet, rather than becoming a quiet adversary, Lazaron went to the opposite extreme. There were many other Reform rabbis who had difficulty in harmonizing their conception of Reform Judaism and Zionism. But few went to the extreme point that Lazaron did in opposition to the cause. Often it appeared as if his was a personal vendetta against the Zionists.

Because Lazaron became blinded by his drive to be a great leader, he lost touch with the needs of his people. The recognition he derived from his work with the National Conference of Christians and Jews was not enough. The position as Senior Rabbi at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, one of the largest and most prestigious congregations in America, was not enough. Lazaron wanted more. In order to do so, he turned toward fighting the Zionist through the American Council for Judaism.

Lazaron met with a great deal of hostility both from his colleagues and from other Jewish leaders. They saw what Lazaron himself could not understand. Some interpreted his actions within the American Council for Judaism as a vindictive and spiteful response to the fact that he could not

assume the role he had hoped for within the Zionist framework.

In the long run Lazaron's drive and energy succeeded in making him a national figure. However, he became known not in a positive way, but rather in a most negative one. Even his years of work for the National Conference were sacrificed at the expense of his anti-Zionist battle.

The fact that Morris Lazaron met with such bitterness also sheds light on the psyche of his accusers. Because he became a part of an active few who opposed the tide of events, all that he had done previously went by the wayside. The important years of work and devotion to the N.C.C.J. were too easily forgotten by those who hounded him for his anti-Zionism, and refused to recognize or acknowledge his strengths. This was obvious when his opponents, in 1963, years after the debate was over, tried to block his receiving an honorary Doctor of Divinity from the Hebrew Union College.

Indeed, Morris Lazaron fell victim to his own shortcomings. His obsession to be a great leader blinded him to the direction he was going. Still his career had noteworthy and commendable features. He blazed a path in interfaith work. He gave years of fine service to the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. Most important of all, he stood the tide of the times and held true to his convictions, displaying great courage and conviction. If nothing else, Morris Lazaron demonstrated that an American Jew could challenge the majority, and stand in opposition despite all, with his head held high and his heart firm in what he believed to be right.

NOTES

CHAPTER I

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[2]Ibid., p. 21.

[3]Malcolm H. Stern, compiler. First American Jewish Families. (American Jewish Archives and American Jewish Historical Society, 1960.)

[4]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 7, p. 22.

[5]Morris Samuel Lazaron, Common Ground: A Plea for Intelligent Americanism. (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1938), p. 20. (Hereafter cited as Common Ground)

[6]Morris Samuel Lazaron, "Old Landmarks Standout in Memory," Savannah Morning News, August 8, 1976.

[7]Encyclopedia Judaica, s.v. "Savannah."

[8]Ibid.

[9]The Jewish Encyclopedia, s.v. "Savannah."

[10]Common Ground, p. 21.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 7, p. 36.

[13]Ibid., p. 44.

[14]Ibid., p. 44a.

[15]Ibid., p. 62.

[16]Ibid., p. 52.

[17]Ibid., p. 62.

[18]Ibid., pp. 54-55.

[19]Samuel E. Karff, ed. HUC-JIR at One Hundred Years: A Centennary Perspective (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1976). See essay by Dr. Michael A. Meyer, especially the Chapter on Kaufmann Kohler's term of office as President of H.U.C.

[20]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 7, p. 83.

[21]Ibid., p. 64.

[22]Morris Samuel Lazaron. Translation and Analysis of Tractate Derech Eretz Zutta. Thesis submitted to the Hebrew Union College. See preface.

[23]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 7, p. 84.

[24]Ibid., p. 64.

[25]Ibid., p. 85.

[26]Abraham I. Shinedling, West Virginia Jewry 1850-1958. Volume III, 1963. p. 1316.

[27]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 7, p. 94.

[28]Ibid., p. 96.

[29]Ibid., p. 95.

[30]Abba Hillel Silver (n.d.) to Morris S. Lazaron, Morris S. Lazaron Collection. Manuscript Collection No. 71, American Jewish Archives, Box 7, Folder 28.

CHAPTER II

[1]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 7, n.p.

[2]Ibid., p. 108.

[3]Rose Greenberg, The Chronicle of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation 1830-1975. (Baltimore, 1976), p. 41. (Hereafter cited as The Chronicle of BHC)

[4]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 7, p. 110.

[5]The Chronicle of BHC, p. 43.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 7, p. 111.

[8]Malcolm H. Stern, "Memorial Tribute to Morris S. Lazaron," Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. (New York, 1981), Volume XC, p. 233.

[9]The Chronicle of BHC, p. 43.

[10]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 7, p. 150.

[11]The Chronicle of BHC, p. 44.

[12]American Jewish Yearbook. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1921), Volume 23, p. 291.

[13]The Chronicle of BHC, p. 45.

[14]Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. (New York), Volumes 30 thru 39. See Committee lists of members.

[15]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 7, p. 219.

[16]The Jewish Times of Baltimore. (Baltimore: April 28, 1933), p. 21.

[17]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 7, p. 250.

[18]Paul Kuhn to Morris S. Lazaron (May, 1936), Morris S. Lazaron Collection. Manuscript Collection No. 71. American Jewish Archives. Box 7, Folder 28.

[19]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 7, p. 250.

[20]Paul Kuhn to Morris S. Lazaron (May, 1936), Morris S. Lazaron Collection. Manuscript Collection No. 71. American Jewish Archives. Box 7, Folder 28.

CHAPTER III

[1]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 9, p. 1.

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[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., p. 47.

[5]The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, s.v. "Better Understanding"

[6]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 8, p. 304.

[7]Ibid.

[8]The Chronicle of BHC, p. 47.

[9]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 8, p. 29.

[10]Ibid., p. 311.

[11]Morris S. Lazaron Collection, Manuscript Collection No. 71. American Jewish Archives. Oversize Box X178.

[12]Ibid.

[13]"The Jewish Student on Campus," Jewish Daily Bulletin, April 24-25, 1934.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Common Ground, p. 22.

[16]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 8.

[17]Ibid., p. 277.

[18]"Who Chose Lazaron," Congress Weekly, (October 3, 1941), Volume 8, No. 32, p. 4.

[19]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 8, p. 291.

[20]Ibid., p. 353.

[21]*Common Ground*, p. 257.

[22]Ibid., p. 26.

[23]Ibid., p. 313.

[24]Ibid., p. 31.

[25]Ibid., p. 262.

[26]Lazaron Autobio., Box 32, Folders 8-11.

[27]Morris S. Lazaron, *Bridges--Not Walls*, (New York: Citadel Press, 1959), p. 191.

[28]Ibid., pp. 103-4.

CHAPTER IV

[1]Naomi W. Cohen, American Jews and the Zionist Idea. (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1975), p. xi.

[2]Bernard G. Richards, "Reform Judaism and Zionism," The New Palestine, September 11, 1942.

[3]Gunther Plaut, Growth of Reform Judaism. (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1965), p. 34.

[4]Ibid., p. 97.

[5]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 9, p. 237.

[6]Ibid., p. 238.

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[8]Ibid., p. 239.

[9]Ibid., pp. 246-7.

[10]Ibid., p. 250.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Howard R. Greenstein, The Changing Attitudes Towards Zionism in Reform Judaism, 1937-1948. (Brown University Press, 1973), p. 33.

[14]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 9, p. 266.

[15]Excerpt from American Council for Judaism's Statement of Principles issued August 31, 1942. See Appendix.

[16]Morris S. Lazaron Collection, Manuscript Collection No. 71. American Jewish Archives, Box 10, Folder 4.

[17]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 9, pp. 275ff.

[18]Ibid., pp. 277ff.

[19]Ibid., p. 278.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid., Box 33, Folder 5.

[22]Ibid., Box 30, Folder 10, pp. 288ff.

[23]Morris S. Lazaron, "Looking Back," Conservative Judaism, Volume XXVIII, No. 2, pp. 74-75.

[24]Philip Slomovitz, "Purely Commentary," Detroit Jewish News, January 16, 1976, p. 2.

[25]Ibid., October 7, 1977, p. 2.

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[1]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 7, n.p.

[2]The Chronicle of BHC, p. 56.

[3]Lazaron Autobio, Box 30, Folder 7, n.p.

[4]The Chronicle of BHC, p. 56.

[5]Lazaron Autobio., Box 30, Folder 7, pp. 11ff.

[6]Ibid., n.p.

[7]Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Resolution passed by the Union Board of Trustees regarding the HUC-JIR's conferral of honorary doctoral degrees on Rabbi Morris S. Lazaron and Rabbi William Fineshriber, New York, N.Y., May 26, 1963. (American Jewish Archives)

[8]Morris S. Lazaron, As I See Him. (England: Gerrad's Cross, 1978), p. 9.

[9]Ibid., pp. 25-27.

[10]Morris S. Lazaron Collection. Manuscription Collection No. 71, American Jewish Archives, Box 27, Folder 7.

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APPENDIX

DOCUMENT A

Our first task is to appraise the situation in which we find ourselves, with a proper sense of values. We Jews have been hurt and many of us disillusioned by the events of these last years. Often have I voiced the prophet's anguished cry: 'Gaze upon us, all ye who pass by, and see if there be any other sorrow like unto our sorrow.' All the more reason why we must preserve our balance; hard to do though it is, and see things straight. Ours is but one sigment of the world tragedy; our own sorrow must make us cognizant of the sorrow of other groups and nations, colors and classes, of all creeds and of no creed. Our sickness cannot be isolated from the general malaise and meliorated alone. Furthermore, whatever plans we pursue, we must always bear in mind the limitations of our situation, that we are a minority everywhere and a minority under fire. Prudence demands that we do not adopt any policy which may lessen or jeopardize our ability to maintain our position here or to help our brethren. . . .

". . . The cruel fate of our people, particularly in Germany, together with the rise of nationalism, has moved a number of Jewish leaders, veterans in the Jewish cause, to lift the banner of Jewish nationalism. They say two things: 1--the plight of German Jewry shows the failure of the emancipation--2--the only hope for the Jew is the development everywhere of an intense Jewish nationalism which centers in Palestine.

"I deny both assertions.

"To declare that German Jewry was assimilated; that it sold its birthright; that it consciously attempted to lose its identity is not true. It is a libel upon the noble institutions and the rich creative literary, scholarly, and artistic Jewish life of pre-Hitler Germany.

"To follow this libel with the further assertion: you see what happened--they tried and they failed; therefore, integration everywhere is doomed to failure--is to add misrepresentation to libel. . .

". . . It is naive to believe that any simple formula will solve all our Jewish difficulties. I yield to no one, not even to the officials of the Zionist Organization of America, in my disinterested loyalty to Palestine reconstruction. I have worked for it, and plead for it, and I shall continue to do so. But Jewish nationalists are doing the same damage to Palestine reconstruction that the uncompromising pacifists and the proponents of unilateral disarmament are doing to the cause of peace. Over-emphasis upon the political aspects of the situation runs right up against two inexorable factors that cannot be argued away--Arab nationalism and British Imperial policy on the other hand. A yishub [community] of 400,000 souls is an economic magnet whose ordinary needs, with the help which Jews throughout the world are prepared to give, will bring it normal healthy growth.

". . . I believe in rebuilding the ancient homeland both from the philanthropic and the cultural points of view.

My life has been made richer because I have been privileged to serve humbly in that cause. I, too, have drunk with my people our common cup of bitterness. But that diaspora nationalism, which is implicit in the American Jewish Congress' Zionist idea, is a Chukkath ha-Goyim, an invitation of the Gentiles. Behind the mask of Jewish sentiment, one can see the spectre of the foul thing which moves Germany and Italy. Behind the camouflage of its unquestioned appeal to Jewish feeling, one can hear a chorus of 'Heil!' This is not for Jews--Reform, Conservative or Orthodox. Has the time not come for us emphatically and publicly to repudiate that group which calls long and loud for Jewish unity but attacks all other Jewish organizations in American life and refuses to cooperate with them, except on its own terms; which prates of democratic control, and is dominated by imitation Jewish Fuehrers; which stirs up class feeling among Jews to further its own proposes, and which in its Bulletin of January 1, presumes to speak through its World Congress--a grandiose misnoma for the Jews of the world. It does not speak for you, and it does not speak for me. It does not speak for the majority of the Jews in our country, Reform, Conservative and Orthodox. It is still a pathetic minority and its bluff should be called.

"We must not be misled by specious and spurious appeals to our prejudices and fears, nor by dramatic challenges to our Jewish loya'ties which may urge us to enlist under the banner of Baal. I, too, want to serve and to save my people, but let us not deceive ourselves by lending an ear to delusions which prate of 'dignity' and the like. Dignity is an inherent quality. Persecution and disfranchisement cannot touch it, the fires of hate cannot burn it, the waters of dictatorship cannot overwhelm it. Nor can the prestige of equality and citizenship enhance it in its place. Let us not think to save our people by an organization or a program, by speeches, resolutions and protests. Vain reeds are they on which to lean.

"We may not like the burden which history and our tradition lay upon us. We may rebel against it, but there it is and we Jews deny it to our peril. We are 'am segullah'--an unique people! Other say, 'Save the Jewish people!' Yes! but I am not interested in saving the Jewish people as a people except in their hearts there burn the fires of the old faith, the psalmists' longing for God, the prophets' social passion and the rabbinical challenge to life's disciplines! Let us first secure the dignity of our own souls by the method tried and tested through the centuries--'ennenu am ki im betorah!'

"Judaism cannot accept as the instrument of its salvation the very philosophy of nationalism which is leading the world to destruction. Shall we condemn it as Italian or German, but accept it as Jewish! Innately we recognize and proudly yield to our sense of Jewish brotherhood throughout the world. Two leitmotifs thread their golden melody through our history:

People and God, God and People. God claims us, we claim God. Down through the centuries comes my people, glorious weak one, pathetic hero whom the cruel holiness of God has claimed for its own. The tie that binds us, while compounded of many elements, is primarily and fundamentally our Judaism. It has been so in the past--it is so today. . . .

". . . This is no time for retreat when the world is tearing itself to pieces in its denial of God. This is the hour to go forward--forward with other Jews, Conservative and Orthodox. Forward with those Christians who feel they face with us a common foe! This is the message of Judaism drawn out of its age-old wisdom and insight. The evil and malignant forces that are so strong in the world today will go under. God is! Because God is, the universe is at basis moral and spiritual. Man might banish religion, but he still has on his hands a moral universe will not back wrong--it will back right; the universe will not back injustice; it will back justice; the universe will not back hate--it will back love.

"In some mysterious way which none can understand, God has put His hands upon us and will not let us go. We are now as we have always been the divine measuring rod. David Frischman, the late contemporary Hebrew poet, paints a luminous picture of the bound Messiah. His hands and arm shackled, tied to a stake and weighted with irons, he gazes upon the earth. He sees tortured Israel and hears his cry of despair 'Let me go, Let me be free!' he cries in the anguish of his soul. 'Not until there comes a generation that is worthy of freedom,' comes God's answer. The poem has meaning not only for Israel but for all mankind. Israel is the bound Messiah, the world's eternal reminder of its cruelty, its brutality, its inhumanity. Let us be free, O God, from this age-old anabasis of sorrow. 'Not until there rises a generation that is worthy of freedom.' So interpret our teachers the famous 52nd chapter of Isa ah. It may be God's plan that we bear the inequity of the world and through our suffering shall mankind be redeemed. Naught shall take this faith from our hearts and, undefeated, we, the ancient priest people, head high and soul confident, shall move forward on our martyr way testifying to the glory of the universal living God! . . ."

[From Morris S. Lazaron, "Unpublished Autobiography," Morris S. Lazaron Collection. Manuscript Collection No. 71, Box 30, Folder 9, pp. 250ff.]

DOCUMENT B

The American Council for Judaism, Inc. was organized to present the views of Americans of Jewish faith on problems affecting the future of their own lives and the lives of world Jewry in the present hour of world confusion.

The Council reaffirms the historic truth that the Jews of the world share common traditions and ethical concepts which find their derivation in the same religious source. For countless generations, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One," has been the universal cry that has united all Jews in trial and tribulation, in suffering, hunger and want, in despair--and in achievement. It is still the concept which distinguishes Jews as a religious group.

Racist theories and nationalistic philosophies, that have become prevalent in recent years, have caused untold suffering to the world and particularly to Jews. Long ago they became obsolete as realities in Jewish history; they remain only as a reaction to discrimination and persecution. In the former crises of Israel in ancient Palestine, the Prophets placed God and the moral law above land, race, nation, royal prerogatives and political arrangements. Now, as then, we cherish the same religious values which emphasize the dignity of man and the obligation to deal justly with him no matter what his status.

As Americans of Jewish faith we believe implicitly in the fundamentals of democracy, rooted, as they are, in moralities that transcend race and state, and endow the individual with rights for which he is answerable only to God. We are thankful to be citizens of a country and to have shared in the building of a nation conceived in a spirit which knows neither special privilege nor inferior status for any man.

For centuries Jews have considered themselves nationals of those countries in which they have lived. Whenever free to do so, they have assumed, and will again assume, full responsibilities of citizenship in accordance with the ancient Jewish command, "The law of the land is the law." Those countries in which Jews have lived have been their homes; those lands their homelands. In those nations where political action was expressed through minority groups, the Jew, following the law of his land, accepted minority status, thereby frequently gaining an improvement over previous conditions of inferior citizenship. Such East European concepts, however, have resulted in a misunderstanding, shared by Jews and non-Jews, a misunderstanding which we seek to dispel. American Jews hope that in the peace for which all of us pray, the old principle of minority rights will be supplanted by the more modern principle of equality and freedom for the individual. The interest of American Jews in the individual Jew in countries where the minority right principle prevailed is not to be confused with acceptance of this East European political concept.

As a result of the bigotry, sadism, and ambitions for world conquest of the Axis powers, millions of our co-religionists who had homes in and were nationals of other lands have been violently deported and made victims of indescribable barbarism. No other group has been so brutishly attacked and for one reason only--on the false claims that there are racial barriers or nationalistic impulses that separate Jews from other men.

The plight of those Jews together with millions of oppressed fellowmen of all faiths, calls for the profoundest sympathy and the unbounded moral indignation of all free men. The restoration of these broken lives to the status and dignity of men endowed by God with inalienable rights, is one of the primary objectives of the peace to come as expressed in the Atlantic Charter and the Four Freedoms of President Roosevelt. We believe that the Jew will rise or fall with the extension or contraction of the great liberal forces of civilization. By relying upon the broad, religious principles inherent in a democracy and implementing them wherever possible, we join our forces with those of all lovers of freedom; strengthened, in that we do not stand segregated and alone upon exclusive demands.

We ask that the United Nations secure the earliest feasible repatriation or resettlement under the best possible conditions of all peoples uprooted from their homes by the Axis powers and that even in the face of obvious and discouraging obstacles the United Nations persevere in their efforts to provide immediate sanctuary for refugees of all faiths, political beliefs and national origins. We believe that wherever possible the forced emigres should be repatriated in their original homelands under conditions which will enable them to live as free, upstanding individuals.

For our fellow Jews we ask only this: Equality of rights and obligations with their fellow-nationals. In our endeavors to bring relief to our stricken fellow Jews, and to help rebuild their lives on a more stable basis, we rely wholly upon the principles of freedom, justice and humanity, which are fundamental to both democracy and religion, and which have been declared as the principles which shall prevail in the better world for which the United Nations are fighting. We ally ourselves with those who believe this war will not have been fought in vain, that the mistakes of the last peace will not be duplicated.

Palestine has contributed in a tangible way to the alleviation of the present catastrophe in Jewish life by providing a refuge for a part of Europe's persecuted Jews. We hope it will continue as one of the places for such resettlement, for it has been clearly demonstrated that practical colonizing can be done, schools and universities built, scientific agriculture extended, commerce intensified and culture developed. This is the record of achievement of eager, hardworking settlers who have been aided in their endeavors by Jews all over the world, in every walk of life and thought.

We oppose the effort to establish a National Jewish State in Palestine or anywhere else as a philosophy of defeatism, and one which does not offer a practical solution of the Jewish problem. We dissent from all those related doctrines that stress the racialism, the nationalism and the theoretical homelessness of Jews. We oppose such doctrines as inimical to the welfare of Jews in Palestine, in America, or wherever Jews may dwell. We believe that the intrusion of Jewish national statehood has been a deterrent in Palestine's ability to play an even greater role in offering a haven for the oppressed, and that without the insistence upon such statehood, Palestine would today be harboring more refugees from Nazi terror. The very insistence upon a Jewish Army has led to the raising of barriers against our unfortunate brethren. There never was a need for such an army. There has always been ample opportunity for Jews to fight side by side with those of other faiths in the armies of the United Nations.

Palestine is a part of Israel's religious heritage, as it is a part of the heritage of two other religions of the world. We look forward to the ultimate establishment of a democratic, autonomous government in Palestine, wherein Jews, Moslems and Christians shall be justly represented; every man enjoying equal rights and sharing equal responsibilities; a democratic government in which our fellow Jews shall be free Palestinians whose religion is Judaism, even as we are Americans whose religion is Judaism.

We invite all Jews to support our interpretation of Jewish life and destiny in keeping with the highest traditions of our faith. We believe these truths provide the basis for every program of a more hopeful future put forth by free men. To proclaim those views at this time, we believe, is to express the abiding faith, shared by a great number of our fellow Jews, that in the fruits of the victory of the United Nations all, regardless of faith, will share alike. It is also, we believe, to render a service to the task of clarifying the hopes and the purposes for which this war is being fought by free men everywhere.

[Statement of the American Council for Judaism, Inc. (Morris S. Lazaron Collection, American Jewish Archives, Box 10, Folder 4) August 31, 1942.]

DOCUMENT C

THIS IS THE COUNCIL

By Lessing J. Rosenwald

I

We of the Council have never doubted that Zionism, however crucial our differences, was actuated by deep sincerity and concerns. The Council's philosophy, in turn, is derived from an historic evaluation of Jewish existence as adapted to the democratic spirit and requirements basic to American life and institutions. The fundamental conceptions motivating both schools of thought have depth and validity derived from the environments from which they spring. Space limitations will permit little more than a statement of the Council's general principles viewed against the background of their philosophical antecedents. But if these are properly understood by adherents of both movements, progress will be made toward clarifying the issues and objectives.

II

Attitude to Israel

It may help to begin by controverting three familiar charges levelled at the Council in the more heated propaganda that has unfortunately characterized our debate.

1. The Council is *not* opposed to the State of Israel. Prior to the establishment of Israel, we opposed the creation of a state which would have arbitrarily established a Jewish majority or would assume the character of a "Jewish" state in the sense that all Jews, whatever their citizenship would possess *national* —not alone political—rights in or responsibilities to that state. Either implication, we felt, would serve to identify Jews the world over, including American Jews, as a nationality group and any such state as the national center of all Jews.

What is our present attitude toward Israel? In an address to the Fifth Annual Conference of the American Council for Judaism in April 1949, I said:

> *"The State of Israel is now a fact. Earnestly do I hope that all of its citizens and those who in the future may seek to rebuild their lives there may enjoy life, liberty and happiness such as we in America have enjoyed for generations. I hope also that Israel itself and the entire Middle East, in which our country is so importantly concerned, will enjoy peace, prosperity and democracy. I believe profoundly that all Israelis should be free to work out a way of life which will enlist their whole allegiance to their state, as we in America who are of Jewish faith propose to work out our life-pattern as an inseparable part of the American people. The most loyal citizens of Israel could wish no more."*

This statement should clarify the differences between Israeli nationalism and "Jewish" nationalism; between a sovereign foreign State of Israel and a "collective Jewish nation" embracing all Jews, of which the State of Israel is only the "center."

Question of the Funds

2. The American Council for Judaism favors the most generous philanthropic support possible for our fellow Jews in need, whether in Israel or any other country. The Council urges support of legitimate philanthropy designed to meet humanitarian needs; but we insist that there is a wide difference between philanthropy and alleged Jewish responsibilities to the State or "national economy" of Israel. And we further maintain that in order to contribute to such legitimate philanthropic needs, we should not be compelled to contribute to Zionist organizational activities.

The "Dual Loyalties" Issue

3. The American Council for Judaism has not charged Zionists with "dual allegiance." In many ways, that is a meaningless phrase. American Zionists publicly deny political unity with the Israeli Government, although the question is befogged by conflicting reports. What the Council has claimed—and documented with good Zionist authority—is that Zionism is a dynamic movement of world-wide Jewish nationalism. Zionism is avowedly not philanthropy, nor mere pro-Israelism, nor a refugee aid movement. Zionism seeks to establish Jewish distinctiveness in a common nationality status for Jews.

We of the Council maintain that all Jews do not possess such a nationality; that we are Jews by religion.

Through all these denials of false allegations runs the unifying thread of the Council's positive and affirmative philosophy.

III

The tradition out of which the American Council for Judaism draws its strength and validity derives from the era of the great revolutions in France and America toward the close of the 18th century. Although frequently distorted in application, the principles themselves that guided those revolutions remain clear and a source of strength for the democracies of the west and particularly the United States, even today.

Democracy and Emancipation

Briefly stated, those principles included the following: 1) The inalienable right of the *individual* to freedom, regardless of race or creed, in societies formed on the basis of free compacts among individuals; 2) separation of church and state, for only in societies where such separation existed, could any individual be assured equality of citizenship regardless of his religious faith or lack of it.

These principles deeply affected the lives and status of Jews in the new revolutionary states, as they affected all other men. For Jews these principles meant the end of a status which had compelled them to live as a separate corporate community, as "a nation within a nation." Henceforth Jews, as individuals, were to enjoy equal rights and responsibilities of citizenship in these new states. Like other groups that had suffered discrimination under the old order of segregated societies, Jews were called upon to emerge from the pre-revolutionary collectivity which had characterized their life. "To the individual Jew, everything; to the Jews as a nation, nothing." In one aspect only were Jews expected to maintain a community of interests as Jews. Their religion remained unaffected by this compact.

The significance of this revolutionary principle did not escape unnoticed in the history of Jews. Some greeted the new era with enthusiasm and hailed it as The Emancipation. Others

wanted to maintain the separate existence of the pre-democratic corporate life of Jews and turned their backs on the new era. Neither group of Jews was alone. The people of every western nation were divided between those who accepted and those who rejected the full implications of the libertarian principle. It required another half-century of struggle—the revolutions of the 1840's and the American Civil War—before the principle of societies founded upon free individuals was established as a trend in history. That struggle is not ended even today. It expresses itself in the efforts of liberal men to end the imperfections of our democracies, and in the efforts of reactionaries to exploit these imperfections as the Achilles' heel for their attack on the entire democratic way of life. Anti-Semitism is one of these imperfections.

Eastern Europe & Jewish Nationalism

Had the influence of these libertarian revolutions been universal, it is highly speculative whether there would have been a Zionist movement. There would have been religious, Messianic Zionism, in those denominations of Judaism of which it was, and remains, an important religious tenet. But there probably would not have been a secular, full-bodied national movement striving to solve the "Jewish" problem in imperfect democracies by advocating continued existence of Jews as a "nation within a nation" or their exodus from countries in which they had limited citizenship, to one which would grant them, as Jews, national privileges.

But that is supposition. The fact was that large areas of the world, embracing large numbers of Jews, did not experience the impact of the western revolutions at all. Other areas felt this impact only in ways that were diluted or ephemeral. Germany, for all of its facade of progress, serves as the classic example of the second category; Russia, Poland and the Balkans exemplified the former.

For the Jews caught in these politically retarded countries, there was no possibility of emancipation in the western pattern of individual equality. When the rising force of nationalism was added to these states that had not passed through the democratic revolution, the status of a Jewish "nation within a nation" became one of increasing jeopardy and frequent catastrophe.

IV

The Jews who were caught in the vise of the backward states divided on how to meet the increasingly intolerable pressures. Until the Peace Treaties at the end of World War I, Jews in such countries had obviously no escape from the patterns of Jewish collectivity or nationhood. But they differed among themselves on how to use their enforced collective entity most effectively. Should they, as a collective entity, join in the fight for liberalization of the countries in which they live? This was the position of the Russo-Polish Bund. Or should they join with collectivities of Jews similarly situated in other countries to force recognition of a world-wide Jewish nationality from the nations of the world? Zionism chose this second alternative.

Jews as a Collective Entity

The reference to this division of opinion—and ensuing struggle—between these groups of Jews, is made here for two reasons. First, the Council is aware of the fact that differing historic and social experiences in different countries have molded the character of the struggle for Jewish emancipation. What was salutary for the western world—and successful—was not suitable for a world living in the twilight zone between medievalism and the democratic liberty-loving societies. What was a compulsory pattern for Jewish nationalism in Eastern and Central Europe, where there was no democracy as we know it, was not suitable for the liberal states of the west. Second, a fact of extreme significance, was the struggle between the secular Jewish collectivity represented by the Bund on the one hand and on the other the collectivity, projecting world-wide, all-embracing Jewish nationalism. The latter pinned its hopes for emancipation on acquiring Palestine as a Jewish "homeland." It makes clear that anti-Zionism was not born with the American Council for Judaism or even the amorphous opposition of the famous *Protest-Rabbiner* of Germany. Anti-Zionism, as the Bundists have demonstrated in the past, and as a ferment in Yiddish groups in America indicates today, is not a simple negation by "assimilationists" or Jews whose associations with Judaism have become attenuated.

What Does Anti-Zionism Mean?

Anti-Zionism, whether of the Bund variety or that of the American Council for Judaism, believes in the struggle for equality here and now. In Poland the whole structure of society ordained that anti-Zionism should be in the form of a Polish-Jewish nationality fighting for equality in a system that retained the pre-democratic concept of the Jew as a member of a separate nationality group. Actively or passively, the Bund resisted the idea of an "auto-emancipation" linked to Palestine through the world-wide Jewish nationalism of the Zionist movement. The position of the Bund in favor of a separate national minority status of Jews has no validity in the United States as it had in Poland. But theirs too, was a struggle for greater emancipation, and it involved opposition to Zionism.

The American Council for Judaism's struggle takes still a different form. Its roots are in those principles of *individual* liberty and separation of church and state that lie at the heart of the liberal revolutions which gave birth to western democracy. It believes that Jews in the United States can achieve the fullest possible emancipation only as the medieval or East European concept of an isolated "Jewish" nationality is dissolved and individual Americans who are Jews become more and more an integral part of the American people. In religion only resides a collectivity which, in the United States, is no bar to emancipation.

The Council & America

For this reason, the Council urges the increasing secular integration of Jews, as individual Americans. By so doing, it is our belief that an American Judaism may continue its development allowing for the richest possible expression of our spiritual interests while we participate, increasingly, in the secular life we hold in common with our fellow citizens of other faiths.

This is the Council's positive formula for maintaining and extending the benefits of emancipation in terms of an American society founded upon the principles of individual rights and separation of church and state.

That its program is formulated precisely as it is, lies in the fact that the members of the Council are for the most part Jews who are committed to Western democratic ideologies. The Council could no more have formulated a program like that of the Bund, than the latter could have formulated the

Council's program. Their particular forms of anti-Zionism are reflections of the life and experiences of the people in each group as they approached the problem of emancipation.

Herzl the Journalist

The point at which Zionism calls for the opposition of these other two philosophies may have been born out of Herzl's inability to read history objectively and as a student. Herzl was a journalist. The day's headlines were the pulse-beats of his life. Indeed, had he been an historian, he would probably never have conceived his dream. No historian, at that time, would have had the blind courage to dream of fashioning a nation embracing all Jews; to batter on the doors of chancelleries and parliaments trying to materialize that dream in the form of a state. No historian would have looked at Alfred Dreyfus' humiliation in France and seen in it the failure of Jewish emancipation everywhere in the world. An historian would have seen that another half of France defended Dreyfus and would have marvelled that a century after the First Republic and after more centuries of universal persecution, so large a part of any nation came to the support of a single Jew, identifying his cause with their own liberal hopes.

But Herzl, the journalist, the enthusiast, missed all this. And he missed, too, the fact that the formula for emancipation of Jews *as a single nation*, which he did so much to crystallize and implement, was not and could not be a formula for all Jews. Nor was his curt dismissal of those whom he knew would not accept it—"Very well, let them be Frenchmen"—an answer. For it presaged already the cardinal error of Zionism, appropriating *title to everything Jewish*, for its one particular plan for emancipation. Having committed itself to the idea that a Jewish nation existed, Zionism then bent its efforts to create it—and to prove itself right. It could not tolerate anti-Zionism because, if organized and effective, anti-Zionism disproved the basic Zionist contention of a nationality common to all Jews. The basic principle of Zionism, therefore, which calls for challenge and opposition is not its assertion of nationality nor even its projection of emancipation to a "Jewish State," now the State of Israel. There are Jews who believe those things and they have a right to believe them. Moreover, as long as they conform to the laws of the separate nations in which they live, such Jews have a right to programs to implement those ideas.

Basic Zionism

The point at which Zionism invades the rights of many Jews lies in its claim to speak and act for *all Jews* as if all Jews agreed to this one program for greater emancipation. Since the leaders of Zionism know that they do not, in *fact* speak and act for all Jews, there inevitably follow certain deeply objectionable patterns and practices used to try to make good its boast. Any given Zionist organization may be a voluntary membership group. If Zionist groups acted only in their own names and practiced tolerance in Jewish organizational life, those approaching the problem of the fulfillment of emancipation from other viewpoints would not be in head-long conflict with Zionism. But by insisting upon being spokesmen of "the Jewish people" and by designedly taking control of great communal institutions that are the instrumentalities of all Jews, Zionism leaves those who look to other ideologies for greater emancipation no recourse but direct conflict and public protestations of dissent.

V

This is basically what is at issue in the historic debate. The issues are as inevitable and irrepressible as any ideological conflicts born out of varying histories and varying life experiences. The one unforgivable dereliction is to stand aside or to pretend that no conflict exists. Equally reprehensible is the attempt to camouflage the issues by false analogies or vague language. There must be no more of the kind of thing about which Dr. Weizmann boasts in his "Trial and Error" when he admits to taking money from anti-Zionist Jews by telling them it was for philanthropy while he and his Zionist associates knew the money would be used for "national renaissance."

The Right to the Truth

American Jews should not be fooled into acquiescence with the "philanthropic" subsidies to Israeli nationalism by comparing their private philanthropies to the Marshall Plan. *Halutzist* programs should not be masked as Jewish counterparts of the Fulbright Law or as the scattered, individualistic migrations of technicians and specialists to Israel. Zionism should not be presented to American Jews as a revival of "Jewish" culture, without making it clear that, as a national movement, the culture it promotes is a national culture.

All American Jews should not be compared, by Zionist spokesmen, to Irish-Americans or Polish-Americans since many American Jews do not accept an analogy between Judaism and Irish nationalism or Polish nationalism.

American Jews are adults. They are earnest, sincere, warm-hearted people, grateful for their blessings in this magnificent heritage of America of which we are a part, and eager to share those blessings with those less fortunate, wherever they may be. They should be told the facts, in language they can understand. Some of them have had their confidence in democracy profoundly shaken in the last fifteen years. In that they are not alone. Some of these may wish to withdraw from the American people, little or much, and feel their way toward what for them represents a greater sense of security in some form of Jewish nationalism. While they transgress no laws, that is their privilege and if and when they do transgress laws, it is not for another Jewish group to sit as judge and jury. We have but one system of government in these United States and it belongs to *all* the people.

But there will be some Jews—also not alone—who, seeing the frailties of democracy and the American people, will still believe that the cure lies in more of the first principles of individual rights and responsibilities; who will have no part of an autonomous existence for a Jewish secular corporate life in America or in a world-wide, secular Jewish nationalism "with its center in the State of Israel."

Choose in Freedom

Only history will select which of these may be the correct approach to our problems. We, who are trustees of the future and analysts of the past and present, should treat these Jews of America as the adults they are—or are prepared to be. Let them know the facts—and the background against which the facts are presented. Then let them choose, in freedom. Let them pay for what they believe—and believe in what they pay. For an honest question, let them have an honest answer.

To this end, the American Council for Judaism continues its utmost efforts to encourage public debate, insisting that no Jew and no single organization of Jews, can speak for all the Jews of America; and believing that in the democratic process of debate will be born the truth that will make men free.

DOCUMENT D

The following letter was read by Rabbi Lazaron at a special meeting of the Board of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation Sunday afternoon, October 6th. At his request, it is being mailed to all members of the Congregation.

ADOLPH D. COHN,
President

Morris S. Lazaron
7401 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore 8, Maryland

October 1, 1946

To the President and
Board of Electors of
Baltimore Hebrew Congregation:

After months of consideration I have decided to ask you to permit me to retire as Senior Rabbi and assume an Emeritus status. This does not mean any diminution of my interest in and love for the Congregation and its members. One cannot forget the intimate and happy association extending over three decades.

We live in precarious times. Cruel problems face the world, our country and our Jewish people. My life, as you know, has been one of continuous, unceasing activity. You have been generous in your willingness to let me work in areas beyond the Congregation - not, I trust, without some honor to my Congregation. I deeply wish the opportunity to pursue these endeavors with some profit, I hope, to our Congregation, our Jewish people and our country.

There are times in a man's life when choices have to be made among many things, all of which are dear and cherished. He has to summon enough courage - and it is not easy - to say, I love every one of these, but some of them I have to set aside, for I cannot do them all. He has only so many more years to live and he wishes to spend his energies where his strength, his knowledge and experience may count most. I have reached that point in my life.

Except for nine months after my ordination as rabbi at Wheeling, West Virginia, my entire rabbinical career has been in Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. My roots are deep in your families, your hearts and your lives even as the knowledge of your love for me is deep in my own heart and life. Your devotion and understanding have given me strength and inspiration, as I hope my ministry among you has been a blessing.

Rabbi Lieberman's hands are strong. His fine mental equipment and personal integrity have brought distinction to him and to his Congregation. His cooperation with me - an example of what such a relation between a younger and an older man should be - has been a profoundly gratifying experience. I have a deep affection for him and complete confidence in his ability. He has at his side the splendid help of our fine young Cantor who, though with us only one year, has already won our hearts. The welfare of the Congregation under their guidance will be happily secure. I am proud and happy that both these men are of my own choosing.

The Congregation needs the vigor of youthful leadership. New contacts must be made in the community, every advantage must be taken

Morris S. Lazaron
7401 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore 8, Maryland

taken to build up its membership and maintain its honored position. Only the energy of youthful leadership can do these things. All practical considerations, therefore, as well as my own wishes indicate the wisdom of this procedure. I know you will give Rabbi Lieberman and Cantor Rosenfeld your unswerving loyalty and the personal affection their devotion to the Congregation so richly merits.

I need hardly tell you I do not desire to indulge myself in idleness. You who know me so well will understand that I could not be happy unless I were occupied and busy. I do not plan to make official connection with any organization. I desire to increase my speaking activities in colleges and elsewhere; to work more intensively in the field of Christian-Jewish relations; to write on Jewish and general matters and to bring to bear upon the problems of our time what wisdom the years have brought me.

In my status as Emeritus, I shall be glad always to consult and help - when you ask for it; to keep in constant touch with the institution and its members which have been the major interests of my life; to advise and help in the building program which must be brought to successful conclusion. I shall continue my contacts with the youth and the service men so close to my heart. I should like to feel that I shall always be able to occupy the pulpit from time to time when I have something to say.

I trust you will feel that I have earned this privilege of Emeritus status, which I should like to take effect immediately. What practical arrangement you see fit to make in my behalf will be acceptable to me.

Because of the affectionate relations which obtain between the Congregation and myself, I would like them to know this decision directly from me. I would like, therefore, to mail a copy of this letter to all our members.

Retirement as Senior Rabbi and assumption of Emeritus status has a ring of finality that may sound unhappy in some ears. Shall we, therefore, put it this way: that in recognition of his nearly thirty-two years of active ministry, at his express desire and because of its love for him, the Congregation at this time consents to grant Emeritus status to Rabbi Lazaron, releasing him for such work as he may wish to do.

MORRIS S. LAZARON

(Morris S. Lazaron Collection, American Jewish Archives, Box 39, Folder 11.)

DOCUMENT E

Morris S. Lazaron
7401 Park Heights Avenue
Baltimore 8, Maryland

Pikesville, Maryland
June 11, 1949

To: The President and Electors
of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation

Ladies and Gentlemen:

You have seen fit to reduce by 33-1/3% the pension you voluntarily granted me. I can see in this only a further attempt to humiliate me, for surely no budget requirement in a solvent institution would cause such conduct.

This is the climax in a campaign of vilification beginning with criticisms of what I said and did which you wanted me not to say and do, followed by criticisms of what I did not do which you thought I should have done. This present action, which amounts now to persecution, is something which no man who values his self respect will accept.

All my life I have followed the dictates of my heart and mind. I have made mistakes — who hasn't? — but I served the Congregation to the best of my ability for thirty-one years and have always acted in a way that appeared to me to be right and decent. This is all any man can do.

You must see that I can no longer continue to accept any gratuity from you while, at the same time, remaining the constant object of discussion and the butt of criticism.

I therefore ask you to discontinue all further payments and to remove Mrs. Lazaron's and my names from the congregational membership. I herewith resign my title of Emeritus.

Because there are still many in the Congregation who care for me, it is but right that they know my removal as Emeritus comes at my own request. I must insist, therefore, in justice to myself, that a copy of this letter be sent to each member. I should have insisted last year that your action at that time, which is at the basis of the present situation, be made known to the membership who support the institution. As you know, I remained silent then to protect the unity of the Congregation. I now see, had all the facts been made known to the Congregation then, some of the present hurt at my absence from services - of which my critics have taken advantage - would be very clearly understood. There is a point beyond which even the effort to preserve unity in an institution becomes ignominious. It is sad that I end my long and affectionate association with Baltimore Hebrew Congregation under such shabby circumstances.

MORRIS S. LAZARON

(Morris S. Lazaron Collection, American Jewish Archives, Box 39, Folder 11.)

DOCUMENT F

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE BALTIMORE HEBREW CONGREGATION

My dear friends,

Now at last I can tell you the whole story. I should have done so long ago but I kept silent and let myself be misunderstood and misrepresented in order to protect the unity of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation to which I was privileged to minister for thirty-one years. It is not a pretty story and I speak only with sadness in my heart.

All of you as members of the congregation are entitled to know the facts. The majority of you I know have the warmest feelings of friendship for me. In justice to you and to the congregation I must speak.

You may have heard that at its meeting Monday evening, June 6th, the Board reduced by 33 1/3% the pension it voluntarily granted me. I have informed the Board that I shall accept no further payment from it; that I have resigned my title as Emeritus and that Mrs. Lazaron and I have withdrawn our names as members of the congregation. I want you to know why I took this step so that rumor and gossip may not distort the truth.

I need hardly tell you who know me so well that this is not a matter of pique on my part. Had anyone waited on me and told me the congregation was in financial straits I would have been the first to ask a reduction in my pension. But the financial condition of the congregation has little to do with the situation.

As most of you know I have never considered the financial end of my association with the congregation. I have never asked for a contract nor did I ever ask for an increase in salary. On the contrary I insisted on reduction in the dark days of the depression, a reduction which was accepted. During my ministry with you I was offered two pulpits -- in Chicago and in Boston -- for nearly double the salary I was then receiving, but I never brought these extremely remunerative opportunities to the attention of the Board. While I had the means, I spent considerable sums of money entertaining the various groups in the congregation in my home and offering hospitality to distinguished visitors whom I brought here to address you. The financial factor in the picture is the least important except as it reflects on the Congregation, which is of great importance.

Every minister expects some criticism. It is the price that he pays for the privilege of being a minister. Every minister makes mistakes through thoughtlessness or bad judgment. I have had my share of criticism, some of it justified; and I have made mistakes though none with intent to hurt or harm anyone. We were a happy family in Baltimore Hebrew Congregation for many, many years.

When our country was forced into the last war I tried to get into the service -- I still had my commission as Major in the Chaplains Reserve - but was turned down summarily because of a duodenal ulcer of some years standing. I carried the load alone, in the absence of my associate. I cut down my outside activities in the colleges and camps. I tried to bring comfort here and to keep in touch with the service men through the Newsletter which appeared the first month of the war and every month thereafter until the end of hostilities. We were never closer than in those trying days.

But there were rumblings against me even then because of my stand on the Zionist issue. An undercurrent of ill-feeling was built up against me which fed whatever animosities had been created during the long years of my ministry.

Upon the return of my associate from the Army and against the advice of several intimate friends, I requested the Board to reduce my salary by 25% with the understanding that after 30 years of service I could relinquish in some measure the responsibility, give greater opportunity to my associate and have the time to devote to the large and pressing problems outside. The offer was accepted and I thought I would be granted some release from the persistent criticisms. But the situation did not change. Therefore in the fall of 1946 I asked for Emeritus status. This was granted and the Board retired me on half salary.

Shortly before the fall Holydays in 1948, a committee of the Board waited on me. I read the enclosed statement marked Document One to this committee. At the committee's urgent request I did not send the statement to the members of the Board. I expected that the statement would at least be read to the special meeting of the Board. Upon finding out almost at the last moment that there was no intention to read the statement even to the Board I insisted that it be read and discussed. In the midst of the discussion I sent Documents Two and Three to the Board meeting. My obvious desire was to continue to protect the unity of the Congregation and help the Board find a way out of the impasse it had brought on itself and the Congregation, while at same time preserving the principle of a free pulpit and my own integrity.

I thus took upon myself the unpleasant responsibility for not appearing on the pulpit, saved the Board embarrassment and kept the real situation from the knowledge of the Congregation. I thought this sacrifice would at last make me quit of the distressing picture and that I could do my work unbothered by irksome and unjust talk.

In the light of all that had happened most of you will see how I could not bring myself to sit upon the pulpit I had occupied for so many years. You can also understand why I attended services rarely and on these occasions sat in the pew. I felt I had made enough sacrifice without being compelled to do violence to my deepest feelings. I believed my friends would understand and accept the situation as explained in Document Three. Of course I could do nothing to defend myself against those who ignorantly or wilfully misjudged and misrepresenteed me. I believed too that the sense of justice and fair-play might prompt the Board, as a Board, at least to protect me from petty back-biting and loose talk. I was mistaken; altho I am sure there are those on the Board who are my staunch friends and they did what they could.

Unfortunately my silence puzzled and hurt many friends because they did not know the facts. Throughout the country went all sorts of rumors such as this: that I had been put out of my pulpit! My absence from temple was talked about by some, maliciously, by others with the accusation that I had 'deserted' the Congregation. The Board did nothing to defend me from such gossip. Indeed there were some people who took advantage of the criticisms and in some cases, even encouraged them.

In these circumstances the Board took the action it did at its meeting Monday evening, June 6th.

All during the week, rumors came to me of the Board's action. These things run quick through a city. It was not until five days later, Saturday, June 11, having had no official information, I myself phoned the President of the Congregation and in this way received official confirmation. Thus I took the only course any self-respecting man could take. I sent to every member of the Board Document Four.

Having had no word in answer to Document Four I phoned the President this morning, Wednesday, June 15th. He told me there is to be a special meeting of the Board this noon. I then told him that after careful consideration I did not believe even if the Board decided to send the letter that the letter gave enough of the facts to enable the Congregation to know what actually happened. If sent out alone it would only confound confusion and that I intended to address a communication to the Congregation.

This letter is my only defense against misjudgment, misrepresentation and irresponsible gossip. I am convinced that the best interest of the Congregation will no longer be served by my silence; rather the best interest and indeed the future of the Congregation will be best served if its members know the truth.

My work with you is done. I cannot leave you with the feeling that one in whom you had confidence has broken faith with you. And so I write you this rather lengthy letter.

My last word to you is: Keep vigilant watch on congregational affairs. Strive to make it an institution where honesty, sincerity and spirituality are not only professed but practiced. Weakness, cowardice, and malice have no place in a religious institution. Maintain the character and integrity of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation as an American Liberal Jewish congregation.

And may the blessing of God rest upon all of you.

Faithfully yours,

Morris S. Lazaron

Pikesville, Maryland

June 15, 1949

Document Two

Sunday morning, Sept. 26, 1948

Mr. Milton Haas, President,
Baltimore Hebrew Congregation.

Dear Milton:

In justice to myself it was necessary that the Board knew the facts. I therefore insisted that my statement to the sub-Committee be read to the Board at this morning's meeting. This having been done the problem of the Congregation still remains.

There will be much gossip if my absence from the pulpit is explained only as originally suggested. Many I know will be regretful. Some may say: we shut him up. Others will be indignant. But the great majority will be confused. There may be the tendency to take sides and an unhappy situation which none of us wants may result.

In order to prevent speculation, stop gossip and loose talk and preserve the unity which all of us want I believe some explanation should be sent to all our members. Such an explanation should reduce the situation to very simple terms which everyone will understand and accept.

I therefore suggest that the enclosed letter be sent to every member of the congregation before New Years.

Faithfully as always,

Morris S. Lazaron

Document Three

Sunday morning, Sept. 26, 1948.

My dear friends:

This letter will bring to you my blessing for the Holy days season. I write you because I shall not be in the pulpit to speak to you.

I need not tell you that this means a wrench for me after our thirty-three years together. I know I shall be missed by many of you as I shall miss you. We have travelled a long road.

In order that you may understand my decision to participate no longer in any of the services in the synagogue, I wish to say only this: After much careful and heartsearching consideration this summer, I came to the conclusion that in the rabbinate as in all other professions, "emeritus status" should be what it signifies -- a complete break in all official capacity and relationships. After a long period of service, the retiring rabbi's influence in all matters in the synagogue should cease. It should pass into the hands of those who are carrying on and who are responsible for the active leadership of the Congregation. Because I felt this to be true I have not been with you at services or in other activities of congregational life. I am now convinced that this is the right and wise procedure for all concerned.

I shall be in Baltimore for some months each year. As your friend I am always available to serve you in any personal way I can. I am still interested in what is going on in your lives.

May the coming year and the years ahead bring health and happiness to you and your households. God's blessings on you all!

Faithfully yours,

Morris S. Lazaron

(Morris S. Lazaron Collection, American Jewish Archives, Box 40, Folder 3.)

DOCUMENT G

BALTIMORE HEBREW CONGREGATION

CHARTERED IN 1830
BY THE STATE OF MARYLAND

MORRIS S. LAZARON
RABBI EMERITUS
MORRIS LIEBERMAN
RABBI

June 23, 1949

ADDRESS MAIL TO:
7401 PARK HEIGHTS AVE.
BALTIMORE-8, MARYLAND

TO THE MEMBERS OF BALTIMORE HEBREW CONGREGATION

The following letter is being sent in accordance with the unanimous vote of the Board of Electors at a special meeting held on Thursday, June 23, 1949:

The Board of Electors received a letter dated June 11, 1949 from Rabbi Lazaron tendering his resignation as Rabbi Emeritus, and his resignation and that of Mrs. Lazaron as members of the Congregation.

Rabbi Lazaron made his views known to the members of the Congregation in a letter dated June 15, 1949. The Board does not accept and deeply regrets the interpretation of its action set forth in that letter and accompanying documents. Numbering among its members some of his closest personal friends and intimate co-workers on many projects, it has at all times striven to deal fairly with Rabbi Lazaron, while, at the same time, remaining faithful to its responsibilities to the Congregation, the welfare of which it holds in trust. Its task has not been easy. The Board makes no claim to perfect wisdom. However, it has always acted in good faith, trying to bring to bear in every problem its best collective thought and judgment.

Rabbi Lazaron, during his many years of active ministry, earned the highest regard and the warmest feeling of friendship from the Congregation. Because the members of the Board personally share in this feeling, the Board cannot bring itself to enter into a controversy with Rabbi Lazaron.

At a special meeting of the Board, held two days after receipt of Rabbi Lazaron's letter of resignation, a committee, consisting of President Milton Haas, Henry Frank, Milton Gundersheimer, Adolph Cohn and Harry J. Green, was appointed to call upon Rabbi Lazaron to explain the position of the Board, and to seek reconsideration of Rabbi Lazaron's resignation. Their visit was of no avail.

Therefore, the Board has no alternative other than to accept their resignations, which it does with profound regret.

THE BOARD OF ELECTORS:

Aaron Straus
Honorary President
Milton J. Haas
President
Paul C. Wolman
Henry S. Frank
Vice-Presidents
Meyer Kushnick
Treasurer
Maxwell A. Behrend
Harold R. Breslau
Mrs. Jacob Dashew
Lee L. Dopkin
Harold M. Fish
Jerome L. Fox
Louis J. Fox
Harry J. Green
Alfred R. Himmelrich
Jack H. Hoffberger
Samuel Lazarus
Daniel A. Lowenthal
Leon F. Meairow
Elkan R. Myers
Walter Rothschild
William Schenthal
Mrs. Ira A. Spear
Harvey H. Weiss
Samuel M. Woronoff

Honorary:
Dr. M. L. Breitstein
Adolph D. Cohn
Mrs. Hugo Dalsheimer
Milton E. Gundersheimer
Dr. Gilbert W. Rosenthal

(Morris S. Lazaron Collection, American Jewish Archives, Box 40, Folder 3.)

DOCUMENT H

B. F. Saltzstein Resolution

(May 26th, 1963 - Board of Trustees Meeting)

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, as the patron of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, is privileged to confirm the Rabbinical and Doctoral Degrees conferred by the College-Institute. In the forthcoming Ordination and Investiture Ceremonies of the HUC-JIR, the Union will thus be called upon to confirm honorary doctoral degrees being conferred upon, among others, Rabbi Morris Lazaron and Rabbi William Fineshriber.

Rabbi Lazaron and Rabbi Fineshriber served their congregations during their active ministry with devotion and zeal.

However, both Rabbi Lazaron and Rabbi Feinshriver are honorary vice-presidents of the American Council for Judaism. This Board of Trustees wishes to emphasize that in confirming these degrees, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, in no manner, approves of the labors of these Rabbis in behalf of the American Council nor their affiliation with that organization.

In 1957, the biennial General Assembly of the UAHC, meeting in Toronto, Canada, passed a formal resolution denouncing the American Council for Judaism. That resolution noted that representative leaders of the American Council have "repeatedly slandered the UAHC, misrepresenting our position and casting aspersions on the American loyalty of our adherents."

The resolution further pointed out that the American Council "had furnished material for professional anti-Semites who have publicly endorsed its position and has played directly into the hands of Arab propagandists." In addition, the resolution adds, "in a number of communities, representatives of the American Council have employed morally reprehensible methods to undermine existing congregations and to introduce

division and discord into them."

Nothing has occurred in the intervening years to modify the charges articulated in the 1957 Biennial resolution. If anything, the damage and dishonor visited upon American and world Jewry by the activities of the American Council has become more extensive.

The American Council for Judaism has in recent months publically denied that Jews behind the Iron Curtain suffer from anti-Semitic treatment even in the face of grim and incontrovertible evidence of the ruthless execution of Jews for alleged economic crimes when most non-Jews similarly sentenced received jail sentences or fines. These statements by the American Council for Judaism, because of the name it bears, regardless of how unrepresentative it may be of American Jewry, numerically or idealogically, lend themselves to use by Russian propagandists in refutation of the accusations hurled at the Soviet Union concerning their mistreatment of Russian Jewry by the nations of the world.

Not content with having sustained the efforts of those who worked against the admission of Jews to the Holy Land during the heights of the Nazi exterminations, and in undermining the efforts of world Jewry to build a safe and secure refuge in Israel, the American Council now turns to abet the anti-Jewish efforts of the Soviet Union.

The total organized Jewish community of the United States, rabbinical and lay, has repeatedly rejected the American Council for Judaism and the position it has so ignominiously taken.

In addition, the American Council has aided in the stimulation of a Senate investigation of the Zionist organizations allegedly seeking to determine whether these organizations are entitled to privileges they now enjoy.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: that this Board of Trustees declare that the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, in confirming the honorary degrees of Rabbi Morris Lazaron and Rabbi Willian Fineshriber to be conferred by the Hebrew Union College-

Jewish Institute of Religion, does completely disassociate itself with that aspect of their ministry which has been spent in support of the American Council for Judaism.

We re-affirm the 1957 resolution of the UAHC General Assembly which condemns the activity of the American Council and charges its representative leaders with having willfully and widely slandered the UAHC, misrepresented its position and impugning the loyalty of those members of the UAHC who hold to beliefs contrary to those of the American Council.

We call attention to the resolution of our rabbinic leaders, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, which declared, "that the American Council for Judaism does not represent liberal, Reform of any other valid interpretation of Judaism" and that, "it has distorted and misrepresented the nature and meaning of Judaism."

We condemn those current activities of the American Council which lend support to investigations calculated to embarras and cast suspicions of disloyalty on every American Jew associated with Zionist movements and those public statements of the American Council which confuse the public mind as to the validity and severity of the anti-Semitic acts of the Soviet Union and thus aid in their campaign of cruel recriminations against Russian Jews.

This Board of Trustees of the UAHC does reiterate its unyielding opposition to the American Council for Judaism and its complete disassociation from all who are its spokesmen.

[Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Resolution passed by the Union Board of Trustees regarding the HUC-JIR's conferral of honorary doctoral degrees on Rabbi Morris S. Lazaron and Rabbi William Fineshriber, New York, N.Y. May 26, 1963.]

DOCUMENT I

A REPRINT FROM
CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM
Vol. XXVII, No. 2, Winter Issue, 1973

LOOKING BACK

Morris S. Lazaron

LOOKING BACK OVER MANY YEARS in the rabbinate provides an opportunity to express my thoughts and feelings about the rabbinate, Judaism and Israel, and perhaps make some clarification for those who may have judged me without really knowing what I believe.

nationalism reexamined

TO BE A JEW MEANS MORE than accepting a set of ethical principles and social obligations. We are the inheritors of a religio-cultural tradition. The birthland of the Jews has a larger place in that tradition for some Jews than it has for others. It is in this area that I find the greatest change in my position.

I remember an incident which took place in Washington, in the anteroom of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee during the controversy about the establishment of the State of Israel. Stephen Wise was at one end of the room and I was at the other. We had been very good friends, although we differed greatly on the matter of political Jewish nationalism and he was bitterly critical of my position. Simultaneously we walked toward each other. We shook hands and he said, "Morris, when are you coming back to your people?" I answered, "Stephen, I have never left my people."

Indeed, I do not believe that any Jewish community can cut itself off from the trunk of Jewish life without impoverishing itself. I have never denied the brotherhood of Jews. At a convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis many years ago in Buffalo, New York, when we were debating the question of Palestine and Jewish nationalism, I suggested the term "peoplehood." And if memory serves me right, this term was used in a resolution adopted by the Conference.

In the twenties and thirties, I toured the major cities of the United States in behalf of the Keren Hayesod and the Palestine Appeal. In hearings before the Joint Senate-House Foreign Relations Committee, I was, with Stephen Wise, one of the very few Reform rabbis who testified in favor of our government's acceptance of the Balfour Declaration as a principle of its foreign policy. I wrote the prayer for the restoration of Palestine which is in one of the Friday evening services of the *Union Prayer Book*. In my book, *Seed of Abraham: Ten Jews of the Ages* (Century Company, 1930), I included a biography of Herzl and stated my position as follows:

Morris S. Lazaron, a graduate of Hebrew Union College, class of 1914, is Rabbi Emeritus of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, Baltimore, Maryland.

We live in a world of intense nationalisms. The deep, unreasoning loyalties of nationalism are used as the motivating force for most of the wars that devastate the earth and the lives of men. Nationalism . . . is a force in our civilization which must be reckoned with. We must dominate it or it will dominate us. We can and must spiritualize it. Our present-day world conceives of nationalism in political terms, terms of empire and sovereignty. The Jewish conception of nationalism is different. It covets no vast acreage. True, it centers on Palestine because of that land's historic association with the Jewish people. But it is content to make its home there among the Arabs, asking only that it be granted the right to fix the conditions of its own life. . . . Jewish nationalism seeks the opportunity to express the soul of the Jewish people in terms of institutions, culture, and civilization. This is the new conception of nationalism which the Zionist movement expresses and which holds a lesson for our world. . . . The old nationalism destroyed; the new nationalism will create; it will create the new world which will recognize the reason for differences among the peoples, but will not tolerate jealousy, prejudice and hate based on those differences . . .

This was my thinking in 1930.

Moved by sympathy and yielding to the persuasive spell of the phrase "the peoplehood of Israel," but without commitment to the political aims of Zionism, I joined the Zionist Organization of America. I defined my conception of Jewish nationalism in an address from the pulpit: "The concept of Jewish Peoplehood, of Jewish nationality, has no political implications. Its program may be political, but only insofar as existing world conditions and the conduct of international relations makes this necessary."

disillusionment and reconsideration

As I look back, I realize how naive I was. I did not understand the realities of Jewish nationalism. Disillusionment came gradually. The Zionist leaders seemed to be less than completely frank. They talked about the democratization of Jewish life and yet the party line and discipline were in the hands of a few who exercised an autocratic authority which no one could challenge. During the controversy between the American Jewish Committee and the Zionist Organization of America, I pleaded for an honorable compromise which would bring unity instead of division in American Jewish life. To no avail. Finally and reluctantly, I came to the conclusion that the Zionists were using Jewish needs to achieve their political goals. If one was not with the Zionists, *ipso facto*, one was against them. When these convictions crystallized after a few years, I withdrew from the organization.

In 1948, vast tides of emotion moved the multitudes of our people. "Our brothers are being killed and they have nowhere to go!" What Jew with any feeling for the brotherhood of Jews could resist? Major voices like that of Judah L. Magnes, and minor voices like my own, were rejected in the aftermath of the Hitler persecutions. We believed in and proposed the creation of a binational state, after the pattern of Switzerland. We foresaw the tragic problems,

which at the present, are still unsolved. But any deviation from the Zionist solution to the tragic problem was considered treasonable, and proponents of any other solution were considered anti-Semites.

I was condemned and boycotted. But my position implied no lack of concern or love for my brother Jews in their agony. I was fearful for their safety and their future in Israel, and concerned about the effect that a Zionist state in Israel would have upon the peace of the world.

NOW, AFTER TWENTY YEARS, Israel has proved by its indomitable courage and the sacrifices of its citizens, its right to exist in peace.

The accomplishments of Israel have engendered a feeling of pride, not only among Jews but among the unprejudiced everywhere. We Jews have made contributions to the intellectual and cultural life of every nation in which we have made our home. If Israel is allowed to live in peace, she will surely enhance that tradition in the Middle East.

But there is danger! We constitute a small segment of the world's population. Extreme nationalism in the Diaspora will inevitably result in isolating Jews from their fellow citizens. Jews will continue to live all over the world and give their first loyalty to the countries in which they live. This applies particularly to American Jews, who have been the greatest supporters of Israel.

reform judaism

JEWS HAVE CHOSEN TO EXPRESS their Judaism in three forms: Orthodox, Conservative, Reform. Each fills a need for its own group. My greatest hope is that a Jew can enter any synagogue anywhere, feel at home and find hope and peace. But in looking back at the Reform movement after a lifetime in its service, I feel concerned about many things.

I am concerned about the small attendance at religious services. I believe that among Conservative and Orthodox Jews the urge to worship with their brethren is more imperative than among Reform Jews. Our group is the loser thereby, for the preservation and communal practice of some of our forms and ceremonies add to the beauty and usefulness of our lives.

Our congregations are too large. Personal contact between rabbi and congregation is too meager. When the late Samuel Goldenson first came to Temple Emanu-El in New York, he determined to know every member personally. One Saturday, he knocked on the door of a member's apartment and introduced himself: "I am Rabbi Goldenson and you are a member of my congregation." The congregant, rather dazed, looked at him and said, "So *that's* what you look like." Congregations in large cities have become "big business." The rabbi too often must be fund-raiser and administrator, with little time for the study and reflection so necessary to maintain emotional balance and spiritual growth. No congregation should be so large that the rabbi cannot know and be known by every member of his congregation.

I AM ALSO DEEPLY CONCERNED about our youth. We have somehow failed them. Many of them are worshipping at other altars, and we must ask ourselves why. Beyond their rebellion, their sometimes ridiculous dress, there is uncertainty and fear, but also a seeking, a frankness, a sensitivity to suffering and a passion to serve, which the youth of my generation seldom felt. Given a chance, youth will share generously and sacrificially in building a better social order. We must try to capture their idealism, show them that mysticism is just as important in Judaism as in the religions of the East, and that social justice is just as important a goal in Judaism as it is in socialism or communism.

The Rabbis, describing the death of Nadab and Abihu, declare: "Their souls were consumed but their bodies survived." This has been happening to our people. I see a materialism among them, the casting away of values and standards and a cynicism that destroys moral courage and personal integrity. In this post-technological world, our people needs the refining, civilizing influence of a religious faith.

a rabbi's vision

THERE IS A MOVEMENT AMONG Jewish thinkers to attempt to express our faith in terms of a systematic theology. I stand amazed and reverent before the profound and eloquent voices of our theologians. Yet my prejudice against theology derives from the all too frequent, absolute nature of its presumptions. Every theological system has won devotion from some men. But theologies have also resulted in religious controversy and even irreligious conduct, when the followers of one or another system felt that forced conversion or exclusion of others was necessary for salvation. I have often wondered what God would say to those who speak with the finality of authority in His name.

My Judaism begins with a childlike faith that prompts me to say: where I cannot understand, I believe. My Judaism tells me it is my duty to identify my conduct with divine purpose so far as it is given me to know it; that in the end, through me and others like me of all kinds and creeds, that purpose will be realized in God's kingdom, not in heaven but here on earth among men and nations. My fathers lived and died by these simple truths, and so shall I.

After forty years in the rabbinate, I still believe that the true minister is always a child at heart, no matter how sophisticated he may be. When his spirit loses the quality of wonder at the mystery of life, the sense of goodness in every man and woman, the feeling that he is a part of an eternal unfolding fellowship —when he loses this radiant vision, his work is done.

AS I READ MY OWN WORDS, I believe I have not changed greatly. Judaism has the same meaning for me as it had a generation ago. If I were given another lifetime, I believe my hopes as well as my fears for our faith and our people would not be very different.