

***I Dwell Among The People:
A Biography of Rabbi Louis Israel Newman***

A Rabbinic Thesis Written In Partial Fulfillment for Rabbinical Ordination

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- Abstract -

Rabbi Louis Israel Newman (1893-1972) served as spiritual leader of two prominent American congregations: Temple Emanu-el in San Francisco from 1924 to 1930 and Congregation Rodeph Sholom in New York City from 1930 until his death in 1972. A prolific writer and commanding speaker, Rabbi Newman was a powerful voice for both Reform Judaism and Zionism. A vital aspect of his rabbinate was his commitment to the centrality of the synagogue in Jewish life.

Rabbi Newman was a disciple and associate of Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, from whom he received private ordination in 1918. He joined with Wise in supporting the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, and in warning Americans of the threats posed by Nazi Germany. Rabbi Newman contributed to the founding of Rabbi Wise's Jewish Institute of Religion in New York and, in the course of its merger with Hebrew Union College, he argued passionately for maintaining the academic integrity of both institutions. He subsequently founded the Academy of Jewish Religion in New York City, an alternative seminary to HUC-JIR.

A gifted author, Rabbi Newman wrote numerous articles, plays and poetry. Many of these works, in addition to his collected sermons, were published. He also edited anthologies of Hasidic and Talmudic literature. For many years, Rabbi Newman was associated with the Intercollegiate Menorah Association.

Rabbi Newman was a fervent Jewish particularist. Through the power of his pen and pulpit, he strongly influenced congregational and communal life within the communities he served. Though occasionally at odds with the Reform establishment, he nevertheless devoted his rabbinate to the strengthening of American Jewish identity.

Introduction: The Angry Man

Occasionally, Rabbi Newman was referred to as an “angry” man. That characterization does him honor and adds to his stature as a rabbi and Jew. A rabbi whose wrath cannot be aroused – even as was the wrath of Moses – is unworthy of his calling.

-Rabbi Theodore A. Lewis
Memorial Issue, Rodeph Sholom Chronicle, 1972

This rabbinic thesis is a biographical study on the life and career of a man who was often angry, but who was also a loving and devoted human being. The anger attributed by Theodore Lewis to the character of Rabbi Louis Israel Newman was not expressed out of disrespect. Rather, Lewis' comment was grounded in the admiration he felt for his colleague, and in recognition of the high hopes and lofty values with which Newman embraced the Jewish people. Newman's anger was not the kind that emerged out of spite or contempt for others; it was only one ingredient in a powerful fusion that produced a career devoted to sustaining the vitality, integrity and self-worth of Jews everywhere. Newman's "anger" was tempered – at all times – by deep recesses of love for America, Israel, and the Jewish people. Newman's career is the story of a spiritual leader, scholar, poet, playwright and essayist. It is also the story of professional challenges and responses. Over the course of his long career, Louis Newman faced a diversity of noteworthy controversies. His responses to the issues he encountered were influenced by his fascinating personality, which was composed of strengths and weaknesses that distinguished him as an American rabbi. Pen, pulpit, passion - and anger

- were the means through which Newman channeled his life-long concern for the Jewish people.

This thesis seeks to explore and evaluate key aspects of Newman's life. The work is divided into four chapters, in addition to a conclusion. Collectively, the chapters provide (a) an overview of Newman's life and career as a rabbi; (b) an analysis of his political activities; (c) an intimate examination of the role Newman played in preserving the identity of the Jewish Institute of Religion after its merger with the Hebrew Union College; and (d) a review of his remarkable literary contributions as a poet, playwright, essayist and author. Attention will also be paid to Newman's close personal relationship with his mentor, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise. The common thread – one that runs the entire course of his career - is a commitment to Jewish particularism. Throughout his synagogue and communal activity, political work, books, essays, poems and dramas is to be found Newman's fervent commitment to Jewish survival and identity, in America, Israel and elsewhere. The anger with which Newman on occasion expressed his commitment cost him – at various times – the friendship and respect of colleagues and laity.

Despite Louis Newman's eventful years in the American rabbinate, and his involvement in so many noteworthy aspects of American Jewish life, there does not exist a detailed study of his career or a published biography. This thesis aspires to provide researchers with an initial attempt to filling this void. It is based on letters and documents from Newman's personal papers, his poetic and dramatic works, his numerous publications, several oral histories given by individuals who knew the rabbi personally, as well as the works of various historians. Collectively, these source materials produce a

colorful portrait of Louis Newman's career and his many contributions to the spiritual, political and cultural life of American Jewry in the twentieth century. Rabbi Louis Newman attained great stature in American Jewry. At the same time, his poem, "The Voice of God," the final line of which is the title for this thesis, points to a man who understood his place among the Jewish people he was privileged to serve.

Chapter One

Biographical Overview

The modern mission of the Jew is to assume the moral leadership of the world. Though mere self-preservation is adequate sanction for the existence of any individual or group, it does not satisfy the Jew. We seek a raison d'être for our survival; we seek to pluck the heart of the mystery of our sufferings and triumphs.

- Anglo-Saxon and Jew: Jewish Questions of the Day, A Collection of Essays, p. 32.

Louis Israel Newman was born on December 20, 1893 in Providence, Rhode Island. His parents, Paul (Pinchas) and Antonia Hecker Newman had come to America from Austrian Galicia.¹ Both were part of the enormous wave of Eastern European Jews who arrived in the United States during the latter years of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century. A large number of these immigrants settled in Rhode Island. By 1915, the year in which Louis Newman was undertaking graduate studies in California, it was estimated that more than eight thousand Eastern European Jewish immigrants lived in Providence, comprising more than three percent of the city's population. Yiddish signs along the main street of Providence's Smith Hill neighborhood marked Jewish-owned bakeries, butcher shops, tailors and second-hand clothing establishments. The city's first synagogues were constructed in 1893 and 1906.²

¹ Phillip Miller, "Rabbi Louis I. Newman," *Rhode Island Jewish Historical Notes*, Volume 14, November 2005, Number 3, p. 445.

² Judith E. Smith. *Family Connections: A History of Italian & Jewish Immigrant Lives in Providence, Rhode Island, 1900-1940* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985) p. 16.

Antonia Newman died from tuberculosis in 1898 in Denver, Colorado. Paul's second wife, Theresa Berger, also predeceased him, passing away in 1938.³ Paul himself died in 1949. Louis Newman had one sister, Anna, who died in 1978. In Providence, Paul had manufactured costume jewelry. By the time Louis was a student at Brown University, his parents and sister had moved to San Francisco, where Paul dabbled in real estate.⁴

Called *Leibel* as a child, Newman acquired his primary education in Providence, graduating from high school in 1909. At Brown, Newman won prizes in Latin, French, German and Biblical Literature. A letter to Newman from the Dean of Brown informing him of a scholarship testifies to Newman's commitment to scholarship: "[The award] will be continued so long as you may need it, provided your college standing in studies should prove as creditable as your previous record leads us to expect."⁵ Newman also participated in gymnastics, drama, glee club, debating and played the mandolin. Reports from college newspapers attest to Newman's involvement in school oratory contests.⁶ As a senior, he served as president of the German club and vice-president of the French club.⁷ Newman was arguably the most brilliant Jewish undergraduate to attend Brown prior to World War I and was popular among the school's nine hundred-member student body.⁸ In a letter to his family, Newman expressed the dedication with which he applied himself to his learning:

³ Miller, *Ibid.*

⁴ Newman Family Genealogies File, GF-737, LOUIS ISRAEL NEWMAN PAPERS (hereafter "LINP") American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio (hereafter AJA).

⁵ Dean Alex Meiklejohn Letter to (hereafter "to") Louis I. Newman (hereafter "Newman"). 28 June 1909. Box 9, Folder 1, *Ibid.*

⁶ "Oratorical Contest Won By Amherst," *Wesleyan Argus*, 5 May 1913, pp. 1 & 4. Box 14 Folder 1. *Ibid.*

⁷ Miller, p. 446.

⁸ *Ibid.*

I am putting a great deal of energy
in my own work now, and believe I
am attaining beneficial results.
I am trying to toe the mark now as
never before in all my interests, so
that when I receive my degree in
June I will have the consciousness
of feeling a solid foundation beneath
my feet.⁹

In 1913, while only nineteen, Newman was the youngest graduate in Brown University's history and served as speaker at his class's graduation exercises.¹⁰

Though offered a position as an assistant in the English Department of Brown Newman chose to continue his education in Northern California.¹¹ He had considered enrolling in Harvard Law School but was dissuaded by the necessity of taking a year away from school just to earn money for his tuition:

It [law school] may mean a year out –
in business work or in teaching. Teaching
offers the most, as I said before, to a
young fellow fresh from college, but
should I fall into a good business
position, the practical training there
would be almost as advantageous
as the benefits from teaching.¹²

His parents and sister having already moved to San Francisco a few years earlier, Newman felt drawn to pursue his studies and career there. In a regular correspondence with his sister, Newman frequently expressed his desire to follow his fortune in the West, sentiments that are ironic in light of his long and successful career in New York City: "So when I leave Providence I go with not a tic to hold my attention, absolutely free and

⁹ Newman to Newman Family. 11 November 1912. Box 9, Folder 3. LINP.

¹⁰ "San Franciscan Awarded High Scholastic Honors." Unknown/Undated Newspaper Item. Box 14, Folder 1, Ibid.

¹¹ Newman to Newman Family. 26 May 1913. Box 9 Folder 4. Ibid.

¹² Ibid. 8 June 1913. Box 9, Folder 4. Ibid.

ready to become heart and soul a Westerner. I glory in expectation of the time!"¹³

Rumors suggest that Newman may also have journeyed west in pursuit of a young woman to whom he was engaged but did not marry. More likely is the suggestion that Newman followed a favorite professor of French who had departed Brown for the University of California at Berkeley.¹⁴

At Berkeley, Newman studied under Semitics scholar William Popper, earning his Master's degree in 1916. Popper not only mentored Newman but also served as a co-author on his thesis on Biblical Parallelism, considered at the time a landmark of biblical scholarship.¹⁵ It was during these years that Newman became associated with the Intercollegiate Menorah Association,¹⁶ serving for a time as its national president. Most important in determining Newman's future during these years in California was his development as a Jewish spiritual leader. Under the discipleship of Rabbi Martin A. Meyer¹⁷ - whom he would eventually succeed as rabbi of San Francisco's Congregation Emanu-El - Newman became leader, though not rabbi of the First Hebrew Congregation of Berkeley. An announcement of Newman's arrival described the Berkeley community as follows:

Berkeley has a large Jewish community, which
can be relied upon to support the congregation.
Its future is very promising, and it seeks the aid

¹³ Ibid. 16 March 1913. Box 9, Folder 3. LINP.

¹⁴ Miller, p. 446.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 447.

¹⁶ The International Menorah Association (IMA) was established in 1906 by Henry Hurwitz (1886-1961) to promote Jewish culture, ideals and values on American college campuses. The IMA was an important precursor to the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation. The IMA published *The Menorah Journal*, containing articles on Jewish history, religion, literature and modern life. (*Encyclopedia Judaica*. See also MS 2. Biographical Sketch/Institutional History, AJA).

¹⁷ Rabbi Martin Meyer (1879-1923), ordained at HUC in 1901 and received his PhD from Columbia in 1906. After serving pulpits in Albany and Brooklyn he returned to his native San Francisco to assume the leadership of Temple Emanu-El. In a short but prolific career, Meyer achieved renown as a pulpit rabbi, scholar and military chaplain during WWI. (*American Jewish Historical Society*, Number 29 pp. 179- 181).

and co-operation of all interested individuals.¹⁸

Referring to Newman as “winner of the highest oratorical honors at Brown,” the same news item announced that the Berkeley congregation would include regular Hebrew classes, use the “reformed ritual,”¹⁹ conduct a religious school and offer a weekly sermon by prominent rabbis. Newman, who “will be ordained a rabbi after finishing his work at the university [of California]”²⁰ was to supervise all of these activities. In due time, Newman re-organized the congregation’s religious school and instituted regular Hebrew classes. Other activities at Berkeley included an Annual Grand Ball that served as a fundraiser for the congregation’s Sabbath school and a lecture series featuring prominent local professionals.²¹ Outside of his congregational work, Newman helped to establish a regular forum at the Berkeley YMHA devoted to the discussion of current political and social topics. Subjects included “Is the United States Justified in its Policy of Intervention in Mexico?”²² To his congregation, Newman spoke on such issues as “Internationalism vs. Nationalism.”²³

Rabbi Martin Meyer closely guided Newman during his Berkeley years. It was Meyer who recommended Newman as an assistant to Rabbi Stephen S. Wise of the Free Synagogue in New York. In 1915, while visiting the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco, Wise met with Newman and invited him to join the staff of the Free Synagogue.²⁴ In New York, Newman followed Meyer’s path by undertaking doctoral work at Columbia University under the supervision of Semitics scholar Dr. Richard

¹⁸ *Emanu-El Bulletin*, 23 October 1914, no page number. Box 14, Folder 1. LINP.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Dance Card for “Second Annual Grand Ball,” 29 December 1914. Box 14, Folder 8. LINP.

²² “Y.M.H.A. Open Forum.” Undated Newspaper Item. Box 14, Folder 1. Ibid.

²³ “Hebrews To Hold Meeting Tonight,” Ibid.

²⁴ Newman to Isidore S. Meyer. 8 April 1969, Box 9, Folder 2. LINP.

Gottheil.²⁵ Even after his departure from the West, Newman continued to seek Meyer's counsel on various matters, particularly in his decision of whether to remain with the Menorah Association following his ordination or continue to work under Wise at the Free Synagogue.²⁶

A central feature of the Free Synagogue was an uncensored spiritual leadership, unencumbered by any restrictions from the congregation's governing board. This same quality characterized the Bronx Free Synagogue to which Newman was assigned.²⁷ Years earlier, in turning down the leadership of the prestigious Temple Emanu-El in New York, Wise had articulated his understanding of a "free" pulpit:

The chief office of the minister, I take it, is not to represent the views of the congregation, but to proclaim the truth as he sees it. How can he serve a congregation as a teacher save as he quickens the minds of his hearers by the vitality and independence of his utterances? But how can a man be vital and independent and helpful, if he be tethered and muzzled? A free pulpit, worthily filled, must command and influence; a pulpit that is not free, howsoever filled, is sure to be without potency and honor. A free pulpit sometimes stumbles into error; a pulpit that is not free can never powerfully plead for truth and righteousness.²⁸

Newman shared the vision of Wise and his associate Rabbi Sydney Goldstein in perceiving the synagogue as a tool for social improvement and promoting Zionism.²⁹ In

²⁵ Richard Gottheil (1862-1936), long-time Semitics Scholar at Columbia University and Jewish communal leader in New York City. Son of Rabbi Gustav Gottheil of Temple Emanu-El in New York. Gottheil was a pioneer of American Zionist Movement and supporter of Wise's JIR. Served as academic mentor to Newman at Columbia (*American Jewish Yearbook*).

²⁶ Newman to Martin Meyer. 4 December 1917. Box 37, Folder 13. HENRY HURWITZ/ MENORAH ASSOCIATION MEMORIAL COLLECTION PAPERS. AJA. (hereafter "HHMAP")

²⁷ Miller, *Ibid*.

²⁸ Stephen Wise. *Challenging Years: The Autobiography of Stephen Wise* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1949), pp. 91-92.

²⁹ Miller, *Ibid*.

a letter to his parents, Newman reflected on the nature of this work at the Free

Synagogue:

I am beginning to touch movements
on all sides – to see the sordid, the
beautiful, the distasteful, the attractive –
above all, the way in which men when
[they] really show themselves perform.
I can't give you all the details of my
experience in New York; they are
but a portend and hint of what is
perhaps going to be my whole life.³⁰

In addition to supervising the Bronx Free Synagogue Newman directed the religious school program for the Free Synagogue branches in Washington Heights, the Bronx, downtown Manhattan and the main synagogue on 68th Street. With the support of Wise, Newman grew as an educator, administrator and spiritual leader. The extensive correspondence between Newman and Wise reflects their dynamic pupil-teacher relationship. Upon assigning Newman his duties at the Free Synagogue religious schools, Wise wrote: "Personally, I desire to express my very deep pleasure at the thought of your continuing in association with us in the work."³¹ Newman responded: "I assure you that I am happy to enter the rabbinate next July [of 1918] as a member of the Free Synagogue Staff and as one of your disciples."³² Other letters reflect the intensity that Newman applied to maintaining student enrollment, parental involvement, a solid teaching corps and a meaningful Judaic curriculum. To his parents Newman wrote: "...the spirit of the work is excellent, and everyone is co-operative and affectionate. It is a joy indeed to

³⁰ Newman to Newman Family. 20 January 1918. Box 9, Folder 5.
LINP.

³¹ Wise, Stephen (hereafter "Wise") to Newman. 7 March 1918. Box 12, Folder 3. Ibid.

³² Newman to Wise. 17 March 1918. Ibid.

work with people in the Bronx and to be at the School on 68th Street.”³³ Even with all of his responsibilities, which included regular preaching duties, Newman’s position allowed him to continue with his doctoral studies under Dr. Gottheil. On at least one occasion however, Wise reminded Newman that the synagogue work took priority over academic matters:

I am sorry to say so but I think it will be entirely unfitting for you to drop the work of the Synagogue do the [summer] Library work for Dr. Gottheil] a month after your coming to us...I know you will understand me, that I think of your best interests, as well as those of your work.³⁴

Newman himself did not hesitate to offer suggestions for improvement on matters of worship at the Free Synagogue. Writing to Wise on the proposed Free Synagogue prayerbook, Newman pointed out,

...a prayerbook should grow out of a system of religious ideas, fairly well organized and formulated...If we are to have a prayerbook fitted to our own needs, and expressive of our special aims and purpose and spirit, then it must embody certain fundamental ideas which represent the Free Synagogue platform.³⁵

Although Newman would come to occupy two of American Reform Jewry’s most prominent pulpits, while acquiring a reputation as an orator, writer and political activist, he was not a graduate of a rabbinical seminary. On July 19, 1918, Newman was

³³ Newman to Newman Family. 9 September 1918. Box 9, Folder 5. Ibid.

³⁴ Wise to Newman. 25 July 1917. Box 12, Folder 2. Ibid.

³⁵ Newman to Wise. 9 June 1918. Box 12, Folder 3. Ibid.

personally ordained by Rabbis Wise, Meyer and Goldstein in a ceremony³⁶ held at the Bronx Free Synagogue. In expressing his appreciation to Meyer, Newman wrote:

I can hardly realize that the plans we laid together in 1913 have been consummated, and that with a great milestone passed, a new and broader path of service opens up. I can voice only faintly my sense of gratitude and obligation.³⁷

Over the next three years Newman continued to guide the growth of the Bronx Free Synagogue, preaching, directing the religious school and continuing education programs for adults while enlarging the congregation's membership. At this early point in his rabbinate Newman struggled with congregants over the practice of Bar Mitzvah. Newman believed Confirmation to be a more worthy rite of passage than Bar Mitzvah. "I have tried to explain [to parents] the democratic character of receiving boy and girl through Confirmation into Jewish life – without avail."³⁸ Along with Wise and Goldstein, Newman facilitated the development of the synagogue's social services program. These included Big Brother and Big Sister work in the field of juvenile delinquency, sewing circles (particularly during the war years), fundraising for the Hebrew Orphan Asylum, Influenza Relief Fund and regular volunteer drives.³⁹

It is a reflection of Newman's mercurial character that during his years at the Bronx Free Synagogue, along with the Menorah Association work and his doctoral

³⁶ Many North American rabbis receive ordination, or *semicha* = "laying" (of hands) from the established seminaries: HUC-JIR, JTS, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and Orthodox *yeshivot*. The Bible relates that Moses ordained Joshua by placing his hands on him, thereby transferring a portion of his spirit to Joshua. The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 1:3, 19a, *Sanhedrin*, 1:3 TJ) mandated the presence of three elders, at least one of whom was himself ordained, conferring ordination upon their pupils. (*Encyclopedia Judaica*). Newman's ordination was a variation on this tradition.

³⁷ Newman to Martin Meyer. 30 July 1918. Microfilm No. 2265. Ibid.

³⁸ Newman to Wise. 24 September 1918. Box 12, Folder 3. Ibid.

³⁹ *Free Synagogue of the Bronx Bulletin*, Holyday Services Edition, 1919. Box 37, Folder 14, HHMAP.

studies, he seriously contemplated leaving the United States to pursue a life and career in Palestine. "I want to help prove that we can succeed in the task of state-building, and that the American Jew is willing to go to the Land to contribute his share...I want hereby to notify you [Rabbi Wise] that I conceive it as a dominant aspiration of mine to migrate to Palestine."⁴⁰ Though he did not follow through on this plan, the welfare of Palestine and, subsequently, the State of Israel remained close to Newman's heart throughout his lifetime. In 1920, having devoted almost four years to the Free Synagogue and wishing to move on to more challenging endeavors, Newman proposed to Wise that – as an alternative to assuming a post at another congregation - a branch of the Free Synagogue be established in Boston: "If possible, I would like to remain in New York, for many reasons, among them the desire to be in on the seminary [the Jewish Institute of Religion] when it is launched. But if this cannot be, I am ready for Boston when you so decide."⁴¹ However, Newman's Boston initiative occurred at the same time that Wise had begun to focus on establishing the Jewish Institute of Religion. A Boston Free Synagogue therefore never materialized.

Wise regularly fielded enquiries from congregations asking him to recommend a colleague to become their rabbi. Though tempted to suggest Newman as a candidate, Wise wrote to Newman: "I have taken it for granted always that you did not care to be considered. If I am wrong about this, I ought to know about it."⁴² Wise was not wrong. Newman loved New York and - notwithstanding his feelings for Palestine and the idea of creating a Free Synagogue in Boston - New York was his home. But at this point in his career, Newman desired to emerge from beneath the wings of Wise, Meyer and

⁴⁰ Newman to Wise. 5 March 1919. Box 12, Folder 3. Ibid.

⁴¹ Newman to Wise. 7 December 1920. Box 12, Folder 4. Ibid.

⁴² Wise to Newman. 8 November 1919. Box 12, Folder 3. Ibid.

Goldstein, and assert the force of his personality and intellect in a new setting. Newman put it best in his response to Wise's letter of above: "You are correct in your surmise about my attachment to the Bronx work; moreover, I cannot conceive myself away from New York...only an unusual set of circumstances, to which we all would acquiesce, could draw me apart therefrom."⁴³ Circumstances fell into place in 1921. The previous year, Newman had written to Wise of a growing tension between himself and Rabbi Goldstein:

His [Goldstein's] recent outbreak against me, coming as a climax to many during a period of five years, I attribute to overwork in connection with his duties... My only concern with reference to Doctor Goldstein is that if in the future men should be chosen as assistants and associates in the Free Synagogue, they should not feel under needless restraint; that a man should not learn to believe, as perhaps you have been told, that a man of independence cannot hope to develop up towards you, Doctor Wise, because he is not permitted to develop beyond Doctor Goldstein.⁴⁴

Newman's concern regarding his association with Goldstein combined with his desire to be part of a community within which Jewish religious education was at the center. In 1921, Newman resigned from the Free Synagogue to assume the role of Associate Rabbi of Temple Israel on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, under Senior Rabbi Maurice Harris.⁴⁵ In addition to carrying out his mission of "reclaiming American Jews who have drifted from their Jewish moorings," Temple Israel's proximity to Columbia University helped to fulfill Newman's desire to continue his association with college students

⁴³ Newman to Wise. 12 November 1919. Ibid.

⁴⁴ Newman to Wise. 29 December 1920. Box 12, Folder 4. Ibid.

⁴⁵ Rabbi Maurice Harris (1859-1930), during a forty-eight year rabbinic career, guided Temple Israel towards becoming one of the most prominent of American congregations, "with loyalty surpassed by none, with distinction equalled by few, with a reciprocated faithfulness and love that are the very essence of his high profession (*CCAR Yearbook XL*, pp. 220-221).

through Menorah and sustain his interest in Jewish academic work.⁴⁶ It is also possible that Newman envisioned himself as Harris' successor; in 1921, Harris had already led Temple Israel for almost forty years.⁴⁷

An issue of the *Temple Israel Chronicle* of November 17, 1922 reveals the scope of work undertaken during Newman's three years there. Special children's services were held on Saturday mornings, high schools students took part in Sunday afternoon socials, while a "Temple Club" for people of "early college age" met regularly to hear speakers and present dramatic productions. Literary and dramatic readings, some by Newman himself, were a staple of the synagogue's cultural life, as was the publication of Newman's own poetry in the *Chronicle*.⁴⁸ In a sermon at Temple Israel, an excerpt from which was later published in his book *Anglo-Saxon and Jew*, Newman expressed his vision of what the synagogue must strive to become. Newman's words reflected on his experiences at the Free Synagogue and commitment to the idea of the synagogue as a center for social improvement.

There is work to be done: club, class, athletic leaders are needed; trained social service workers who can aid in the reconstruction of shattered homes; Big Brothers and Sisters who can help stricken youth over the perils besetting our adolescent growth; teachers and friends who can sympathize with the folkways and sentiments of our great Jewish middle classes and who delight to assist them in their struggle for self-dependency and achievement. In short, the new Temple Israel must attain congregational solidarity through Service.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Newman to Wise. 1 January 1921. Ibid.

⁴⁷ Miller to William S. Tepper. (hereafter "Tepper") 16 October 2007.

⁴⁸ *Temple Israel Chronicle*, 17 November 1922. Box 37, Folder 15. HHMAP.

⁴⁹ Newman, *Anglo-Saxon and Jew: Jewish Questions of the Day* (hereafter "*Anglo-Saxon and Jew*") (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1923), pp. 41-42.

Over the next three years, in addition to his rabbinical duties, Newman continued to serve the Intercollegiate Menorah Association. He undertook a regular schedule of speaking engagements throughout the New York and New England areas to meet college communities on behalf of the organization. His growing prominence in the New York rabbinate helped Menorah to raise urgently needed funds for its programs.⁵⁰

In 1922, Newman assisted Wise in the establishment of the Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR), a new liberal rabbinical seminary in New York that represented an alternative to the more established Hebrew Union College (HUC) in Cincinnati. In his autobiography *Challenging Years*, Wise wrote:

...there were too few American-born young Jews who entered or felt called to the rabbinate. Cincinnati, site of the oldest of the American Jewish seminaries, had somehow ceased to be the large and vital Jewish center it had been in the earliest days of its great founder, Isaac M. Wise. With a Jewish population then, as now, of fewer than twenty thousand, it offered its students an inadequate experimental station. New York had uniquely become such a station, with its great Jewish population, made up of representatives of virtually every Jewish community on earth.⁵¹

As Associate Rabbi of Temple Israel, Newman welcomed the first class of JIR, which met there during its first year.⁵² Owing to the training and private ordination that Newman received from himself, Meyer and Goldstein, Wise customarily referred to Newman as a “pre-graduate” of JIR.⁵³ Newman was as a member of JIR’s original faculty. The teaching staff from the first year included “Louis I. Newman, Temple Israel,

⁵⁰ Henry Hurwitz to Newman, 5 March 1924. Box 37, Folder 15. HHMAP.

⁵¹ Wise, *Challenging Years*, p. 130.

⁵² *The Chronicle* - Congregation Rodeph Sholom: Louis I. Newman Memorial Issue, 1893-1972 (hereafter “LIN Memorial Issue”), p. 5. Box 14, Folder 3. LINP.

⁵³ Newman to Isidore S. Meyer. Ibid.

in New York.”⁵⁴ In joining the new seminary, Newman faced the opposition of Temple Israel’s president, Daniel P. Hays, who, as a member of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) Board saw JIR as a challenge to HUC. In response, Newman expressed hope that Hays would eventually support JIR, while lamenting the problems put forth by the UAHC leadership that sought “to destroy what promises to be a fine contribution to Jewish life.”⁵⁵ Newman dedicated himself to the success of the upstart seminary. Thirty years later, he would play a crucial role in securing the continuity of this institution in the wake of its tumultuous merger with HUC.

An article in *The New York Times* from April of 1921, announced that “Miss Sara Unna and Rabbi Louis I. Newman Are Not to Wed.”⁵⁶ The announcement described Miss Unna as a graduate of the University of California “who is [currently] attending Columbia.” She and Newman had met at the University of California “and had planned to be married in California this summer [of 1921].”⁵⁷ No reason for the break-up was given. In June of 1923, Newman married Lucile Helene Uhry in a ceremony co-officiated by Rabbis Harris and Wise at Temple Israel. Lucile Uhry had grown up at the Free Synagogue and met Newman as a student in his confirmation class. Their marriage took place shortly after her graduation from Hunter College. Lucile was a distant cousin of the well-known American playwright Alfred Uhry.⁵⁸ In 1919, at the age of fifteen, Lucile wrote a short essay entitled “Shall Women Be Permitted To Enter The Rabbinate?” This

⁵⁴ Hyman J. Fliegel. “The Creation of the Jewish Institute of Religion,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, Volume LVIII, September 1968 to June 1969, Numbers 1-4, p. 269.

⁵⁵ Newman to Wise. 25 April 1922. Box 12, Folder 5. LIMP.

⁵⁶ “Their Troth Broken,” *The New York Times*. 26 April 1921.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Saul Newman to Tepper. 27 November 2007.

paper was published in *The Guardian*, the newspaper of the Free Synagogue Religious School.

Why should we not permit our women to enter the Rabbinate? The war [World War I] has proven that women are equal to tasks that heretofore no one ever dreamed they could accomplish. Surely, they are equal to the tasks of the rabbi...Many Jewish women are teachers, preachers and social reformers, yet they cannot, according to Jewish unwritten law, be ordained as rabbis. This shows an unprogressive spirit, which has no place in Jewish life.⁵⁹

Despite these views, Lucile declined an invitation from Stephen Wise⁶⁰ to enroll in JIR, feeling it was not right for her. During her husband's tenure at Rodeph Sholom, she joined Newman at many functions with her "ever-present gentleness and grace," and served as a valued member of the Sisterhood.⁶¹ The Newmans' three sons were Jeremy, who became an engineer; Jonathan, a lawyer and judge; and Daniel, a professor of art.

1924 was an important year for Newman. He received his Ph.D. from Columbia University, an achievement that culminated in the publication of his seven-hundred page thesis, dedicated to the memory Martin Meyer, entitled *Jewish Influence on Christian Reform Movements*. More significantly, 1924 was the year Newman returned to California to assume the pulpit of San Francisco's Congregation Emanu-El following the premature death of Meyer. Newman and Lucile had been in San Francisco on their honeymoon when Meyer died; they had been scheduled to meet with him on the day of his death.⁶²

⁵⁹ Lucile Uhry, "Shall Women Be Permitted To Enter The Rabbinate?" *The Guardian* (newspaper of the Free Synagogue Religious School), June 1919. Courtesy of Dr. Pamela Nadell, American University, Washington, DC, 8 November 2007.

⁶⁰ Wise to Lucile Uhry, 31 May 1919. Courtesy of Dr. Pamela Nadell, Ibid.

⁶¹ "Mrs. Louis I. Newman," *The Rodeph Sholom Chronicle*, undated, p. 3 Box 11, Folder 8. LINP.

⁶² Newman to Wise, 1 July 1923. Box 12, Folder 5. Ibid.

Newman hesitated in accepting the Emanu-El pulpit. Both he and Lucile were comfortable in New York, the center of Jewish life in America. To his in-laws, Newman wrote: "Though this [Emanu-El] is a desirable post in a multitude of ways, I can tell you in the intimacy of the family, that Lucile and I have made up our minds from the first that nothing can tempt us away from New York."⁶³ Perhaps also, Newman experienced trepidation at stepping into the shoes of his long-time mentor. Wise, however, foresaw that, owing to Newman's growing reputation, and close relationship to Meyer, it was inevitable that Emanu-El would seek Newman's services. Wise wrote, prophetically:

If the call comes to you, as I somehow feel it will, don't decline it until after you have talked it over with me. Nothing better could happen to you than to be taken out of the current New York life for a few years. This may be the great call and opportunity of your life.⁶⁴

Upon Newman's eventual acceptance of the Emanu-El post, in the spring of 1924, Wise wrote to his disciple: "I need not tell you what lies in my heart for you, not so much congratulations, as very real hopes and prayers to the end that you may have a great and noble ministry in California."⁶⁵ Writing to the lay leadership of Emanu-El Wise added: "It is a happy augury for Emanu-El and for Israel throughout the West that the new leader should be a disciple of his predecessor, and an adoptive son of the community which has summoned him to its service."⁶⁶

At the age of thirty, Newman was the youngest man ever chosen rabbi of Congregation Emanu-El. Following an eight-year absence, he was returning to a

⁶³ Newman to Uhry Family. 2 July 1923. Ibid.

⁶⁴ Wise to Newman. 2 July 1923. Ibid.

⁶⁵ Wise to Newman. 28 April 1924. Box 12, Folder 6. Ibid.

⁶⁶ Wise to Newman. 16 August 1924. Ibid.

community that had seen its Jewish citizenry first arrive with the California Gold Rush of 1849. Approximately three hundred Jews had been among the initial group of prospectors and pioneers. They came overland across the country as well as by ship and portage through the Isthmus of Nicaragua.⁶⁷ In 1850, San Francisco's Jewish settlers founded the Eureka Benevolent Society, which, along with the local Hebrew Benevolent Association assisted needy Jewish newcomers to America's Pacific Coast.⁶⁸ Over the following decades, Jews played a prominent role in the city's economic development. Emanu-El's pioneer families had, by the 1880s, developed many of the city's major commercial establishments. By 1921, there were approximately thirty thousand Jews in the city.⁶⁹ Fifty years after their arrival San Francisco, Jews held positions in the highest ranks of the city's social and political life.⁷⁰ In *Jewish San Francisco*, Edward Zerín writes:

Reaching out to the larger community, the Jews of San Francisco envisioned and responded to the many needs of the city's growing diversification. Turning within, they put "new wine in old bottles" to meet the new world challenges to their ancestral traditions.⁷¹

Though San Francisco Jews gathered in 1851 for the express purpose of creating a single synagogue for their community, visions of harmony quickly dissipated as differences in background and custom became apparent.⁷² The two synagogues

⁶⁷ Howard M. Sachar, *A History of the Jews in America* (New York: Knopf, Distributed by Random House, 1992), p. 57.

⁶⁸ *The Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, p. 1654

⁶⁹ Jacob Rader Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1775-1985*, Volume IV (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), p.72.

⁷⁰ Sachar, pp. 59-61.

⁷¹ Edward Zerín, *Jewish San Francisco*. (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2006), p. 8.

⁷² Fred Rosenbaum, *Visions of Reform: Congregation Emanu-El and the Jews of San Francisco, 1849-1999*, (Berkeley: Judah L. Magnes Museum, 2000), pp. 6-9, in Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 73.

eventually established were Emanu-El, consisting of German, American and French elements, and Shearith Israel, made up British and Polish immigrants. Julius Eckmann, the first Rabbi of Emanu-El, organized a Sabbath School and launched California's first Jewish journal, *The Gleaner*.⁷³ In the 1860s Emanu-El became part of the Reform movement.

Newman inherited a congregation that had undergone the trauma of the 1906 earthquake, during which its stately temple on Sutter Street had been virtually destroyed. Though the Sutter Street synagogue was re-built, the congregation – with Newman at its helm – looked towards a new era, one marked by optimism, prosperity and creativity.⁷⁴ A new sanctuary was to be erected, one that, from Newman's perspective, would surpass the synagogue's function as that of solely being a theological institution.⁷⁵ The new Emanu-El "Temple House" would feature sports, performing arts and a range of social and continuing education opportunities. Newman's predecessor, Martin Meyer, had – prior to his death – lobbied his constituents on behalf of such a structure.⁷⁶ This "Temple House" concept can be traced to the ideas developed by Rabbis Joseph Krauskopf and Henry Berkowitz, two members of the first HUC ordination class. Though their teacher Isaac Mayer Wise had, through the Friday night service and *Oneg Shabbat*, facilitated the transference of Jewish ritual from the home to the synagogue, Krauskopf and Berkowitz extended this idea by introducing such communal activities as literary societies, cultural clubs, lectures and readings into their congregations.⁷⁷ As well, Rabbi Jacob Neito of

⁷³ *The Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*, Ibid.

⁷⁴ Rosenbaum, p. 138.

⁷⁵ "The Temple House movement with its basketball games, dramatics, dancing classes...", Newman, *Biting on Granite: Selected Sermons and Addresses*, (New York, 1946), p. 37, in Ibid, p. 140.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Jonathan Sarna, *JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture, 1888-1988* (Philadelphia: Jewish

San Francisco's Sherith Israel was one of the first to propose the idea of "Temple Centers."⁷⁸ For Newman, the relationship between the synagogue's worship services and community activities was symbiotic.

Newman's ideas for the new synagogue did not carry without facing a measure of resistance from the Emanu-El membership. A number of lay leaders saw the non-religious activities as the prerogative of the YMHA or Jewish Community Center. They argued that Newman's plans represented needless duplication. Newman, on the other hand, looked down on such secular institutions. For him, the synagogue was the center of Jewish communal life.⁷⁹ Newman won his battle. The Emanu-El board approved, in addition to the sanctuary, the erection of a five-story Temple House containing classrooms, offices, a library, gymnasium and fully-equipped theater – named for Martin Meyer – that seated nine hundred persons.⁸⁰

The new Emanu-El, with its majestic, red-tiled dome, sixteen hundred-seat sanctuary, five thousand-pipe organ, and cloistered courtyard with fountain situated at the corner of San Francisco's Lake and Arguello Streets was dedicated in 1926, twenty years to the day after the earthquake. In 1927, the building was recognized by the American Institute of Architects as one of the finest structures in Northern California.⁸¹

Under Newman's dynamic leadership, one that had been honed during his eight years in New York at the Free Synagogue and Temple Israel, Congregation Emanu-El grew from five hundred and sixty-five families in 1924 to more than one thousand by

Publication Society, 1989), in David Kaufman, *Shul With A Pool: The Synagogue-Center in American-Jewish Life, 1875-1925*. (Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services, 1994), pp. 54-55.

⁷⁸ Newman, "Jacob Neito," *CCAR Yearbook*, Volume XL, pp. 217-218

⁷⁹ "The Temple is a piece of Palestine," Newman, *Biting on Granite*, Ibid, p. 38, in Rosenbaum, 140.

⁸⁰ The Martin A. Meyer auditorium in particular bore Newman's stamp: Rinder, "Music, Prayer and Religious Leadership," p. 88, in Ibid, p. 141.

⁸¹ Miller, p. 448.

1929. Of this number, two hundred were less well-off families who paid forty dollars per year to attend services, send their children to the religious school and receive tickets for the High Holidays.⁸² In 1925, prior to the completion of the new building, a *Kol Nidre* service at the city's Civic Auditorium drew more than eight thousand people, one of the largest worship experiences in American history.⁸³ Newman also inaugurated the *Temple Chronicle*, a weekly bulletin of congregational events including excerpts from his sermons.⁸⁴ Along with Rabbis Edgar F. Magnin in Los Angeles and Barnett R. Brickner in Cleveland, Newman delivered a weekly radio broadcast on Jewish religious, cultural and communal subjects.⁸⁵ He was also in demand as a speaker at churches, clubs and universities. In 1928, Newman was Baccalaureate Preacher at the Commencement Exercises at the University of California.⁸⁶ Newman's weekly column on Jewish affairs, "Telling It In Gath," was published in Portland's *The Scribe*, Seattle's *Jewish Transcript* and San Francisco's *Jewish Journal*. He also contributed a weekly column to the *San Francisco Call-Bulletin*.⁸⁷

At Emanu-El Newman inaugurated the Temple Players – a theater company that during the 1920s presented several full-length dramas in the Martin Meyer Auditorium. Plays by Bernard Shaw, Somerset Maugham and Phillip Barry were among those produced.⁸⁸ Perhaps Newman's most successful dramatic endeavor was engaging the

⁸² Newman remarked in 1930 that five thousand people were in some way affiliated: Temple Minutes, January 1929, in Rosenbaum, p. 149.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ The Board of Directors voted to cease all advertising in the *Temple Chronicle*, 30 April 1926, in Ibid, p. 150.

⁸⁵ *B'nai B'rith Magazine*, 19 December 1928. Box 40, Folder 6. EDGAR F. MAGNIN PAPERS. AJA.

⁸⁶ "Rabbi Newman's Ministry in California," January 1930. Box 27, Folder 15. JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION PAPERS. AJA (hereafter "JIRP").

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

director, Nahum Zemach, of the prestigious Hebrew-speaking Habimah Theater to direct a production of S. Ansky's *The Dybbuk*. The performance ran for two weeks and was seen by more than eight thousand people.⁸⁹ Drama remained an important synagogue activity during the Newman years in San Francisco. Religious school students presented several plays each year in addition to elaborate pageants for the holidays and festivals.

Newman also helped to found the Pathfinders, a group of male youths, including college students from Berkeley, who served as Emanu-El's religious school teachers, service ushers, stagehands and an array of other roles within the congregational community. Lucile Newman established a feminine counterpart to the Pathfinders, the Reviewers. A Boys Scout troop sponsored by Emanu-El became popular for its regular camping trips and swimming classes.⁹⁰ In the religious school, Newman placed a greater emphasis than his predecessors on the instruction of Hebrew. By the time Newman departed the congregation, each student received at least a half-hour of Hebrew instruction per week. Nevertheless, the religious school competed heavily with Northern California's attractive outdoors. For a time the absentee rate was as high as twenty-five percent. Newman and Hattie Sloss, head of Emanu-El's Sunday School committee, struggled in their attempts to have parents take a greater interest in their children's Jewish education.⁹¹

Among Newman's most noteworthy achievements in California was to take part in establishing a School for Jewish Studies, a training institute for Jewish teachers that began in 1925 at Emanu-El's old synagogue on Sutter Street. The goal of the institute's

⁸⁹ Critics were unanimous in their praise: *Temple Chronicle*, 9 November 1928, in Rosenbaum, *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ The [Religious] School had difficulty competing with "the California out of doors," *Temple Chronicle*, 9 November 1928, in *Ibid.*, p. 152.

⁹¹ "Nothing in this world is perfect...": Emanu-El Temple Minutes, January 1927, in *Ibid.*, p. 153.

two-year program was to prepare teachers for religious schools in the Jewish communities of Northern California. The school opened its doors to college and university students, as well as Jewish teachers in the regular public schools. The required courses were Bible, Jewish History, Hebrew, Ceremonies, Curriculum Content, Teaching Methods, Doctrines and Jewish Literature. The faculty, in addition to Newman – who taught History – consisted of prominent rabbis and scholars from the Northern California area.⁹²

In his sermons, the more conservative aspect of Newman's character was apparent in his attacks on the "new paganism"⁹³ of those obsessed with jazz, sports, alcohol and sexuality. Newman voiced his displeasure with the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud, who had "unloosed a veritable Pandora's Box of demons."⁹⁴ Freud's ideas were treated with much trepidation during these years. Newman was a strong believer in family and regularly preached on the value of fidelity and the importance of chastity prior to marriage. He criticized young women who sought careers and financial independence rather than the life of a home and family, and warned his congregants against the fads, cults and "nature worship"⁹⁵ that he feared would displace organized religion.

During his tenure at Emanu-El, Newman also spoke out against religious fundamentalism. He upheld the principle of church-state separation and, with his rabbinic colleagues, successfully fought against the passage of a government bill that would have allowed for release time in the public schools for religious education. At the

⁹² "School for Jewish Studies, San Francisco California. Under the Auspices of Jewish Ministers and Communal Workers of Northern California: Announcement of Courses, 1925-1926." (San Francisco: 1925). Box 14, Folder 18. LINP.

⁹³ *Temple Chronicle*, 6 February 1925, in Rosenbaum, p. 153.

⁹⁴ *Temple Chronicle*, 6 February 1925, 10 April 1925, 22 May 1925, 11 April, 1930, in Rosenbaum, p. 154

⁹⁵ *Temple Chronicle*, 1 October 1926, Ibid.

1925 CCAR Convention, Newman supported a motion that prohibited the teaching of religion in the public schools. He stated: "we must make clear in detail that we liberal Jews do not accept as literally true the Biblical accounts of man's creation, which tells that God made man out of red earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life."⁹⁶ That same year, Newman took part in a successful defence of school textbooks teaching evolution and science against attacks by religious fundamentalists.⁹⁷ During the infamous Scopes "Monkey" Trial in 1925, Newman chastised three-time presidential candidate and anti-evolution spokesman William Jennings Bryan. In an open letter to Bryan, Newman wrote, "You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of ignorance."⁹⁸ In 1927, Newman was part of a vocal group of American rabbis who objected to the inflammatory portrayal of Jews in Cecil B. DeMille's motion picture *The King of Kings*. In an episode to be examined later in this thesis, Newman, along with Wise and other like-minded colleagues demanded that the film be withdrawn from circulation. Similarly, in 1929 Newman harshly criticized the American performances by a German company of the Freiburg Passion Play in which Jews were vividly depicted as Christ-killers.⁹⁹ His efforts resulted in the cancellation of the drama's performance at the Civic Auditorium in San Francisco.¹⁰⁰

On a number of crucial issues Newman encountered stiff opposition within the Emanu-El community. Among these was the matter of officiation at interfaith marriages. In a letter to Wise, Newman explained his beliefs regarding rabbinical officiation. He

⁹⁶ *CCAR Yearbook*, Volume XXXV, pp. 180.

⁹⁷ "Group to confer on Dr. Newman's Successor," *Jewish Journal*, 22 January 1930, p. 10. Box 27, Folder 15. JIRP.

⁹⁸ *Temple Chronicle*, 29 May 1925, in Rosenbaum, p. 155.

⁹⁹ *Temple Chronicle*, 17 May 1929, Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ "Rabbi Newman's Ministry in California," Ibid.

officiated "Where a Gentile accepted the Jewish community, but not the Jewish faith, [while] saying that if he was ever interested in religion he would turn to Judaism. The stipulation with reference to children being reared as Jews stood."¹⁰¹ Newman would not officiate at any marriage between a "Jew and a non-Jew who wished to adhere to Christianity or who did not enter the Jewish fold."¹⁰² In such circumstances, Newman allowed his colleague Cantor Reuben Rinder to officiate. Newman's stand cost him the support of numerous Emanu-El congregants, including synagogue President Louis Bloch, whose daughter married a non-Jew.¹⁰³

Newman's three-day per week program of religious classes drew some resistance from the Emanu-El laity. He also found himself at odds with his community over the issues of Zionism and his travels throughout the West speaking on behalf of the United Palestine Appeal.¹⁰⁴ Owing, however, to Newman's inspiring sermons and dedication to serving as the conscience of his congregation, Emanu-El members tolerated their rabbi's strong social, political and religious views as well as his occasional aloofness:

It was felt that he [Newman] was standoffish – that, preoccupied with the great issues of the day, he had little time for personal interaction. Often he was so deep in thought that he would pass acquaintances on the street without acknowledging them.¹⁰⁵

Overall, however, the Emanu-El community revered Newman. In 1929, when he submitted his resignation in order to accept the post at New York's Rodeph Sholom, Emanu-El's president tried unsuccessfully to persuade Newman to stay. Newman's

¹⁰¹ Newman to Wise. 29 January 1932. Box 13, Folder 5. LINP.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Rosenbaum, p. 155.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 156

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 157.

decision capped a two-year effort by Rodeph Sholom to bring him back to New York City.¹⁰⁶ The lure of New York, with its dynamic Jewish community, combined with the prospect of being near Wise, was too strong for Newman. In a published statement to the Emanu-El congregation, Newman wrote:

...I cannot help but feel that the time has come for me to return to New York, and to resume my work as a Rabbi in the midst of the most populous and, from many points of view, the most difficult center of Jewish life. The call has been so insistent and the challenge to serve in the very heart of Jewish policy-making activity has been so urgent that, after long deliberation, I believe I cannot do otherwise than go.¹⁰⁷

In his final sermon at Emanu-El, Newman urged his congregants to maintain the strong spiritual life of their synagogue: "While it is excellent that the message of religion should be disseminated through the press and radio, churches will not flourish unless congregants assemble within the religious edifice for prayer and worship."¹⁰⁸ A newspaper editorial lamented Newman's departure in the following terms: "In the years of this young and brilliant rabbi's service in San Francisco he has been a vibrant life force. His keen mind and wise heart have served all sects and all levels of humanity."¹⁰⁹

The Stockton [California] Independent wrote:

The departure of Rabbi Newman will be a distinct loss to California, for besides being a brilliant scholar, endowed with many talents, Rabbi Newman is above all a man of exceptional spiritual character – a man rich in all the qualities

¹⁰⁶ *Jewish Journal*, Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ "Rabbi Newman Sees Religion Thrust Aside," Undated Newspaper Item, from either *The San Francisco Chronicle* or *The San Francisco Examiner*. Courtesy of Temple Emanu-El, San Francisco, California.

¹⁰⁹ "Goodbye, Dr. Newman. We'll See You Again," Undated Newspaper Item from either *The San Francisco Chronicle* or *The San Francisco Examiner*, Ibid.

of leadership in the realms of the cultural and spiritual.¹¹⁰

As historian Fred Rosenbaum pointed out, Newman's time in the West, like that of Wise years earlier in Portland, Oregon, was only "an interlude" before returning to the vibrant center within which American Judaism flourished – New York City.¹¹¹

The prestigious congregation of which Newman assumed leadership in 1930 – Rodeph Sholom – was founded by German Jews of New York in 1842.¹¹² In 1901, the synagogue formally joined the Union of American Hebrew Congregations; though not until 1924 did it adopt the Union Prayer Book, thus signalling its formal identification with the Reform Movement.¹¹³ For more than twenty years, from 1875 to 1896, Rabbi Aaron Wise, the father of Stephen Wise, was spiritual leader of Rodeph Sholom. Following the death of his father in 1896, the younger Wise, unwilling to tread in his father's footsteps, declined the invitation to become the synagogue's rabbi.¹¹⁴ Thirty-four years later, Wise's disciple Louis Newman took charge of this esteemed pulpit.

The return to New York allowed Newman to renew his relationship with Wise and resume teaching duties in Homiletics at the Jewish Institute of Religion. As in San Francisco, Newman joined his new congregation at an important moment in its history: Rodeph Sholom had recently moved to a new building on Manhattan's Upper West Side. In addition to acquiring a new home, the congregation was on the verge of celebrating its ninetieth anniversary. From modest circumstances on downtown Clinton Street, to a statelier edifice on Lexington and 63rd Street, Rodeph Sholom was now settled in new

¹¹⁰ *Jewish Journal*, Ibid.

¹¹¹ Rosenbaum, pp. 157-158.

¹¹² Newman, "In The Place of Thy Fathers," Congregation Rodeph Sholom of the City of New York: Journal of the Ninetieth Anniversary Celebration (1842-1932), Box 11, Folder 7, LINP.

¹¹³ *Congregation Rodeph Sholom 150th Anniversary Celebration Journal, 1842-1992*, page 34. Courtesy of Congregation Rodeph Sholom, New York City.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

quarters on West 83rd Street. In March of 1930, three days were devoted to dedication ceremonies and activities.¹¹⁵

Rodeph Sholom would be Newman's spiritual home and the centre of his rabbinate for the next forty-two years. It was there that Newman would build upon the reputation that he had established in San Francisco as preacher, writer and political activist. It was here that Newman further developed his view of the synagogue as the focus of Jewish communal life, within which worship, learning, culture and social service activity would equally flourish.

Shortly after his installation, Newman oversaw the creation of a number of important synagogue groups: a Parents Association, founded in 1930, to support the Religious School¹¹⁶ and draw parents closer to synagogue activities, and a new synagogue bulletin – *The Chronicle*.¹¹⁷ The Rudolph Grossman Society, dedicated to the memory of the congregation's long-time former rabbi, brought together youth for debates, religious and cultural forums, dramatics and inter-faith gatherings. This group eventually became affiliated with the National Federation of Temple Youth.¹¹⁸

In 1930, Rodeph Sholom began a Sunday Morning Community Service, featuring classical choral works presented by a forty-voice adult choir led by Nathan Meltzoff, Rodeph Sholom's Cantor for more than thirty-five years. The Sunday morning service, which continued uninterrupted for nineteen years, featured guest speakers of national and

¹¹⁵ "A Brief History of Congregation Rodeph Sholom, 1842-1972," *Congregation Rodeph Sholom, New York City: 130th Anniversary Dinner Dance Program*. Courtesy of Congregation Rodeph Sholom, New York City. Also: The first Bar Mitzvah over which Newman presided at Rodeph Sholom was that Richard J. Scheuer, later a Chair of the HUC-JIR Board of Governors. The service took place at a neighborhood church, since the new synagogue building on 83rd Street was not yet complete (Richard J. Scheuer to Tepper, 18 February 2008).

¹¹⁶ "A Brief History of Congregation Rodeph Sholom, 1842-1972," Ibid.

¹¹⁷ *Congregation Rodeph Sholom 150th Anniversary Celebration Journal, 1842-1992*, p. 36.

¹¹⁸ *Congregation Rodeph Sholom...Its Past*. Courtesy of Congregation Rodeph Sholom, New York City.

international stature. These included such political and literary luminaries as Israeli Prime Minister Moshe Sharrett, Jan Masaryk, Sean O'Casey, and Eugene O'Neill.¹¹⁹ In 1949 the synagogue decided to concentrate on the Friday Evening and Saturday Morning Services as a way of reinforcing the meaning of the Jewish Sabbath.¹²⁰ Guest speakers and preachers were a highlight of the Sabbath services, among them, Wise and the Reverend Dr. John Haynes Holmes.¹²¹ Under Associate Rabbi Abraham Soltes, Youth Services began in 1946 one Friday evening per month. These services frequently included an address by a prominent lay leader, musical selections by the Youth Choir and an Oneg Shabbat. High Holy Day and Hanukkah services for Rodeph Sholom's youth were also a fixture of congregational life.¹²²

Rodeph Sholom's Ways and Means Committee, established in 1937, was one of the synagogue's most valued lay groups. In its effort to enhance the quality of all congregational activities, this committee gathered funds to take care of the synagogue's mortgage, construct a new auditorium, operate a wartime religious school, sponsor cultural events for and by refugees and newcomers, and create a Golden Age Club for Rodeph Sholom's senior members.¹²³

The Young Married Guild, established prior to World War II, held bi-weekly cultural and social gatherings devoted to themes closely related to their interests. Well-known educators, physicians and psychiatrists served as guest speakers. The Men's

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ *Yearbook In Celebration of The 25th Anniversary Year of Rabbi Louis I. Newman's Ministry in Rodeph Sholom and A Siyyum Ha-Sefer on the Completion of His Manuscript "The Jewish People, Faith and Life."* Box 11, Folder 7. LINP.

¹²¹ John Haynes Holmes (1879-1964). Prominent Unitarian Minister of the Community Church of New York City, social justice pioneer and anti-war activist. Helped to found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the American Civil Liberties Union. Long-time friend of both Newman and Stephen S. Wise (*Wikipedia*).

¹²² *Congregation Rodeph Sholom... Its Past.* Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

Association, formed in 1918 under Rabbi Grossman, was devoted to social service work as well as sponsoring the cultural activities of the Jewish Chautauqua. The Rodeph Sholom Sisterhood was founded in 1891. Through its involvement in a range of important causes - social service programs, Charity and Red Cross Sewing Group, Surgical Dressing Group, Milk Fund for undernourished children and contributions to summer camps and Passover relief - the Sisterhood added to the esteem and welfare of both the congregation and community at large. Under Newman's guidance, the Sisterhood assisted the city's poor during the Depression years. During World War II, the Sisterhood, through its USO and First Aid work, nurtured a closer relationship to American Jewish life.

Under Newman, Rodeph Sholom's religious school consisted of Sunday morning classes along with Hebrew instruction and mid-week activities that took place following regular weekday school hours. The faculty consisted of trained teachers recruited from both public and private institutions. The curriculum included Jewish History, Hebrew, Jewish Current Events and "the Bible as Literature."¹²⁴ Emphasis was placed on teaching Jewish home observance, including Shabbat Kiddush, Hanukkah and Purim customs. The Confirmation Class, under Newman's tutelage, frequently presented Newman's Shavuot cantatas, works that will be explored in greater detail in a subsequent chapter. As part of the Rodeph Sholom centenary celebration, religious school students performed Newman's original pageant *The Eternal Temple*.

In 1969, Newman oversaw the formation of the first Reform Jewish Day School in the United States. Although the Reform Movement had traditionally favored public education along with supplementary religious learning in the synagogues, support for

¹²⁴ Ibid.

Jewish day schools had begun to widen. Rodeph Sholom's day school was an expansion of the nursery and kindergarten programs that had begun in 1957. Newman reiterated that the curriculum would "be in keeping with state educational requirements and that registration would be open to all applicants regardless of affiliation."¹²⁵

During World War II, Rodeph Sholom developed into a model of congregational support for the war effort. Virtually every synagogue group or club assumed a role under the direction of the War Activities Committee. For both young and old members, service was the byword. Rodeph Sholom became a distribution center for personal care kits, recreational materials, books, magazines, and games to be sent to servicemen overseas. In all, the congregation sent three hundred and fifty-five members to the American armed forces during the war, while the congregation itself subscribed to more than four million dollars in U.S. War Bonds.¹²⁶

During his forty-two year tenure at Rodeph Sholom, Newman had two loyal and professionally capable associates. Following the retirement of Nathan Meltzoff in 1952, Gunter Hirschberg joined Rodeph Sholom as Cantor, a role he served with distinction until 1963, when, following his ordination, he was appointed Associate Rabbi. Upon Newman's death in 1972, Hirschberg assumed the leadership of the Rodeph Sholom pulpit until 1989. Ephraim Biran, Rodeph Sholom's Israeli-born Cantor - and a former leading baritone in his homeland - came to the synagogue in 1963. Biran distinguished himself as a musician and communal leader, helping to found the Community Chorus and Children's Choir.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ "Breaking a Precedent: N.Y. Plans Reform Day School," *San Francisco Jewish Community Bulletin*, 2 May 1969. Microfilm 2265. LINP.

¹²⁶ *Congregation Rodeph Sholom 150th Anniversary Celebration Journal, 1842-1992*, p. 36.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 19.

The range of activity that took place at Rodeph Sholom, both before, during and after the war years reflected Newman's life-long view of the synagogue's role as an all-encompassing center for the celebration of Jewish faith, culture and peoplehood.

Educational opportunities, recreational activities, social service work and worship were open to all who entered, regardless of age or gender. It was a view that emerged during Newman's graduate student days in Berkeley and developed through his years at the Free Synagogue, Temple Israel and Congregation Emanu-El. In 1932, in celebration of the congregation's ninetieth anniversary, Newman wrote in a specially-published booklet:

What is it that brings distinction to a congregation in Israel? It is the quality of service which it renders to its own adherents and to the community in general...Through the Religious School...auxiliary organizations...preachment of pulpit and the beauty of the liturgy.¹²⁸

Newman settled for nothing less than a synagogue where all could develop into worthy heirs of Judaism's venerable legacy. Reflecting on his first twenty-five years as Rodeph Sholom's spiritual leader, Newman paid tribute to his many partners – both lay and ministerial – who worked with him in solidifying the congregation's reputation: "If Rodeph Sholom is what the community knows it to be, we can find the reason in the partnership between us all throughout the two and a half decades we have striven together for the faith of Israel and the advancement of the general good."¹²⁹

Beginning in his graduate study years, and continuing under the influence of Meyer and Wise, Newman was an outspoken and devoted Zionist. In a letter to the Menorah Association's Henry Hurwitz in 1915, the twenty-two year-old Newman wrote,

¹²⁸ Newman, "In The Place Of Thy Fathers." Ibid.

¹²⁹ *Yearbook in Celebration of the 25th Anniversary Year...* Ibid.

"I think Zionism is the path through which many Jews, now entirely estranged from people and religion, will be brought back to their own, and to the synagogue."¹³⁰ The welfare of the burgeoning Jewish state remained – throughout Newman's rabbinate – one of his most enduring priorities. Under Wise's guidance, Newman took part in Zionist activities throughout the 1920s, 30s and 40s. At the risk of polarizing his congregants in San Francisco and New York, Newman involved himself in many of the key political events that led to the establishment of the State of Israel. So fervent was Newman's desire to see the Jewish nation come into being, that he allied himself with the Revisionist Movement of Vladimir Jabotinsky, who, in Newman's words, "undertook a program to educate the Jewish people in the realities of national life in a continuously hostile world."¹³¹ A witness to the historic United Nations Partition Vote of 1947, Newman penned a detailed letter to his three sons describing the dramatic events leading up to this pivotal moment in Jewish history.¹³² A more extensive examination of Newman's Zionist work shall be undertaken in a subsequent chapter of this thesis.

During the early 1950s, Newman dedicated himself to the survival of Wise's Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR) in New York City. Having been present when the school was established in 1922, and as one of its original faculty members, the preservation of Wise's Institute evolved into one of Newman's most passionate causes. With the installation of Nelson Glueck as President of Hebrew Union College (HUC), followed soon after by Wise's death in 1949, steps were taken by Glueck and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) to diminish the role of the New York

¹³⁰ Newman to Henry Hurwitz. 4 November 1915. Box 37, Folder 13. HHMAP.

¹³¹ Newman, "Jabotinsky's Place in Zionist History," *The American Zionist*, May 1970, p. 25.

¹³² Newman to Jeremy, Jonathan and Daniel Newman. 2 December 1947. Microfilm 2265. LINP.

school. Authority for the combined school was to be centralized in Cincinnati. Over a period of several years – in a story to be documented in greater detail in subsequent chapters – Newman took part in a determined effort to save Wise's New York seminary. Foremost on Newman's agenda was the right of the New York school to ordain rabbis, a privilege that Glueck and members of the UAHC sought to remove. Newman's upstart seminary, the Academy for Liberal Judaism, established in 1955 as a response to the initiatives of the Cincinnati-led group, helped to restore JIR's right to provide a full five-year rabbinic program leading to ordination.

Although a full chapter of this thesis will be devoted to Newman the Writer, it is important to state here that Newman produced an impressive and extraordinarily large body of literature during the course of his career. Poetry, plays, pageants, articles, essays, books on Judaism and collected sermons all comprise the Newman canon. Two of Newman's most prominent and enduring works, in collaboration with Samuel Spitz, are *The Hasidic Anthology* and *The Talmudic Anthology*, both of which have been resources to generations of rabbis, scholars and the general readership. As early as the 1920s, while serving at Temple Israel in New York, Newman devoted what must surely have been a significant amount of his time to publishing poetry and writing a column on Jewish affairs - "Telling It In Gath" - that appeared in the Portland [Oregon] Jewish newspaper, *The Scribe*. In viewing drama as a vital aspect of the synagogue's cultural life, Newman wrote plays on Jewish themes and subject matter, many of which were performed by his congregants. For Newman, drama served as a valuable tool for creating congregational involvement in the synagogue. In addition, Newman saw his plays as adding to the storehouse of Jewish dramatic literature that might be produced by

synagogues and community theatre groups throughout the country. Along with various composers, Newman collaborated on elaborate musical-dramatic pageants for Shavuot Confirmation services, Purim, Hanukkah and commemorating Israel's Independence. With Israeli composer Marc Lavry, Newman created an opera, *Tamar and Judah*, based on the narrative of *Exodus 38*.

Through his poetry, Newman found a means of educating children and young adults on Jewish history, morals and values. Publications of Newman's poetry, among them, *Songs of Jewish Rebirth* and *Trumpet In Adversity*, have earned a place in synagogue, public and home libraries.

Newman's sermons were collected and published in several volumes, among them, *Biting On Granite*. He authored a work on Jewish living, *The Jewish People, Faith and Life* that served as the basis for a series of lectures that Newman delivered at Rodeph Sholom dealing with Jewish customs and ceremonies. Though the idea of a Jewish university did not originate with Newman, his 1922 essay, "A Jewish University In America?" provided an added impetus for the establishment, a generation later, of Brandeis University in Massachusetts.¹³³

In 1942 Newman was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree from Brown University. He was the first Jew so honoured by the school. The citation read:

The world, richly-endowed with material things, squanders even those in war for want of spiritual resources equal to its responsibilities. Because in a time of moral confusion you have been steadfast in faith, because you have uplifted the hearts of men and fortified their spirits,

¹³³ "Louis I. Newman, Noted Rabbi, 78," (Obituary) *New York Times*, 10 March 1972. Box 14, Folder 3, LINP.

your Alma Mater delights to honor you.¹³⁴

Among the many national organizations with which Newman was affiliated during his life and career were: the San Francisco Branch of the Archaeological Society of American, the American Advisory Committee for the Hebrew University in Palestine (later Jerusalem), the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Historical Society, the American Church History Society, the Society for Oriental Research and the Society for Biblical Literature and Exegesis. In 1924, Newman served as Chaplain at the Democratic National Convention in New York.¹³⁵

One of Newman's grandchildren recalls him as a "stiff, talented, intelligent and highly-emotional."¹³⁶ For relaxation, Newman loved writing, drawing sketches, or sitting quietly in his living room and reading. Despite his Zionist activity and support for Israel, Newman only traveled to Israel once, on a visit with Lucile in the early 1960s. While there he reunited with his old Revisionist acquaintances as well as the writer and philosopher Martin Buber. By 1970, Newman's health concerns precluded any additional trips to Israel.¹³⁷ However, a dormitory was named for him at the David Raziell School near Herzliyah.¹³⁸

Rabbi Louis Israel Newman died in New York on March 9, 1972. His wife, three sons and ten grandchildren survived him. Of the many moving tributes, among the most expressive was penned by Rabbi Theodore A. Lewis of the Progressive Shaari Zedek Synagogue in Brooklyn:

¹³⁴ Miller, p. 454.

¹³⁵ John Simons, Editor, *Who's Who In American Jewry: A Biographical Dictionary of the Living Jews in the United States and Canada*, Volume 3, 1938-1939, (New York: National News Association, Inc. 1938) p. TBA.

¹³⁶ Lisa Eckstein to Tepper. 29 October 2007.

¹³⁷ Saul Newman to Tepper. 28 November 2007.

¹³⁸ Ann Newman to Tepper. 28 November 2007.

Occasionally, Rabbi Newman was referred to as an “angry” man. That characterization does him honor and adds to his stature as a rabbi and Jew. A rabbi whose wrath cannot be aroused – even as was the wrath of Moses – is unworthy of his calling.¹³⁹

In the chapters to follow, this thesis will explore the ways through which Rabbi Louis Newman’s anger, tempered by his love for all things Jewish, gave way to a life and career marked by extraordinary achievement; a life dedicated to the enhancement of Jewish faith and peoplehood.

¹³⁹ LIN Memorial Issue, p. 8

Chapter Two

Political and Social Activism

Someone told me correctly that those who who keep silent when an offensive remark is made against the Jews in the presence of Jews is missing an opportunity to set the well-intentioned and correctible right in their judgments. I agree. Everyone carries the defense of the Jew in his own keeping...

- From "God's Promise to the Anti-Semites"
in *Biting On Granite*

Rabbi Louis Newman cared deeply about matters of political and social significance that affected world Jewry. His rabbinate was characterized by intense political and social activism. Newman's involvement with Zionism and on behalf of beleaguered German Jewry, his protests against the dissemination of what he perceived as anti-Semitism in the film *The King of Kings* and his argument in favor of establishing an American-Jewish institution of higher education bespeak his interest in freedom, justice and equality as they applied to the Jewish people. This chapter will focus on Newman's response to a number of the major political and social issues that impacted on both the American and international Jewish community of his day, and shed light on his particularistic – and uncompromising – view of Jews and Judaism.

In the early 19th century Mordecai M. Noah of New York¹ proposed the idea of a college where Jewish youth could acquire a proper secular education along with

¹ Mordecai Noah (1785-1851), American editor, politician, and playwright. Probably the most influential Jew in the United States in the early 19th century (*Encyclopedia Judaica*).

instruction in Hebrew and the principles of Judaism. In 1849, Rabbi Isaac Leeser² founded the Hebrew Education Society of Philadelphia in the hope of creating a Jewish college of arts and sciences. Leeser's plans, however, failed to materialize. Hebrew Union College (HUC) in Cincinnati and the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York were founded primarily with the goal of training rabbis, whereas Gratz College in Philadelphia was centered on producing Jewish teachers.³ Many prominent American colleges and universities, such as Columbia, Harvard, Yale and Fordham had been established under the auspices of religious denominations.⁴

In 1922, Newman wrote an essay entitled "Is A Jewish University in America Desirable?" that was published on the editorial page of *The Jewish Tribune*.⁵ Newman believed that a Jewish university was a necessary response to the exclusionary policies of such schools as Harvard. For Newman, public universities such as City College of New York did not adequately fulfill the needs of American Jewish students. His concern was that political groups would come to resent the appropriation of public funds for an institution, the population of which would be overwhelmingly Jewish.⁶ Nor, Newman added, should Jewish students feel compelled to leave the larger metropolitan areas - removing themselves from the expansive Jewish community - to attend public universities in the more remote west, mid west or southern areas of the country. Migrations to the west or south, Newman feared, might also accentuate the issue of anti-

² Isaac Leeser (1806-1868). American rabbi, writer and educator. *Hazzan* of Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia. Founder of *The Occident*, the first successful American Jewish newspaper. Founder of the The Jewish Publication Society and wrote first American translation of the Hebrew Bible (*Encyclopedia Judaica*).

³ Israel Goldstein, *Brandeis University: A Chapter of Its Founding* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1951), pp. 1-2.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 6.

⁵ *The Jewish Tribune*, 27 October 1922.

⁶ *Ibid*, in Newman, *A Jewish University in America?* (hereafter, "*Jewish University*") (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1923), p. 16.

Semitism: "The more Jews at midland universities, the greater the feeling against them; the more significant their role in college activities, the more their Gentile competitors look askance."⁷ Sole credit for the establishment of Brandeis University cannot go to Newman. He himself wrote: "no one need claim originality for the idea; surely it is big enough and obvious enough to have occurred to many people, at various times or concurrently."⁸ However, Newman's articulation of the need for this institution was characteristic of his commitment to strengthening Jewish identity. Access to higher learning was a means through which such identity, self-esteem and stature could be enhanced. Under no circumstances did Newman suffer those who assimilated or converted in order to be accepted into academic institutions where Jewish enrollment was limited. Such behavior played into the hands of those who already held Jews in disregard:

I know of a lad whose elders advised him to say in the psychological test that he was not a Jew, but rather a Christian Scientist; of a girl who gave German rather than Jewish names of recommendation...In the breakdown of Jewish self-respect; the Gentile exclusionist finds his most satisfying vindication...⁹

Newman's proposal drew a range of responses, both for and against the idea of such an institution. A number of those who were critical of the project assumed that the new school would serve Jews only, hence creating a segregationist enclave of learning. Charles Thwing, President of Western Reserve University in Cleveland wrote: "I do not

⁷ Newman, "The Progress of the Jewish University Idea." Amplified from an article in *The Jewish Tribune*, 12 January, 1923, in *Ibid.* p. 70.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 55.

⁹ Newman, "Is a Jewish University in America Desirable?" *The Jewish Tribune*, 27 October, 1922, in *Ibid.* pp. 14-15.

believe in a university designed primarily for one race and one race only. I think we ought to establish universities, like all great institutions, for humanity.”¹⁰ The *Ohio Jewish Chronicle* stated, “Jews should not try to multiply agencies that will intensify the spirit of segregation.”¹¹ In response to these negative reactions, Newman composed a rebuttal, emphasizing that the Jewish university would not be exclusionary, but open to students of all faith groups while encompassing both a secular and Judaic curriculum. Though endowed and sustained through Jewish philanthropy, the proposed school would not espouse Jewish doctrines: “Though courses in Judaics might be included, there would be strict separation of theology and secular subjects; no attempt would be made to ‘Judaize’ the students or their work.”¹² The faculty and student body would be drawn from both the Jewish and non-Jewish ranks: “We would open wide the portals without restriction of race, color or religion, thus seeking to restore to the privately-supported university its former position of democratic champion of American equality.”¹³

Renowned writer Waldo Frank,¹⁴ saw in Newman’s idea an important contribution to American higher education: “Such a university would function beyond Judaism just as Harvard has long functioned beyond Unitarianism.”¹⁵ Rather than modeling itself on America’s Ivy League schools, the Jewish university, according to Frank, would contribute a Jewish “cultural expression” side by side with the existing

¹⁰ *Jewish University*, p. 28.

¹¹ “A Jewish University,” *Ohio Jewish Chronicle*, 22 December 1922, in *Jewish University*, pp. 36-37.

¹² *Jewish University*, p. 17.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 18

¹⁴ Waldo Frank (1889-1967). American novelist, critic and philosopher. Though raised in an assimilated family, Frank underwent a mystical reconversion to Judaism at age 31. He wrote many works on American culture and the value of the Judeo-Christian tradition (*Encyclopedia Judaica*).

¹⁵ Frank in *Jewish University*, p. 44.

Anglo-Saxon ones.¹⁶ By the mid-1940s, the prospect of founding such an institution – Brandeis University – was close to fruition. In 1945, Newman wrote:

The idea of such a University under principally Jewish endowment, guidance and mentorship is truly an “unquenchable idea.” The chief question involved in its establishment is whether the Jewish community has the will and the high cultural eminence to undertake such an enterprise.¹⁷

Though Newman’s involvement in Brandeis’ founding has been called “negligible,”¹⁸ the vision he articulated in his 1922 essay would become manifest in the late 1940s and early 1950s – the period of Brandeis’ infancy.¹⁹ In *Brandeis University: A Chapter In Its Founding*, Israel Goldstein acknowledged Newman’s contribution to the idea of a Jewish university.²⁰ Abram Sachar, Brandeis’ first president, wrote to Newman at the time of the university’s establishment:

I look upon you as one of the most valued pioneers in the long battle to establish a university in America under Jewish auspices. A generation ago you were already writing and crusading for the fulfillment of such a project...in a very deep sense we are indebted to you for preparing the soil and fructifying it.²¹

Curiously, Sachar – in his “official history” of Brandeis, *A Host at Last* - did not even list Newman in his index.²²

¹⁶ Ibid. pp. 40-42.

¹⁷ Newman, “A New University Under Jewish Auspices?” in *Biting On Granite: Selected Sermons and Addresses*, (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1946), p. 400.

¹⁸ John A. Gliedman, “Brandeis University: Reflections at Middle Age,” *American Jewish History*, No. 78, p. 516.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Goldstein, p. 3.

²¹ Abram Sachar to Newman. 15 September 1948. Box 11, Folder 6. LINP.

²² Miller, p. 453.

In 1927, while serving as rabbi of Congregation Emanu-El in San Francisco, Newman became involved in the nationwide controversy surrounding the release of producer-director Cecil B. DeMille's motion picture *The King of Kings*. According to Newman, the film, a narrative of the final days, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, portrayed the story's Jewish figures in a negative light. Actor Joseph Schildkraut's depiction of Judas Iscariot was thought to be particularly unpleasant. The film's other Jewish antagonists included the "dark, greasy-haired and large nosed Pharisees" and the high priest Caiaphas, described by Rabbi Stephen Wise as a "five and ten-cent Shylock...a vindictive, savage, bloodthirsty monster." Pontius Pilate was presented as a "moral leader and reluctant tool of the Pharisees." Jesus, as played by H.B. Warner, came across as a "saintly miracle worker," while the film as a whole "mutes his, his mother's and his disciples' Jewishness."²³

From his Emanu-El pulpit, Newman condemned the film, and called on fellow-rabbis to sermonize against it. His Northern California colleagues, Jacob Neito of San Francisco's Sherith Israel and Rudolf Coffee of Temple Sinai in Oakland joined Newman's voice in protest. In a letter to Rabbi Louis Wolsey, Newman wrote: "A policy of silence [regarding *The King of Kings*] seems to be highly dangerous...No rabbi, it seems to me, can afford to remain silent if *The King of Kings* is shown in his city."²⁴ Newman demanded that the film be withdrawn unless revisions were made: "We may not be able to secure this withdrawal, but we should demand it for the sake of our own self-

²³ Ava F. Kahn and Marc Dollinger, *California Jews*, (Lebanon, NH: Brandeis University Press/ University Press of New England, 2003), p. 99.

²⁴ Newman to Louis Wolsey, 9 December 1927. Box 17, Folder 12. HYMAN ENELOW PAPERS. AJA. (hereafter "HEP")

respect and the prestige of the Jewish name here and abroad.”²⁵ Wolsey supported Newman’s argument and noted that one movie theater operator who oversaw three hundred screens across the country had “definitely withdrawn this picture from his theaters.”²⁶ To Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) President Hyman Enelow of Temple Emanu-El in New York, Newman wrote: “I am convinced that Cecil DeMille and his backers be informed that there can be no peace until his hate-provoking film is withdrawn.”²⁷ Disappointingly, Enelow responded by writing “it does not seem wise to carry on a public feud as it serves to advertise the show and increase its attendants.”²⁸ Newman replied by stating, “I regret that you do not believe the Central Conference of American Rabbis ought to lend its support to the movement seeking the absolute withdrawal of the picture.”²⁹

In his autobiography *My Life As An American Jew*, Rabbi David Philipson of Cincinnati recalled, “Rabbi Newman’s persistent cry that the film must be withdrawn entirely, [and] that no amendment would reduce the harm which the picture would do and was doing could be made.”³⁰ Philipson viewed the film and took part in negotiations with B’nai B’rith to alleviate the situation. He acknowledged that it would be “impossible to induce the producer to withdraw the film” though he and others succeeded in preventing the film from being shown in “foreign countries where its production might result in riots or pogroms.”³¹

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Louis Wolsey to Newman. 14 December 1927. Ibid.

²⁷ Newman to Hyman Enelow (hereafter “Enelow”). 19 December 1927. Ibid.

²⁸ Enelow to Newman. 27 December 1927. Ibid.

²⁹ Newman to Enelow. 4 January 1928. Ibid.

³⁰ David Philipson, *My Life As An American Jew: An Autobiography*, (Cincinnati: John G. Kidd & Son, Inc., 1941), pp. 392-393.

³¹ Ibid, p. 394.

The revision of *The King of Kings*, eventually undertaken by the reluctant Cecil B. DeMille, involved the incorporation of a prologue that “would plant in the minds of the spectators the idea that the Jewish people must not be blamed and held responsible... so that it will appear to be his [DeMille’s] personal statement.”³² This prologue, formulated by Philipson and members of B’nai B’rith included the following remarks:

The scenes of the deathless story
portrayed in this picture happened
nineteen centuries ago in Palestine.
At that time the Jews were no longer
an independent people, but were
under the rule of the Roman Empire.
They did not even have the power to
appoint the High Priest, their religious
head.³³

The prologue reiterated that Jesus, his mother and his disciples were all Jews, and concluded with the declaration “Nor may it be forgotten that the teachings of Jesus culminated in the Golden Rule, ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,’ and the restatement of the Mosaic injunction, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’”³⁴ Changes were also made to the film’s captions; among these was having the crowd cry out “Away with him” rather than “Crucify him.”³⁵ A title card was inserted during the storm that follows the death of Jesus during which Caiaphas, the Jewish High Priest, cries out, “Lord God Jehovah, Visit Not Thy Wrath on Thy People Israel - I Alone Am Guilty!”³⁶ For Newman, these revisions were a “tragic fraud” that left the film’s anti-Semitic message intact. To Enelow – again – Newman wrote:

The Jewish community of Salt Lake City

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 395.

³⁵ Newman to Enelow, 28 January 1928, Box 17, Folder 12, HEP.

³⁶ Scott Eyman “Christ Film Beg Controversy,” www.jsonline.com.

looks with much trepidation to its [the film's] coming...It behooves the Central Conference with other Jewish groups having headquarters in the East to bring the situation in its present aspects before [Hollywood film censor] Will Hays, before those Jews interested in promoting the film, before all who in any way can help in removing this peril from public view.³⁷

Enelow's conciliatory approach irked Newman; as such approaches had affected him throughout his life and career. Enelow wrote: "I quite agree with you that the film in question is a dreary and detestable thing. But I am sorry that I can't comply with your request. As I have written before, it is my view that the less said about this movie, the sooner it is likely to die."³⁸ The correspondence with Enelow was just one of numerous instances during Newman's career in which he deemed it necessary to write with the full force of his words, even at the risk of alienating his colleagues. Newman found it difficult to tolerate the views of those for whom the welfare of the Jewish people was not the highest of priorities.

Throughout Newman's years in California, he and Wise maintained a regular correspondence. They consulted each other on matters pertaining to congregational life and JIR. Though the relationship was clearly one of master and disciple, each valued the other's advice and counsel. The controversy surrounding *The King of Kings* resulted in both Newman and Wise criticizing the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and its parent organization, B'nai B'rith. For Newman and Wise, these "elite and decorous" institutions responded to anti-Semitism through "discreet, behind-the-scenes diplomacy rather than through vocal public protests," protests that Wise and his American Jewish

³⁷ Newman to Enelow. 28 January 1928. Box 17, Folder 12. HEP.

³⁸ Enelow to Newman. 9 February 1928. Ibid.

Congress vastly preferred as a means of influencing public opinion.³⁹ Though the ADL had communicated its concerns to the film's producers and taken part in the negotiations to have "portions provocative of anti-Jewish feeling either removed or softened,"⁴⁰ both rabbis shared an antipathy for an organization that "catered to the conservative, middle and upper-class descendents of central European Jewish immigrants to America."⁴¹ A key target of Newman's was the ADL liaison to DeMille, Rabbi Edgar F. Magnin of the Wilshire Boulevard Temple in Los Angeles. Having failed to dissuade DeMille from producing *The King of Kings*, settling instead for the removal of as much inflammatory content as possible, Magnin – like CCAR President Enelow – argued that the Jewish community should refrain from publicly protesting since such outbursts would only increase the film's publicity and make it "appear as if the Jews were criticizing Christianity."⁴² Newman viewed this acquiescence on the part of Jews, in particular those in positions of influence - and in the face of anti-Semitic artistic expression – as abhorrent.

In 1932, five years after *The King of Kings* was first screened, the R.K.O. film company announced the re-release of the film in San Francisco for Christmas week. Successful protests by Catholic and Protestant clergy, in addition to B'nai B'rith and Newman's colleague Rudolph Coffee resulted in the cancellation of the film's showing. This issue arose in response to a screening in Salonica, Greece that had led to mob

³⁹ Kahn and Dollinger, p. 100.

⁴⁰ Philipson, p. 392.

⁴¹ Kahn and Dollinger, Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

violence against Jews and their property.⁴³ In a letter to R.K.O.'s David Sarnoff, Wise voiced his concern regarding the film and the ramifications of its presentation:

The threatened re-appearance of *The King of Kings* in your Western Coast theatres moves me to say to you that many of us believe that *The King of Kings* should be finally banished from the R.K.O. Repertory. I do not know whether you happen to have heard that the re-appearance of *The King of Kings* in Salonica last Easter gave rise to a very serious riot – exactly the same thing which I forecast when that vicious thing of DeMille first appeared.⁴⁴

It is possible that *The King of Kings* affair was a factor in Newman's decision, near the end of 1929, to leave San Francisco and return to New York City as rabbi of Rodeph Sholom. The controversy over DeMille's film may be read as an experience that convinced Newman of the need to acquire a more prominent setting within which he could bring his ideas of Jewish particularism to national attention.

Under the influence of Stephen Wise, Newman evolved into a "fierce nationalist" and fervent opponent of Reform Judaism's anti-Zionist position.⁴⁵ During Newman's years at the Free Synagogue, from 1916 to 1921, Wise regularly invited him to peruse his correspondence pertaining to the Jewish struggle in Palestine.⁴⁶ In 1920, Newman marched in a New York parade celebrating the award of the Palestine Mandate to Great Britain. In his commencement address at the Jewish Institute of Religion in 1927, Newman called Reform's stance on Zionism a "flagrant blunder."⁴⁷ In San Francisco, Newman earned the nickname "battlin' Louie" for, among other issues, his regular

⁴³ Deutsch, B.S. to Henry Morgenthau. 9 May 1932. Box 13, Folder 3. LINP.

⁴⁴ Wise to David Sarnoff. 23 December 1932. Ibid.

⁴⁵ Marc Lee Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism: The Reform, Conservative, Orthodox and Reconstructionist Traditions in Historical Perspective*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1984.), p. 42.

⁴⁶ Newman to Jeremy, Jonathan and Daniel Newman. Ibid.

⁴⁷ Raphael, Ibid.

denunciations of Reform's anti-Zionist policy.⁴⁸ During a discussion of Zionism's place in the Reform prayerbook, held at the 1934 CCAR Convention in Wernersville, Pennsylvania, Newman stated:

I think the time has really come for the CCAR to change its attitude with reference to the place of Palestine in the liturgy...The revision is coming, sooner or later. The place of Palestine in contemporary Jewish life is known to you all, and any reader of the Bible is aware of the spiritual aspects of Palestine's role in the Jewish tradition...To me, Zionism and Reform Judaism are in complete harmony.⁴⁹

Newman and Wise were not entirely alone in their convictions; other prominent American Reform rabbis considered Reform and Zionism compatible and openly supported the upbuilding of the Jewish homeland. The group included Abba Hillel Silver of Cleveland, Max Heller of New Orleans, James Heller of Cincinnati and Martin Meyer of San Francisco.⁵⁰ But Newman and his fellow Zionist rabbis represented a small minority. During the early to mid-1930s, the Reform movement by and large continued to embrace universalism over particularism, and, since the historic Pittsburgh Platform of 1885, officially rejected the Jewish return to Zion. In 1935, on the eve of the Pittsburgh Platform's fiftieth anniversary, the CCAR issued a "neutrality" resolution with regards to Zionism.⁵¹ Writing to Wise following the 1934 CCAR conference Newman acknowledged his position as an outsider amidst the Reform rabbinate, as a Zionist and by virtue of his association with the Jewish Institute of Religion. The letter sheds light on how Newman saw himself in relation to his peers:

⁴⁸ Jeremy Newman interview with Rafael Medoff, 9 June 1996, in Rafael Medoff, *Militant Zionism in America: The Rise and Impact of the Jabotinsky Movement in the United States, 1926-1948* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2002), p. 27.

⁴⁹ *CCAR Yearbook*, Volume XLIV, p. 76.

⁵⁰ Newman to Wise, Undated. Box 13, Folder 10, LINP.

⁵¹ *CCAR Yearbook*, Volume XLV, pp. 102-103.

Even the HUC Zionists, who profess to be friendly, can never forgive me for having been Rabbi of Emanu-El in the West, and for being Rabbi of Rodeph Sholom now. I realize that I am something of a maverick in the Rabbinate. I find myself out in the front fighting, and taking most of the blows, while others come and carry off what are supposed to be the rewards.⁵²

In the early 1930s, Newman belonged to the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), led by Supreme Court Judge Louis Brandeis and Judge Julian Mack. This group sought to develop a Jewish homeland in Palestine through economic investments and support for Labor Zionism. Support for the Labor Zionists stemmed from the American Jewish community's negative view of the Revisionists.⁵³ In 1934, Newman, helped to form the Group B General Zionists, a splinter section within the ZOA that opposed the policies of the Labor Zionists, or Histadrut, in the economic life of Palestine. The Group B program sought to involve Zionist leaders in working with Great Britain, the Mandatory Power in Palestine, to end land speculation, ensure fair treatment of all elements and classes of Palestine's Jewish life, conceive a proper policy of preparation and irrigation of soil for Jewish colonization on both sides of the Jordan River, encourage industry and commerce through adequate trade treaties and markets, open the gates of Palestine to mass immigration and help to bring about – as pledged in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 – the creation of the Jewish National Home.⁵⁴ According to Group B, the ZOA had “abandoned the principles of General Zionism...and surrendered to the

⁵² Newman to Wise. 17 July 1934. Box 13, Folder 7, LINP.

⁵³ Pierre M. Atlas, “Defining the Fringe: Two Examples of the Marginalization of Revisionist Zionism in the 1930s,” *Israel Bulletin Studies* 9 (Spring 1994): 7-11, in Mark A. Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism*, (New York: New York University Press, 1998), p. 178.

⁵⁴ *Tentative Statement of Program of the American “B” Group, General Zionists*, March 1935. Box 13, Folder 7, LINP.

domination of the Labor [Zionist] Front.”⁵⁵ Group B objected to the economic practices of the Histadrut, which had:

...utilized its control of the World Zionist Organization, the Jewish Agency and their funds for the aggrandizement and perpetuation of its party objectives, thereby hindering the adequate growth of the *Yishuv* [the Jewish settlement in Palestine] at a time when millions of Jews in their acute misery are looking to *Eretz Yisrael* for immediate settlement.⁵⁶

In 1937, with the Group B initiatives having failed, Newman left the ZOA and joined the American wing of Vladimir Jabotinsky’s Federation of Revisionist Zionists, called the New Zionist Organization (NZO). The Revisionists, organized in 1925, had called for the immigration of forty thousand immigrants to Palestine each year for twenty-five years in order to create a Jewish majority and facilitate the establishment of a Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan River. With its militant and right-wing view of Jewish nationalism, the Revisionists were perceived by their mainstream Zionist opponents as being “fundamentally opposed to Western humanitarian values” in their “pathological expression of national egotism which is not only immoral, but against the real interests and beneath the dignity of Jewry and Zionism.”⁵⁷ Jabotinsky, meanwhile, saw Revisionism as emphasizing the “humanitarian aspect of Zionism” rather than just its nationalistic aspirations. He stated:

The Jewish State is not the ultimate aim:
it is merely the first step in the process
of implementing Greater Zionism. Then

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ *Revisionists and Mizrahi, a Symposium Held in New York on Saturday Evening, February 3, 1934 at Which the Speakers Were Hayim Greenburg and Joseph Sprinzak*, trans. Maximilian Hurwitz (Milwaukee: Spiegel, 1934), 5-6, AJHS, in Raider, p. 179.

will come the second step: the return of the Jewish People to its Homeland, *Shivath Zion* [Return to Zion], the exodus, the solution to the Jewish problem...⁵⁸

The NZO worked on issues affecting the future of Palestine. Newman's reasons for joining the Revisionists were the increase in Arab violence against Jews in Palestine, his belief that the traditional Zionist policy of trusting the British and placing faith in Arab-Jewish co-existence was misplaced, the increasing threat posed by the Nazis and dire predicament of the Jews of Europe.⁵⁹ Newman, who, in joining the Revisionists became "a minority of one,"⁶⁰ was one of the first Reform rabbis to support the Revisionists.⁶¹ He later wrote of Jabotinsky:

To him [Jabotinsky], the military system was abhorrent, and war was an ugly, vicious business. But in this "peculiar and imperfect world," the resort to arms was essential if a community or a people or a nation were to survive, and Jabotinsky had to pay homage to the shrine of the "God Of Things As They Are."⁶²

Efforts by the Revisionist group to establish itself in the United States were generally opposed by more moderate Zionist groups. Both the ZOA and such organizations as Hadassah rejected the Revisionists' anti-socialist and anti-Labor posture. Many American Jews viewed the Revisionists as no less a threat to Jewish interests than Soviet-style Communism.⁶³ Though they remained friends, Newman was unable to win

⁵⁸ Jabotinsky's opening address at the Foundation Congress of the New Zionist Organization. *Kongress Zeitung der N.Z.O.* 8 September 1935. Also: "New Zionist Organization: Its Structure And Aims," A Statement Submitted by the *Nessiut* to the British Colonial Office, in Joseph B. Schectman, *The Life and Times of Vladimir Jabotinsky. Volume 2, Fighter and Prophet: The Last Years.* (Silver Spring, MD: Eshel Books, 1986), p. 284.

⁵⁹ Medoff, Rafael. Interview with Tepper. 25 October 2007.

⁶⁰ Medoff, p. 26.

⁶¹ Newman to Jeremy, Jonathan and Daniel Newman, Ibid.

⁶² Newman, "Jabotinsky's Place in Zionist History," Ibid.

⁶³ Pierre M. Atlas in Raider, Ibid.

Wise's support for Jabotinsky or the Revisionists. Though Wise admired Jabotinsky's personality, he feared the Revisionist leader's authoritarian and doctrinaire position.⁶⁴ In the mid-1930s, Newman wrote to Wise:

I am truly sorry that I cannot agree with you concerning Jabotinsky. He is by no means the ogre he is made out to be, and, while I do not subscribe to all the items in his program, I am prepared to get him an adequate hearing before the American Jewish public...I am sorry indeed that you are not friendly work.⁶⁵

In 1937, when Great Britain's Peel Commission recommended the partition of Western Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states, Newman tried again, in vain, to win Wise's support for the NZO and the Revisionist program. Newman wrote Wise, "you will find your strongest allies in the battle against the partition in the Jabotinsky camp."⁶⁶

With the Nazi threat increasing through the late 1930s, Jabotinsky, in opposition to the perceived hostility of Britain's Mandatory government in Palestine, as well as the apparent indifference and inertia of Jewish Diaspora leaders, warned the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe to migrate as quickly as possible. Realizing that Europe's threatened Jewry "could no longer wait for the timorous and dilatory tactics of those in political power," Jabotinsky and his followers established *Aliyah Bet*, or "Extra-Quota Immigration," an organization that sought to circumvent the immigration limits imposed by the British Mandatory government in Palestine.⁶⁷ Such limits were the result of the British attempt to satisfy Arab demands to restrict Jewish immigration and stem the

⁶⁴ For Revisionism, see Joseph B. Schectman and Yehuda Benari, *History of the Revisionist Movement* (Tel Aviv: Hadar, 1970), as well as Schectman's two-volume *The Jabotinsky Story* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1956, 1961), in Melvin I. Urofsky, *A Voice That Spoke for Justice: The Life and Times of Stephen S. Wise* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), p. 278.

⁶⁵ Newman to Wise, 31 January 1935, Box 13, Folder 8, LINP.

⁶⁶ Newman to Wise, 30 July 1937, LINP, in Medoff, pp. 31-32.

⁶⁷ Newman, "Jabotinsky's Place in Zionist History," *Ibid.*

tide of violence committed against the Jews of Palestine.⁶⁸ The slogan of *Aliyah Bet* was *Af Al Pi* – Hebrew for “in spite of everything!” The slogan suited a cadre of activists determined to bring beleaguered European Jews to Palestine notwithstanding their rickety boats and British border patrols.⁶⁹

Newman was active in organizing support for *Aliyah Bet*. Major American Zionist groups, however, claiming that *Aliyah Bet* ships “resemble concentration camps,”⁷⁰ made his task difficult. Whereas the mainstream Zionists preferred a policy of what they called “selectivity” in immigration, Newman and the Revisionists promoted mass, unrestricted immigration, arguing that the worsening situation in Europe meant that catastrophe was imminent.⁷¹ One of the most trying moments for *Aliyah Bet* occurred during early 1940 when more than two thousand Jewish refugees aboard the Turkish-owned ship *Sakarya* were stranded on the freezing Danube River near Bucharest, after the ship’s owners were apprised of the planned illegal voyage to Palestine. Jabotinsky sought Newman’s support in raising funds to pay the owners the additional ten thousand dollars they demanded to undertake the journey and offset the cost of a possible seizure by the British. Pledges made by prospective donors to rescue the refugees were withdrawn when certain Zionist rabbis advised them not to give money to those “Fascists,” as they called the Revisionists.⁷² A request to the United Palestine Appeal, a major fundraising agency, was rejected. Even Wise turned down Newman’s plea for financial assistance with the assertion that “the Jewish Agency will deal with that

⁶⁸ “Yitshaq Ben-Ami and Rabbi Louis I. Newman: They Spoke Out for Jewish Survival and Freedom,” *Memorial Tribute Program*, 13 January 2005, p. 5. Courtesy of Saul Newman.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 6.

⁷¹ Ibid, pp. 6-7.

⁷² Newman, “Jabotinsky’s Place in Zionist History,” p. 26.

problem as promptly and adequately as they can.”⁷³ Eventually, the necessary funds were acquired from sympathizers in Belgium and the United States, and the *Sakarya* traveled to Palestine, where its passengers were permitted to enter.⁷⁴

In 1940, Newman was a member of a committee that sponsored a visit by Jabotinsky to the United States in order to enlist the support of the American public for the Revisionist Movement.⁷⁵ So close was Jabotinsky to Newman that during this visit he came to Newman’s home for dinner and a place to rest. As well, Newman’s office at Rodeph Sholom served as one of Jabotinsky’s mailing addresses in New York City.⁷⁶ As a Reform rabbi who supported Zionism, Newman had been in the minority; but as one who was openly devoted to the Revisionists, he was now almost completely alone.⁷⁷ A cable to London from the British Embassy described Newman as “a fine man who has fallen into dubious company.”⁷⁸ The lay leadership of Rodeph Sholom tried persuading Newman to direct his energies towards the congregational work for which he was admired. Unwilling to abandon a cause he so firmly believed in, Newman compromised by moving his “office for Zionist activities”⁷⁹ to a bench near his synagogue in Central Park. Newman’s son Jeremy recalled his father during this time:

Hardworking, passionate, and “strong as an ox,” Newman devoted long hours to both his congregation and his Zionist activities, but he frequently interrupted his workday to call his wife. On the Sabbath, he and his sons would relax with a stack of the latest

⁷³ *Memorial Tribute Program*, p. 7.

⁷⁴ William R. Perl, *The Four-Front War* (New York, 1978), pp. 338-340, in Shmuel Katz, *Lone Wolf: A Biography of Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky*, Volume 2. (New York: Barricade Books Inc., 1996), p. 1745-1748.

⁷⁵ Schectman, p. 384.

⁷⁶ Miller, p. 450.

⁷⁷ *Memorial Tribute Program*, pp. 4-5.

⁷⁸ Miller, pp. 450-451.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

Hebrew-language newspapers from Palestine.⁸⁰

Eventually, a group of concerned Rodeph Sholom board members confronted Newman with an ultimatum: resign from the presidency of the NZO – a role he had held since 1938 – or leave Rodeph Sholom. In the face of such congregational and family pressure and, apparently, with no alternative career prospects available, Newman left his position with the NZO.⁸¹ That same year, 1940, Vladimir Jabotinsky died of a heart attack in New York. Years later, Newman reflected on Jabotinsky's achievements:

Jabotinsky taught the Jewish people that a nation, however small in numbers and resources, must know how to protect itself against assailants, despite the repellant nature of the obligation... Today Jabotinsky is included in the Pantheon of Israel's heroes. Whatever his heartaches and heartbreaks, Jabotinsky's dream of a strong, self-reliant Israel has come to pass.⁸²

It is important to point out the difference between the NZO and the "Bergson Group" led by Palestine-born Hillel Kook, who adopted the name of Peter H. Bergson while in the United States. During 1938 and 1939, Kook worked in Poland, organizing illegal immigration to Palestine. Newman was a supporter of Kook's group, welcoming its representatives during a visit to New York in early 1939.⁸³ With the outbreak of World War II, Kook, at the urging of Jabotinsky, moved to the United States to continue his work in rescuing European Jewry. Following Jabotinsky's death, Kook carried on the Revisionist efforts to raise funds for a Jewish army to fight on the side of the allies. The Bergson Group, which existed from 1941 to 1948, was completely separate from the

⁸⁰ Jeremy Newman interview in Medoff. Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 66.

⁸² Newman, "Jabotinsky's Place in Zionist History," Ibid.

⁸³ Monty Noam Penkower, "In Dramatic Dissent: The Bergson Boys," *American Jewish History*, Number 70, September 1980 to June 1981, Numbers 1-4, p. 282.

NZO. However, in an interview, Kook stated “Rabbi Louis Newman for a while supported us. He was Reform. But then he was a sort of follower of Jabotinsky.”⁸⁴

While Newman was speaking and writing on behalf of the Zionist cause, he and Wise were also involved in the desperate attempts to inform Americans of the plight of the Jews in Nazi-threatened Europe. In a telegram to Franklin Roosevelt, written shortly after Adolf Hitler assumed power in Germany, Newman urged the American President to “include in your statement today reference to the necessity for safeguarding religious and racial freedom in Germany if she is expecting the friendship of the world... Your word at this juncture will prove decisively helpful.”⁸⁵

The 1930s correspondence between Newman and Cyrus Adler, President of both Philadelphia’s Dropsie College and New York’s Jewish Theological Seminary, reveals the extent to which the American Jewish Committee⁸⁶ attempted to muzzle rabbis who otherwise desired to speak out in protest against the treatment of German Jewry. Adler did oppose the U.S. State Department’s position that considered the persecution of German Jewry an internal affair.⁸⁷ However, Newman accused Adler of unduly influencing both Reform and Conservative rabbis on the New York Board of Jewish Ministers who had voted down a resolution to have its members preach on the German situation and promote a rally in protest of Germany’s treatment of its Jewish citizens.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ David S. Wyman and Rafael Medoff, *A Race Against Death: Peter Bergson, America And The Holocaust* (New York: The New Press, 2002) p. 114.

⁸⁵ Newman. Telegram to Franklin D. Roosevelt. 16 May 1933. Box 9, Folder 1, LINP.

⁸⁶ The American Jewish Committee, the oldest Jewish defense organization in the USA. Established in 1906, combining philanthropic and diplomatic activity on behalf of Jews. Fought rise of organized anti-Semitism, opposed the Zionist Biltmore Program of 1942. By 1946 the AJC recognized the need for a Jewish state and co-operated with the Zionists in pushing for Palestine’s partition.

⁸⁷ Frederick A. Lazin, “The Response of the American Jewish Committee to the Crisis of German Jewry, 1933-1939,” *American Jewish History*, Number 68, September 1977 to June 1978, Numbers 1-4, p. 285.

⁸⁸ Newman to Cyrus Adler. 18 May 1933, Box 9, Folder 1, LINP.

Newman also criticized UAHC Chairman Ludwig Vogelstein, who had encouraged synagogue presidents to abide by the AJC policy:

[The] negative policy of the AJC has tended to promote bewilderment and confusion throughout the country... [The] AJC has placed a blight upon some rabbinical and other organizations to the immense hurt of the Jewish morals of their members... I cannot regard such inaction as anything except a destructive outcome of the AJC's influence.⁸⁹

Replying to these accusations, the AJC argued that the United States government was already doing all in its power short of suspending diplomatic relations with Berlin. While conditions for German Jewry grew increasingly perilous, the AJC was combating - on home ground - fundamentalist Protestant groups, the German-American Bund and the anti-Semitic preachments of Father Charles Coughlin.⁹⁰ The AJC feared that strong protests, rather than "quiet diplomacy," would result in a fresh wave of anti-Semitic charges that American Jews controlled the United States Government. But when the passage of Nazi Germany's Nuremburg Race Laws of 1935 left little doubt as to the alarming situation of German Jews, the AJC shifted its position, adopting the view that protests against Nazi policy were indeed appropriate.⁹¹ According to Newman, whereas the AJC had thrown obstacles in the path of proper protest against Nazi Germany, the American Jewish Congress,⁹² under the leadership of Wise, "alone embodies the

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Frederick A. Lazin, p. 290.

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 298.

⁹² American Jewish Congress, first formed in 1918 as delegation to Paris Peace Conference. Fully formed in 1928 with Stephen Wise as Chairman. During 1930s it was the leading force in the anti-Nazi movement. Decidedly Zionist and pro-Palestine/Israel. Its Joint Boycott Council in the mid-1930s led to the formation of the World Jewish Congress.

philosophy, procedure and organization by which the rank and file of Jewish democracy in this country can share in the making and conduct of sound Jewish statesmanship.”⁹³

In his *Kol Nidrei* sermon of 1940, delivered in the bleak days during which the Nazi juggernaut swept across Europe, Newman responded to what he termed the Jewish “self-belittlement and self-disparagement”⁹⁴ that had led to America’s lack of “inclination to join the battle against Nazism.”⁹⁵ Newman invoked *Kol Nidrei* as an opportunity to repudiate the negativity of being a Jew in difficult times:

To be sure, it is hard to be a Jew today, it may be harder still tomorrow. Thus it has always been, and it may well be that Jews in America will not be immune to the destiny that has overtaken their brethren elsewhere... Therefore, let us put aside the vain and empty vows which spell defeatism and despair, and let us make, in their stead, the resolutions which appertain to God, since they are voiced in terms of courage, fortitude and high dedication.⁹⁶

Newman was a harsh critic of the American Council for Judaism (ACJ). The ACJ, formed in 1942, was a group of Reform rabbis adamantly opposed to political Zionism. They were men who, with the increase of support for Zionism in American Jewry and among the Reform rabbinate, felt that they had become “strangers in their own house.”⁹⁷ ACJ members withheld support from the CCAR, while lay followers who had once been major contributors to the UAHC directed their funds to the ACJ instead. Though the ACJ never realized large numbers, in the first few years of its existence it represented a

⁹³ Newman to Cyrus Adler, Ibid.

⁹⁴ Newman, “Kol Nidrei: The Secret of Its Power,” reprinted in *Reform Judaism*, Fall 2000, p. 36.

⁹⁵ Marc Saperstein, “Five Sermons No One Ever Slept Through,” Ibid, p. 35

⁹⁶ Newman, “Kol Nidrei: The Secret of Its Power,” Ibid, p. 36.

⁹⁷ Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 326.

challenge to Reform unity.⁹⁸ In his column "Telling It In Gath" Newman described the ACJ rabbis as being "out of touch with the Jewish people and thoroughly unsympathetic to Jewish aspirations," "stubborn intransigent die hards" and a "reckless minority."⁹⁹

According to ACJ member Rabbi Julian Feibelman of New Orleans, his organization opposed Zionism, though not a Jewish homeland. The Zionists, wrote Feibelman, were determined to "stigmatize other Jews who do not believe in political Zionism with the accusation that they are condemning their fellow Jews to the fate Hitler would impose upon them."¹⁰⁰ In his autobiography, Feibelman sought to clarify the views of the ACJ:

The world was expanding; nations were more dependent with growing inter-dependence, and I did not think one more small people, enclosed solely with itself, could remain secure. One might foster the claim for rights but not deny the self-same rights for others. No people could, in the foreseeable future, be completely and only for itself. This became my fixed principle.¹⁰¹

However, Newman did not hesitate to draw comparisons between the ACJ and the pro-Fascist organizations of 1930s and 1940s Europe. In his book detailing the conversion to Catholicism of Rome's Chief Rabbi Israel Zolli at the end of World War II,¹⁰² Newman described how the ACJ resembled acquiescent Jewish- Fascist groups as Italy's "Italians of the Jewish Religion."

They [ACJ members] ignore the patriotic services rendered by men like the late

⁹⁸ Meyer, p. 332.

⁹⁹ Newman, "Telling it in Gath," *The Scribe* (of Portland, Oregon), 15 May 1942.

¹⁰⁰ Feibelman, Julian (hereafter Feibelman). Letter to Abe D. Waldauer, 6 January 1943. Box 1 Folder 7. JULIAN B. PAPERS. AJA.

¹⁰¹ Feibelman, *The Making of a Rabbi*, (New York: Vantage Press, Inc., 1980), p. 385.

¹⁰² Newman, A "Chief Rabbi" of Rome Becomes A Catholic: A Study in Fright and Spite (hereafter "Chief Rabbi"), (New York: The Renaissance Press, 1945).

[American Zionist leaders] Justice Louis D. Brandeis and Judge Julian Mack and other Zionist notables, and they seek to establish - exactly like their Italian confreres - a spurious contradiction between Zionism and [American] patriotism.¹⁰³

Newman also condemned American Reform congregations that attempted to marginalize or blacklist any rabbi who had the reputation of being a free-speaking Zionist.¹⁰⁴

An exchange of letters between Newman and Feibelman during the 1940s illustrated how colleagues who failed to support the Zionist cause and join the voice of protest against Nazism could anger Newman. The correspondence reflects Newman's attitude towards fellow-Jews, especially rabbis, who fell short of meeting his own standards of morality and justice. In 1942 Newman responded to Feibelman's criticism of Wise for calling attention to the mass murders of Eastern European Jews. According to Feibelman, Wise's announcement should have come from a news agency or government officials rather than a rabbi.¹⁰⁵ Newman replied to Feibelman:

It is clear from your letter that you have at last found a mission in life to which you can consecrate yourself: namely, to disprove, in company with [Nazi Propaganda Minister George] Goebbels the "atrocities stories" because Dr. Wise and the American Jewish Congress are associated with the bringing of the information to the attention of the authorities of our government and the American public... Shame on you! It is impossible for me to defend you and those like you as colleagues in the ministry of

¹⁰³ Newman, *Chief Rabbi*, p. 42.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 73.

¹⁰⁵ Feibelman to Newman, 28 December 1942. Box 9, Folder 5
JULIAN B. FEIBELMAN PAPERS. AJA.

Israel.¹⁰⁶

In late 1944, when the facts regarding the concentration camp atrocities came to full light,

Newman wrote a final time to Feibelman:

I do commend to you at this forthcoming
Yom Kippur a few moments of communion
with the Almighty in which you freely
confess that you have been guilty of a
grave transgression, not only against the
truth in spirit and letter, but also against
your own brothers.¹⁰⁷

In his autobiography, a still-defiant Feibelman recalled encountering Newman years later. From a distance, Feibelman observed:

There stands a handsome man, tall, dignified,
imposing, defiant, and arrogant. He looks
like an English lord, very impressive and
commanding...He would have made
the Grand Inquisitor look helpless and futile.
He could condemn you to the stake and not bat
an eye while watching the flames consume
you.¹⁰⁸

As the official observer of the CCAR, Newman witnessed the historic vote in favor of Palestine's Partition in November of 1947. Despite his joining the Revisionists and disagreements with Wise over Jabotinsky, the event was a vindication of Newman's longtime faith in the idea of a Jewish homeland. On being present, in 1949, when the new State of Israel became a member of the United Nations with the raising of its flag at Lake Success, New York, Newman wrote to his sons: "Of such significant happenings the history of a people is fashioned."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Newman to Feibelman. 4 January 1943. Box 9, Folder 5. Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Newman to Feibelman. 2 September 1944. Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Feibelman, p. 393.

¹⁰⁹ Newman to Jeremy, Jonathan and Daniel Newman. Ibid.

In a eulogy delivered at Newman's memorial service in 1972, Yitzhak Ben-Ami, a Rodeph Sholom congregant and former associate of Newman in the Revisionist Movement, stated:

[Newman] scratch[ed] together dollars and pennies to ship the so-called "illegal" immigrants from Nazi-threatened Europe to British-occupied Palestine. He knew that there was a time to dwell on and search for the humanistic principles of Judaism, and there was a time to open the doors of hostile and uncomprehending Jewish homes and temples in the USA...¹¹⁰

In 2005, the David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies¹¹¹ held a dinner at Rodeph Sholom in honor of Ben-Ami and Newman. According to the Wyman Institute, Ben-Ami and Newman "waged a lonely struggle in America in support of the campaign to smuggle Jews from Europe to Palestine."¹¹²

In a memorial article written by Rabbi Theodore A Lewis of Brooklyn's Shaari Zedek Synagogue, Newman was described as possessing "a divine discontent, a profound and deep disquiet with injustice, with cruelty and with evil. But what caused his soul the sharpest anguish was injustice to his own people – the Jews. Nothing aroused him as intensely, and nothing touched him as acutely as the agony of the Jewish people."¹¹³

¹¹⁰ LIN Memorial Issue, p. 7.

¹¹¹ The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies, based in Washington D.C., is devoted to examining America's response to the Holocaust, focusing on what it terms as America's "abandonment" of Europe's Jews during the Nazi era. It researches efforts by such groups as the Bergsons to rescue the Jews, as well as the moral and historical lessons to be gleaned from this period (Ben-Ami and Newman Memorial Tribute Program). The Institute's views have not received wide acceptance in the scholarly community (G.P. Zola).

¹¹² "Wyman Institute Dinner in NYC Honoring Yitshaq Ben-Ami & Rabbi Louis Newman," Press Release, The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies.
www.acteva.com/booking.cfm?bevaaid=76353.

¹¹³ LIN Memorial Issue, p. 8.

Near the conclusion of his 1945 book *A "Chief Rabbi" Of Rome Becomes A Catholic*, Newman expressed his contempt for the wartime Italian rabbi Israel Zolli who – following the war – converted to Catholicism. Newman wrote that Jews must take a stand with regard to tyranny and injustice, and of the duty of all Jews to ensure their continued welfare, prosperity and survival. The Jews, wrote Newman, must never tolerate despotic regimes nor favor such undermining agents as the American Council for Judaism. Rather, Jews were to enjoin righteousness in all its forms, both in international and national life. Every Jew was responsible for one another, and one must never seek escape from harm by placing blame on the “alien Jew” in his or her midst.¹¹⁴

Neither the tension that Newman’s activism stirred within his congregation, nor the rifts that such tension created between him and his rabbinic colleagues could sway him from clinging to the idea of Jewish particularism. Jewish survival, in America, Europe and Palestine remained at the forefront of Newman’s agenda. When Jewish identity, culture or traditions were threatened, Newman spoke out in the strongest of terms. From his fellow Jews he demanded no less. What one learns from exploring Newman’s political activities is the uncompromising manner with which he sought to safeguard Jewish identity while awakening the consciences of his fellow Jews - including rabbis - everywhere; this during an era when so many in American Reform Judaism and its rabbinate clung to a more universalistic outlook. The fervor with which Newman applied himself to these political causes underscored his particularistic view of the world, a world in which Jewish continuity was fundamental to the survival of humanity as whole.

¹¹⁴ Newman, *Chief Rabbi*, pp. 215-219.

Chapter Three

The Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion Merger

*To enable Hebrew Union College to flourish
should not mean that the Jewish Institute of
Religion should be permitted to "wither on
the vine."*

- Rabbi Louis I. Newman,
*The Case Against The "Unification Plan" Regarding
The Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, p. 6.*

In the late 1940s and early 1950s an issue arose of enormous significance for the American Reform rabbinate: the merger of Cincinnati's Hebrew Union College (HUC) and New York City's Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR). The circumstances surrounding this merger, a process that began with JIR's establishment in 1922 and which was, after more than three decades of struggle, finally consummated in 1956, became a matter of great concern to Rabbi Louis Newman. Newman was determined to preserve Stephen Wise's vision of a school for the liberal rabbinate in New York City. Once the proposed "Unification Plan" for Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) was announced, Newman devoted considerable energy to articulating the urgency of JIR's maintaining a full five-year rabbinical program, along with the right of ordination in New York. Newman's efforts involved the founding of a new, albeit short-lived seminary of liberal Judaism, one that would assure New York's retention of the right to produce rabbis who would minister to American Jews in the spirit of *K'lal Yisrael*.

In 1922, dissatisfied with the anti-Zionistic stance of HUC and the religiously conservative character of the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), Wise proceeded to

establish a new rabbinical school in New York City.¹ Whereas HUC, in the words of Wise, offered only “a narrow Reform spirit,” the new school would not promote a specific religious ideology. Instead, JIR would in principle train rabbis to serve the entire Jewish community.² JIR’s students held a variety of theological beliefs and were affiliated with different branches of Judaism: Orthodox, Conservative and Reform. For his new seminary, Wise sought “any and all Jewish youth who might wish to prepare themselves for the calling of rabbi without committing themselves in advance of their period of study to one or another division within the Jewish religion.”³ All of these students, however, needed to identify with the three pillars that distinguished Wise’s own rabbinate: Zionism, social justice and the task of serving *K'lal Yisrael*, the Jewish people in its entirety.⁴ In words that were indirectly critical of HUC, historian Abram Sachar – an admirer of Wise – wrote that JIR would provide rabbis for the “forward-looking, progressive American congregations.”⁵

From the beginning, JIR was an outgrowth of Wise’s own Free Synagogue. The principles upon which the Free Synagogue was based - Zionism, social and communal action, democracy of the pew and freedom of the pulpit - represented the foundation upon which JIR was built. Within the walls of JIR, “academic freedom for both faculty and students alike were to be accepted as valid and desirable norms of Jewish life.”⁶ Wise called JIR “an institution dedicated to the training of rabbis by a group of free scholars.

¹ Stephen S. Wise, “The Jewish Institute of Religion,” in W. Gunther Plaut, *The Growth of Reform Judaism* (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, Ltd., 1965), pp. 86-88.

² Meyer, p. 303.

³ “Education for Leadership,” *Jewish Institute of Religion* (brochure). Box 14, Folder 10, LINP.

⁴ Melvin I. Urofsky, *A Voice That Spoke for Justice: The Life and Times of Stephen S. Wise* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), pp. 302-303, in Sarna, p. 251.

⁵ Sachar, p. 396.

⁶ Alfred Gottschalk, *A Jubilee of the Spirit: Address on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Jewish Institute of Religion*, 31 May 1972, p. 7.

They are free in the sense that, out of the depths of their Jewish learning and loyalty, they may teach whatever they feel they, within the range of Jewish learning, wish to teach.”⁷ For his faculty, Wise sought teachers who would be able to express themselves freely on the issue of Zionism, and graduate rabbis for America who were favorable to this idea.⁸ One of the primary reasons for the creation of JIR was Wise’s belief that New York City, with “the largest Jewish community in history,” urgently required its own school for training liberal rabbis. “What persuaded him [Wise] particularly was that New York City, this great center of Jewish life, lacked a great liberal seminary imbued with a love for Zion and America and expressing a concern for *K’lal Yisrael*, the totality of the Jewish peoples’ needs and aspirations.”⁹ Wise himself wrote of “the extraordinary educational and cultural advantages New York offered to students, and the varied character as well as the unique numbers of the Jewish population of New York.”¹⁰ He pointed out that Austria and Germany, with less than one million Jews combined, possessed four seminaries, whereas the United States, with a Jewish population of three and a half million had only five seminaries: HUC, JTS, the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (REITS) and two Orthodox *yeshivot* in Brooklyn.¹¹ Furthermore, JIR would differ from HUC in that no one would be accepted for study that was not already a graduate of an American or European college.¹² This rule was in keeping with Wise’s view of the rabbinate as a profession, not unlike medicine or law, which required

⁷ “Education for Leadership,” Ibid.

⁸ Hyman J. Fliegel, “The Creation of the Jewish Institute of Religion,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly*, Volume LVIII, December 1968, Number 2, p. 261.

⁹ Gottschalk, p. 6.

¹⁰ “Education for Leadership,” Ibid.

¹¹ Carl Herman Voss, *Rabbi and Minister: The Friendship of Stephen S. Wise and John Haynes Holmes*, (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1964), p. 210.

¹² “Education for Leadership,” Ibid.

a broad-based liberal education.¹³ During the years 1921 and 1922 meetings took place involving HUC, JIR and the UAHC, at that time HUC's major patron. At a meeting held on December 22, 1921 representatives of the UAHC sought unsuccessfully to dissuade the Free Synagogue from supporting JIR. At the next meeting, on March 8, 1922, representatives of both HUC, including then-Acting President Julian Morgenstern, and JIR "agreed to endeavor to find a method of cooperation, if possible"¹⁴ between the two schools and the UAHC. At the third and final meeting, held on March 17, 1922, delegates from New York's Free Synagogue, submitted plans, a "Basis of Discussion," under which JIR would become an activity of the UAHC, co-ordinating its program and activities with HUC. Both Wise and the officers of the Free Synagogue offered to place themselves at the disposal of the UAHC in order to raise funds for both the Cincinnati and New York seminaries. An interchange of faculty and students would also be put in place. At the same time, Wise insisted that JIR remain an independent and autonomous institution. Its Board of Trustees would be self-perpetuating, though not more than twenty percent of this Board would be appointed by the UAHC.¹⁵ Wise asked for a response to the "Basis of Discussion" within a month, so that in the event of rejection by the UAHC, he could proceed to secure funds for his school elsewhere.¹⁶

The plan, viewed as fair and rational by Wise and the Free Synagogue, was rejected by the UAHC. The UAHC objected to a proposal that called for it to provide financial support for JIR but without control of it. To Wise, such independence was

¹³ Wise to Mordecai Kaplan, 6 April 1920; minutes of meeting, 2 November 1920, JIR Records; Wise, *Challenging Years*, p. 131, in Urofsky, p. 183.

¹⁴ Fliegel, p. 263.

¹⁵ Daniel P. Hayes to Lee K. Frankel, 6 April 1922, in Fliegel, *Ibid*.

¹⁶ *Open Letter to the President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations from a Committee of Free Synagogue*, 20 April 1922, p. 7. Courtesy of Klau Library, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio.

crucial if JIR was to avoid becoming an “East Coast version of HUC.”¹⁷ In April of 1922, UAHC Board Member Daniel P. Hays, who was also President of New York’s Temple Israel, issued a statement that read: “The best interests of American Judaism will be conserved not by founding a new institution, but by strengthening the present support of the Hebrew Union College.”¹⁸ Hays added that a new and future seminary should not be under the self-perpetuating control of a single congregation [the Free Synagogue] but, like HUC, should be controlled by the UAHC, which, in 1922, was comprised of more than two hundred member-congregations representing liberal Judaism in America.¹⁹

Another letter, written by UAHC President Charles Shohl to the Reform Rabbinates, instructed congregations not to co-operate with JIR. Shohl’s letter was also critical of Wise: “He [Wise] has frequently found fault with the Hebrew Union College. He has expressed discontent with the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.”²⁰ In a separate letter to the HUC Board of Governors, Shohl conveyed the anxiety regarding the emergence of another liberal seminary:

I am of the opinion that Dr. Wise’s trip through the West [to raise funds for JIR], if successful, is apt to be fraught with danger for our own institution.²¹

In a letter of support for JIR, Newman wrote to Wise:

I feel sure that Mr. [Daniel P.] Hays will come to see, as I do, that there is no conflict between the work of HUC and the proposed Institute, but that the Union [UAHC] is being led astray because of

¹⁷ Urofsky, p. 185.

¹⁸ Hays to Frankel. Ibid, in Fliegel, p. 264.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Charles Shohl to CCAR. 11 April 1922, in *Open Letter...* Appendix B. Courtesy of Klau Library, Ibid.

²¹ Charles Shohl to Louis Wolsey. 14 April 1922. AJA Box 377, in Meyer, p. 146.

unenlightened leadership.²²

Despite such opposition, the new seminary had an ally in Cleveland's Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver,²³ himself an HUC alumnus, who agreed with Wise's contention that HUC was not providing an adequate number of new rabbis for American Reform pulpits and who claimed - rather prophetically - that "no exclusive movement can hope to remain monopolistic for very long."²⁴ Though no immediate agreement between the two schools could be reached, Wise, Rabbi Dr. Sidney Goldstein (who was serving as Wise's Associate Rabbi), Free Synagogue President Charles F. Bloch, Dr. Richard Gotthiel of Columbia University, Judge Julian Mack and George Alexander Kohut moved forward with their plans to launch JIR. To a friend Wise wrote:

We have done all that could be done. The truth is perhaps we never should have expected that there would be any attempt on the part of those in authority to foregather with us... But we shall go on. If I live the Institute will be established, its doors to be thrown open on October 4th [1922].²⁵

More than twenty years would pass before the Cincinnati and New York seminaries would seriously revisit the issue of collaboration. According to Wise, there were two major obstacles to effecting any cooperation between the two schools. One was HUC's unwillingness to accept liberal Judaism in the place of a "too largely standardized Reform

²² Newman to Wise, Undated. Box 13, Folder 10, LINP.

²³ Abba Hillel Silver (1893-1963), American rabbi and Zionist leader. Longtime rabbi of the Temple, Cleveland, Ohio. At various times head of the Zionist Organization of America. Chief Zionist spokesman at the United Nations during the Palestine hearings of 1947 (*Standard Jewish Encyclopedia*).

²⁴ Abba Hillel Silver to Charles Shohl, 21 April 1922. Courtesy of American Jewish Archives, in Fliegel, p. 265.

²⁵ Daniel P. Hayes to Lee K. Frankel, 6 April 1922; Wise to Max Heller, 3 April 1921 and 6 May 1922, Heller MSS; see also Wise to Louis J. Kopald and Richard Gottheil, 11 April 1922, and to James Heller, 12 April 1922, in Urofsky, p. 185.

Judaism.”²⁶ “Reform,” wrote Wise “had become so illiberal and static that it ceased utterly to accord with the dynamic spirit of the founders of Reform Judaism.”²⁷ The other stumbling block was Zionism, which “had become part of the thinking”²⁸ of JIR and its graduates. Although informal discussions took place between the two schools during the 1920s and 1930s, HUC remained unwilling to consider any arrangement that did not place JIR in a decidedly inferior position.²⁹

In June of 1922, Wise departed for Europe to recruit the faculty for his new institution. In England, Wise met with such renowned figures as Hebraist Israel Abrahams, Progressive Judaism Leader and Scholar Claude Montefiore and Theologian R. Travers Herford, all of whom agreed to become associated with JIR – Abrahams as a faculty member, the other two as visiting lecturers. Wise also approached Bible Scholar Felix Perles, Historian Ismar Elbogen in Berlin, Talmudist Michael Guttman, and Philosopher Yitzhak Heinemann in Breslau. Perles and Heinemann agreed to serve as visiting lecturers in the first year. Others who served in a similar capacity the first year were Religious Historian George Foot Moore of Harvard University, Orientalist Julian J. Obermann of Hamburg University and Rabbi Louis Newman. In the years to follow, JIR faculty would include the noted scholars Abraham Binder in Jewish Liturgical Music, Henry Slominsky in Ethics and Philosophy of Religion, Chaim Tchernowitz in Talmud and JIR graduate John Tepfer in Jewish History and Talmud.³⁰ Wise himself taught two classes: “Problems in the Ministry” – nicknamed “Schmoss Session of the Chief” – and

²⁶ Wise, *Challenging Years*, p. 138.

²⁷ Ibid, pp. 138-139.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 139.

²⁹ Urofsky, p. 191.

³⁰ *The Annual, Published through the Jewish Institute Quarterly*, May 1926, Courtesy of Dr. Gary P. Zola, and *Jewish Institute of Religion (brochure)*

Homiletics.³¹ Other prominent figures such as Historian Salo Baron, Biblical Scholar Shalom Spiegel and Philosopher Harry Wolfson taught at JIR on a part-time basis, or until they received more prestigious positions elsewhere.³² According to the minutes from a JIR faculty meeting in 1931, "The recommendation that Dr. Louis I. Newman be invited to serve as Special Lecturer in Homiletics and Apologetics for 1931-32 was unanimously approved for presentation to the Board of Trustees."³³ Newman entitled his course "Materials and Methods of Preaching" in which Jewish and general homiletical literature, sermon themes, classic and modern sermons, and the role of the *maggid* in American Jewish preaching would be studied.³⁴ Among the JIR students whose homiletical style Newman helped shape was Harold I. Saperstein, who later served in Lynbrook, New York for many years:

The textual and homiletical framework of this sermon [Saperstein's "Undying Fires," September 22, 1941]... was apparently drawn from a sermon by the New York Rabbi Louis I. Newman... The historical "meat" of the present sermon, however, is new, drawing at the beginning from the preacher's [Saperstein's] own experience, and from the events of the year since the Newman sermon was delivered.³⁵

In conceiving JIR, Wise was originally convinced that only a prominent Jewish scholar was suitable to lead his new school. Though he himself possessed a doctorate, Wise's reputation rested much more on his remarkable oratorical ability and his role as advocate of social reform. Choosing a noted scholar to lead JIR would allow Wise to continue devoting his energies to promoting Zionism and other issues of political and

³¹ Voss, p. 212.

³² Meyer, p. 303.

³³ JIR Faculty Meeting Minutes, 3 February, 1931, Box 27, Folder 16, JIRP.

³⁴ Newman to Wise, 8 May 1931. Ibid.

³⁵ Marc Saperstein, Editor, *Witness From The Pulpit: Topical Sermons, 1933-1980, Harold I. Saperstein*. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), p. 83.

social import. He initially approached Mordecai Kaplan, the esteemed rabbi and teacher of the Jewish Theological Seminary and founder of the Reconstructionist Movement. Wise urged Kaplan to join him as a co-founder of JIR and serve as its president. He also offered Kaplan the opportunity to teach in “friendly auspices, in a spirit of freedom, co-operation and congeniality.”³⁶ But Kaplan declined Wise’s offer, fearful that others on the new JIR faculty might differ with his philosophy of Reconstructionist Judaism. In weighing the “actual opposition [to his Reconstructionist ideas] that he was encountering at the JTS with the likely opposition he’d meet at the Institute,” Kaplan chose to remain at the Conservative seminary.³⁷ In the years that followed Kaplan limited his relationship to JIR by serving as a visiting lecturer.³⁸

Wise also offered the JIR presidency to Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch of Chicago, a man “dedicated to the principle of free expression of all forms of religious Judaism among faculty and students.”³⁹ But having just turned seventy years of age, Hirsch declined Wise’s offer though he did agree to become Honorary President and a Visiting Professor of Theology. Hirsch’s death in early 1923 kept him from delivering a single lecture at the new seminary.⁴⁰ Thus Wise failed in his attempts find a permanent president for his institution. In 1927, Wise acceded to the demand of his faculty and stopped signing “acting president” after his name, assuming the title and role of JIR president until his death.⁴¹ But with his extensive national and international interests – his work in support of Palestine, his efforts to organize the World Jewish Congress and his all-consuming

³⁶ Wise to Mordecai Kaplan, 6 April 1920, Wise Papers at Brandeis University, in Fliegel, p. 260.

³⁷ Wise, *Challenging Years*, p. 136, in Fliegel, pp. 260-261.

³⁸ Daniel Polish, “Mordecai Kaplan: His Diaries 1913-1932,” Box 2654, American Jewish Archives, in Michael A. Meyer, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: A Centennial History, 1875-1975* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1976), (hereafter *HUC-JIR*) p. 148.

³⁹ Wise’s Second Commencement Address, 1927, Box 1465, in Meyer, *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Urofsky, p. 186.

alarm over the growing Nazi threat - Wise found it increasingly difficult to devote himself fully to matters concerning the seminary.⁴² Nevertheless, it was because of Wise that students came to the new seminary. He inspired them with his passion for Zionism and the conviction that a rabbi must serve all Jews.⁴³ Ismar Elbogen wrote that "Wise stamped the institution with the impress of his own spirit" and created an institution "not bound to any single specific interpretation of Judaism but made a place for all whose representatives were morally and intellectually worthy."⁴⁴

The rabbinical program of JIR was of four years' duration. During World War II, the course of study was accelerated, allowing students to be ordained in three and one-half years.⁴⁵ To qualify for admission, applicants, in addition to being either a college student or graduate, were required to possess a satisfactory understanding of basic Hebrew and Jewish History. It was also necessary that they "by personality be fitted to undertake the rabbinical course."⁴⁶ Though tuition was free, students were responsible for their own means of living. Assistance, however, was provided by JIR in finding employment related to their rabbinical studies. The curriculum emphasized Bible, *Midrash* and Hebrew literature. Various classes were taught in Hebrew, often by men who had spent time living in Palestine. Students also undertook courses in Jewish Education and were required to participate in community service under the auspices of the Free Synagogue. In the final two years of the program, students were able to concentrate on subjects of individual interest.⁴⁷

⁴² Sachar, p.397.

⁴³ Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 303.

⁴⁴ Ismar Elbogen, *A Century of Jewish Life* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1944), p. 574.

⁴⁵ *Jewish Institute of Religion* (brochure)

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Meyer, *HUC-JIR*, p. 155.

The first class of JIR included the thirty-six year Irma L. Lindheim.⁴⁸ Though the faculty initially had reservations, Lindheim was accepted into the full rabbinic program. Personal matters, however, compelled her to withdraw from the course a year short of her ordination. To this day, it remains uncertain as to whether Wise intended to ordain her. Lindheim was, however, the first American woman to be granted permission to enroll in a rabbinical course of study.⁴⁹

Temple Israel President Daniel P. Hays, who, in his role as UAHC Board Member had opposed the plan that would have brought JIR within the UAHC-HUC fold, was a friend and admirer of Stephen Wise. Temple Israel's Rabbi Maurice Harris succeeded in persuading Hays to allow the first classes of JIR to be held at the Community Center of Temple Israel, pending the completion the new JIR building on West 68th Street in Manhattan.⁵⁰ Though this building, in addition to housing the Free Synagogue, also contained JIR's faculty and administrative offices, classrooms, chapel and a library, it fell short of matching the more extensive physical facilities of HUC in Cincinnati. JIR continued to share this structure with the Free Synagogue until the erection of a new building following World War II.⁵¹

In its first twenty-two years of existence, JIR graduated one hundred and sixty-five rabbis. Though a number became leaders of Conservative and Orthodox synagogues, many settled into liberal-Reform congregations. Fifty served as chaplains in

⁴⁸ Irma L. Lindheim (1886-1978). American Zionist leader who also served as President of Hadassa from 1926-1928. Widowed in 1928, she emigrated to Palestine with her five children a few years later, joining Kibbutz Mishmar Ha'emek (Harold U Ribalow, *Autobiographies of American Jews*, Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1973), p. 420.

⁴⁹ Gary P. Zola, "Twenty Years of Women in the Rabbinate: An Introductory Essay," in *Women Rabbis: Exploration & Celebration: Papers Delivered at an Academic Conference Honoring Twenty Years of Women in the Rabbinate, 1972-1992*, Gary P. Zola, Editor (Cincinnati, New York, Los Angeles, Jerusalem: HUC-JIR Rabbinic Alumni Association Press, 1996), p. 3.

⁵⁰ Newman to I.S. Meyer, 8 April 1969, Box 9, Folder 2, LINP.

⁵¹ Meyer, *HUC-JIR*, p. 157.

the American Armed Forces during World War Two, while fifteen devoted their careers to Hillel organizations. In addition to its rabbinic program, JIR offered courses to the general public. A publishing arm, the JIR Press, was established in order to produce material of a scholarly nature.⁵²

During the nearly two decades that passed prior to the renewal of formal negotiations of a merger, JIR continued as an independent rabbinic school, drawing students from different streams of Judaism, all of whom were devoted to the idea of *K'lal Yisrael*. In 1926, the Institute graduated its first class of rabbis. These ten men were “graduated” rather than “ordained.” The word “ordination” was not used in the formula spoken by Wise, who preferred to call the culmination of the JIR rabbinical program a “commencement.”⁵³ During the Depression years, Wise struggled to maintain the stability of the school. Financial circumstances were precarious. Both JIR and HUC had to cope with a supply of Reform rabbis that exceeded the number of available pulpits.⁵⁴ HUC also continued to reject both political Zionism and the “religious liberalism” of JIR.⁵⁵ HUC Board members held the New York school in disdain, and maintained a cool attitude towards its accomplishments.⁵⁶ In 1923, HUC President Julian Morgenstern turned down the idea of a faculty exchange with JIR, insisting that no parity existed

⁵² *Jewish Institute of Religion* (brochure).

⁵³ The formula in 1930 was: “By virtue of the authority vested in me by the Board of Trustees of the Jewish Institute of Religion, and with the concurrence of the faculty, I herewith confer upon you the degree of Master of Hebrew Literature and Rabbi and admit you to all the rights and privileges pertaining thereunto,” in Meyer, *HUC-JIR*, p. 159.

⁵⁴ The situation brought about a conference of representatives of HUC, JIR, JTS, CCAR and RA held in New York on 23 June 1930, Box 1472, AJA, in Meyer, *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁵⁵ By the 1930s, many in the Reform movement were deeply sympathetic to Zionism, but Cincinnati was still the center of classical Reform, to which Zionism was anathema, in Jonathan M. Brown and Lawrence Kutler, *Nelson Glueck: Biblical Archaeologist and President of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion* (Cincinnati: HUC Press, 2006), p. 126.

⁵⁶ Brown and Kutler, p. 125.

between the two institutions.⁵⁷ There remained, however, calls from throughout the American Reform community for a merger of the schools. In 1929, Walter Hilborn of the JIR Board of Trustees offered a resolution calling for greater co-operation among the Union, HUC and JIR. These discussions faltered when the three organizations failed to agree on the issue of limiting enrollment so as not to create a surplus of rabbis.⁵⁸ In 1932, Rabbi Emeritus Tobias Schanfarber of the KAM Temple of Chicago went as far as to suggest a merger of four schools: JIR, HUC, the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Yeshiva of New York and the Theological Seminary of Chicago. According to Schanfarber, "one theological seminary, representing each phase of Jewish thought, is sufficient."⁵⁹

In the late 1930s, CCAR President Rabbi James Heller of Cincinnati - like Wise, a confirmed Zionist - served as an intermediary in renewed talks between HUC and JIR. In 1941, a Joint Committee was established consisting of ten members, five from each school. The committee's purpose was to consider the details that might effect a merger: legal arrangements, faculty, budget, libraries, alumni associations, curriculum and the role of the President. One of the initial proposals was that students from each school take one or two years of courses at the other school; but this idea was fraught with logistical difficulties, one being that not every student, depending on his strengths, would be permitted to complete the program where he began. At the Joint Committee's meeting in June of 1941, Wise, fearing any proposal that might lead to the dissolution of JIR, refused to consider any suggestion wherein students would not be permitted to undertake part of their studies in New York. In a letter to HUC President Julian Morgenstern, Wise wrote:

⁵⁷ Faculty Minutes, Jewish Institute of Religion, 8 November 1923; Board of Trustees file, Box 1509, AJA, in Meyer, *HUC-JIR*, p. 164.

⁵⁸ Wise, "Report of Committee on Co-operation between the UAHC, HUC and the JIR," 4 June 1930 and Wise to Julian Mack, 5 June 1930, Box 1484, AJA, in Meyer, *HUC-JIR*, p. 165.

⁵⁹ *The American Israelite*, 25 August, 1932.

"The Institute naturally wishes to be assured that in any merger of the institutions part of the course of study of the merged institutions will continue to be held in New York."⁶⁰

To JIR alumnus Rabbi Morton Berman of Chicago, Wise added "We feel it would be a crime against one-sixth of the world's Jewry, or more, which lives within fifty miles of the Institute, to surrender the field wholly to the [Jewish Theological] Seminary and its largely baleful influence upon American Jewry."⁶¹ In a letter to Walter Hilborn, Wise wrote: "The merger seems possible but not quite probable, because we will not yield the right to maintain a branch of the merged seminaries in New York, where it is desperately needed."⁶²

In spite of Wise's concerns, tentative plans to combine the schools proceeded to be drawn up. Beginning in 1942, HUC aligned itself with JIR in that it no longer matriculated undergraduates. Henceforth all applicants to the Cincinnati school had to possess a college degree. Following three years of integration, HUC officially became a graduate school in 1945. The Joint Committee then decided that all students would undertake one continuous course of instruction, part of which was to be studied in each city. After five years of "observance"⁶³ by the combined school's Board and administrators, a decision would be rendered as to whether students could complete their entire program in one city. Cincinnati was cited for its advantageous physical plant and library. New York, meanwhile, was unique in the abundant opportunities it offered for congregational, educational and communal work experience. Among the names considered for the merged institutions were: "The Hebrew Union College, An Institute of

⁶⁰ Wise to Julian Morgenstern. 8 April 1941. Box 1 Folder 2. MORTON BERMAN PAPERS American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio (hereafter "MBP").

⁶¹ Wise to Morton Berman (hereafter "Berman"). 2 May 1941, Box 19, Folder 1, JIRP.

⁶² Wise to Walter Hilborn, 18 July 1941, Ibid.

⁶³ Document, Box 19, Folder 1, JIRP.

Religion; Union College, A Jewish Institute of Religion; The Hebrew Union of Religion and The Hebrew Union Institute of Religion.⁶⁴

Difficulties pertaining to a complete merger continued to arise. Wise insisted on the need for balanced representation on the new school's Governing Board and also called for the establishment of a Joint Placement Committee with fair and equal treatment for new rabbis, regardless of where they were ordained. Wise also expressed his concern over sharing the role of President with Julian Morgenstern. The two men differed sharply on the Zionist issue, Morgenstern having signed a declaration of "non-Zionist rabbis" in June of 1942.⁶⁵ As well, Morgenstern had previously issued a "revised text" of the merger proposal that included the words: "Inasmuch as the investment of the Hebrew Union College in land, in buildings, in library, is considerably greater, and its facilities measurably better, it shall be understood that the merged institution shall be located in Cincinnati."⁶⁶ To James Heller, Wise wrote:

You can see for yourself that as sharers of the leadership of the merged institutions we would be in fundamental conflict with each other. Whether the two schools were merged into one institution, or continued as two in any form of union, what he [Morgenstern] and I would say would be in clearest contradiction to each other with respect to the basic things of Jewish life.⁶⁷

To both Heller and Morton Berman Wise stated firmly, "While I live, the Institute will not leave New York. It would mean the abandonment of the guidance of more than two million Jews to the care of the [Jewish Theological] Seminary, which is the theological

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Wise to James Heller, 28 December 1942. Box 1484 AJA, in Meyer, *HUC-JIR*, p. 167.

⁶⁶ Julian Morgenstern to Wise, 7 February 1941, Ibid, p. 166.

⁶⁷ Wise to James Heller (hereafter "Heller"). Ibid.

stooge of the assimilationist American Jewish Committee.”⁶⁸ In early 1943, Wise advised Heller to terminate, “for the present,” negotiations with HUC.⁶⁹ For the next four years Wise directed his energies towards strengthening JIR both financially and academically.

Upon his election as President of HUC in 1947, Nelson Glueck almost immediately undertook to re-effect a merger with JIR. Writing to Wise following his inauguration, Glueck stated: “A great task has been entrusted to me. I count on your help. I hope that our two institutions can unite to labor mightily for our single task.”⁷⁰ In May of 1948, a discussion took place involving Wise, Dean Henry Slonimsky and Board Chairman Judge Joseph Levine representing JIR, along with Glueck, Lester Jaffee and Frank L. Weil of HUC, the result of which was the decision to create a Combined Board devoted to completing a merger. Joint committees were struck to oversee the issues of management, finance and academics. On June 7, 1948 the Combined Board issued the following statement:

The Hebrew Union College and Jewish Institute of Religion resolve to unite for the strengthening and advancement of Judaism in America and throughout the world. The right to serve the Jewish people in its entirety (*K'lal Yisrael*) with freedom for faculty and students alike. This united institution shall continue to maintain schools in Cincinnati and New York, with Nelson Glueck as President and Stephen S. Wise and Julian Morgenstern as Presidents Emeriti. Upon this union we evoke the blessing of God.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Wise to Berman, 28 March 1941, Box 1484 AJA, in Meyer, p. 166.

⁶⁹ Wise to Heller, 11 January 1943, Box 19, Folder 1, JIRP.

⁷⁰ Nelson Glueck (hereafter “Glueck”) to Wise, 16 May 1947, in Brown and Kutler, p. 126.

⁷¹ Combined Board Statement, 7 June 1948, Box 19, Folder 1, JIRP.

A press release issued ten days later announced, “the new enlarged seminary will be known as Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.”⁷² Included in the release were the following words by Nelson Glueck:

This great event creates unity in the ranks of Liberal Judaism in America through the medium of this greatly enlarged and strengthened seminary...I pray that God give me strength to face the tasks that lie ahead and wisdom to steer this great institution so that it may bring blessing to our faith, to America, and to the world.⁷³

Representatives from the New York School had insisted that the word “Liberal” replace “Reform” on the press release. HUC readily agreed to this change, instructing its public relations staff that “wherever the word ‘Reform’ occurs in the story [of the merged seminaries], please delete that word and substitute the word ‘Liberal.’” In eschewing a denominational label, Wise hoped to advance his idea of a single and newly-enlarged seminary that would serve all the Jewish people, rather than confining itself to any narrow definition of American Jewry. Wise wrote to Glueck:

...where, heretofore in the literature and the releases of the Hebrew Union College and its leaders, the terms “reform” and “reform Judaism” were used, there be hereafter substituted for “reform” the term “liberal.” This is fitting not only because of your and my understanding, but because of the term “*K’lal Yisrael*,” which makes the use of the term “reform” rather unfitting. “Liberal” is a less-divisive term than “reform.” It is less partisan. “*K’lal Yisrael*” should be “liberal.”⁷⁴

In June of 1948, the *New York Times* announced the merger, “to unite for the strengthening and advancement of Judaism in America and throughout the world.”⁷⁵

⁷² Press Release, 17 June 1948, p. 1, Ibid.

⁷³ pp. 2-3, Ibid.

⁷⁴ Wise to Glueck. 15 June 1948. Box 19, Folder 1. JIRP.

Louis Finklestein, President of the Jewish Theological Seminary wrote to Wise, "The merger of HUC with JIR should be of the greatest importance not only for the Jewish, but for the general community."⁷⁶ Julian Morgenstern, writing in the *HUC-JIR Bulletin*, called the merger "A source of immeasurable gratification to all understanding and devoted adherents of American Judaism."⁷⁷ In October of 1948, seven months after his inauguration as HUC President, Glueck was similarly installed as President of JIR. Wise called on his successor to make JIR "an ever increasingly effective instrument, conjoined with the [Hebrew Union] College in the strengthening and advancement of Judaism in America and throughout the world."⁷⁸

On April 19, 1949, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise died. Though the merger of HUC and JIR had been approved in principle, Wise did not live to see the fruits of this union effectively carried through. To others, Rabbis Edward Klein of the Free Synagogue, Jacob Rudin of Great Neck, New York, Morton Berman of Chicago, Solomon Freehof of Pittsburgh, Nelson Glueck of Cincinnati, and - in a crucial way, Louis Newman - fell the arduous and emotional task of dealing with the birth pangs of what became Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Edward Klein, Wise's successor at the Free Synagogue, was an alumnus of JIR, as were Rudin and Berman. All three had carried forward much of the Free Synagogue's program into their own ministries.⁷⁹ Freehof, a graduate of HUC who became a foremost author of Reform responsa, was a friend of Nelson Glueck. During the next seven years, these men played important roles in the

⁷⁵ "Two Schools Merge." New York Times. 17 June 1948 (no page number). Box A4-1. HUC-JIRP.

⁷⁶ Louis Finklestein to Wise. 17 June 1948. Ibid.

⁷⁷ *HUC-JIR BULLETIN*, October 1948 (no page number). Box 5. Folder 15, JULIAN MORGENSTERN PAPERS, AJA.

⁷⁸ *HUC-JIR BULLETIN*, November 1948 (no page number) Box 19, Folder 1, JIRP.

⁷⁹ *Free Synagogue, Fiftieth Anniversary Brochure*.

struggle to preserve the integrity of both schools, and facilitate a union that was vital to the future of American Reform Jewry.

In January of 1950, the respective Boards of HUC and JIR officially approved the consolidation agreement and the two institutions became one. JIR expanded its rabbinic curriculum from four to five years, while HUC reduced its own course of study from six years to five. Richard Bluestein, assistant to Nelson Glueck, was placed in charge of overseeing the affairs of the New York School. What followed has been described as an “uneasy but amicable period of adjustment.”⁸⁰ Nelson Glueck only occasionally visited the New York campus, but expressed little desire to expand or even maintain New York’s existing status.⁸¹ As Glueck saw it, Cincinnati, the site of American Reform’s roots, would be the combined institution’s “primary” campus, while JIR would serve as a “subsidiary” location.⁸² In 1951, Glueck sent letters to the second-year students in New York informing them of their mandatory transfer to Cincinnati for their third, fourth and fifth years. Two of these transfer students were future HUC-JIR President Alfred Gottschalk and Professor of History Stanley Chyet. Both, apparently, arrived in Cincinnati carrying considerable bitterness over their forced move from New York.⁸³ Glueck’s program mandated that students would be ordained and receive a Bachelor of Hebrew Letters exclusively in Cincinnati upon successfully completing the fifth year. No student was permitted to accept a permanent pulpit until a diploma was conferred following the conclusion of a sixth, or “intern” year to be offered in New York. Only after finishing this required intern year did one receive the Master of Hebrew Letters

⁸⁰ Meyer, *Ibid*, p. 185.

⁸¹ *Ibid*.

⁸² Brown and Kutler, p. 127.

⁸³ Isaac Jerusalmi, Interview with Tepper, 12 December 2007.

degree and the title of Rabbi.⁸⁴ According to Glueck, New York would provide the “basics” as well as the internship year, while Cincinnati would offer the more advanced studies and the right to conduct ordination. Financial considerations weighed heavily in Glueck’s thinking; duplication needed to be eliminated and a role for New York had to be preserved. The center of rabbinic training for the Reform Movement was to remain in Cincinnati. By 1952, New York had only two full-time faculty members, John Tepfer in History and Talmud, Harry Orlinsky in Bible, as well as longtime Dean and Professor Henry Slonimsky. Whereas both the budget and enrollment increased in Cincinnati, the same figures were reduced in New York.⁸⁵

In the fall of 1951, Newman wrote to Glueck expressing his concern over the low number of candidates accepted to the New York campus in comparison to Cincinnati. Newman requested that an effort be made to stimulate enrollment in New York.⁸⁶ Glueck defended the numbers, explaining that the majority of those accepted to Cincinnati, were “specials” that lacked a strong background in Hebrew and would require appropriate tutoring prior to beginning the regular academic course.⁸⁷ In spite of Glueck’s reply, Newman, at the same time, sent a form letter to JIR alumni accusing Glueck of embarking on a “campaign of attrition” against JIR. This letter was mailed even after Glueck agreed to meet with Newman to discuss the development of the merger.⁸⁸ In his column “Telling It In Gath,” Newman wrote that Stephen Wise “did not envisage the gradual attrition of his institution.” Since the UAHC headquarters had

⁸⁴ Newman, *A Mistaken, Unworkable And Injurious Plan: An Analysis of the “Unification Plan” for the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion*, 1953. (hereafter *Unification Plan*), p. 4.

⁸⁵ HUC-JIR Board of Governors Minutes, 14 May 1952, Appendix D, in Meyer, *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁸⁶ Newman to Glueck, 14 November 1951. Box A4-2. HUC-JIRP.

⁸⁷ Glueck to Newman, 21 November 1951. *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Glueck to Frank Weil, 30 November 1951. *Ibid.*

recently moved to New York from Cincinnati, "one would think that the JIR would gain new attention – but the opposite is the case."⁸⁹ To Glueck's assistant, Richard Bluestein, Newman wrote:

There is an ever-growing group of supporters of the UAHC and the HUC-JIR in Greater New York, who desire enlargement of the program of the HUC-JIR with appropriate provision for the New York School... It is clear, of course, that these friends of the New York School wish to retain a complete Rabbinic training school in New York City, giving *Semikah*, [ordination] holding commencements here, and developing its program with respect to student enrollment, faculty personnel, administration and resources...the intention and terms of the merger did not envisage the reduction of the Jewish Institute of Religion to a mere skeleton.⁹⁰

On March 26, 1953, the HUC-JIR Board of Governors approved Glueck's blueprint for the future of the combined school, known as the "Unification Plan," by a vote of thirty-five to eight. Opponents, without exception, were either lay members from the New York area or rabbinical members who had graduated from JIR. The Unification Plan, in essence described the "major and indispensable functions assigned to each of the two branches," along with reducing "to the greatest possible extent duplication of efforts and expenditures."⁹¹ For Glueck, merger meant "one single institution, whose rabbinic training program would be contained within one student body, one faculty, one curriculum, one ordination and graduation."⁹² In describing the division of time to be spent by students in New York and Cincinnati, Glueck stated: "Our program represents a

⁸⁹ Newman, "Telling it in Gath," *The Scribe*, April 1952. Ibid.

⁹⁰ Newman to Richard Bluestein. 7 November 1952. Ibid.

⁹¹ Glueck, "The Present and Future of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion." Read at Meeting of the Central Conference of American Rabbis at Estes Park, Colorado, 24 June 1953. Reprinted From *CCAR Yearbook*, Volume LXIII. Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1953. Box 1. Folder 3, p. 1. MBP.

⁹² Ibid, p. 2.

realistic division of work which accomplishes our mandated objective of a single school, graduating classes of the same training and single loyalties to one Alma Mater.”⁹³ To his credit, Glueck added, “Time and experience, I repeat, may well indicate the necessity of modification and changes.”⁹⁴

Response to the vote – and the details of the Unification Plan – was swift. Despite both Glueck’s and UAHC President Maurice Eisendrath’s defense of the plan, the CCAR resented not having been consulted. Both the Federation of Reform Synagogues of Greater New York and the New York Association of Reform Rabbis passed resolutions calling for a deferment of the plan until it could be further studied. The Federation objected to plans for transferring students from New York to Cincinnati for three years as well as removing New York’s right to ordain rabbis.⁹⁵ Having witnessed significant growth in the number of Reform congregations in the New York area, these organizations feared that reducing the stature of JIR would impede further expansion of the Reform Jewish community. New congregations would be deprived of rabbinic students to meet their needs.⁹⁶ Even prior to the release of the Unification Plan, the second-year class in New York had refused to abide by Glueck’s ruling that it move to Cincinnati for its third, fourth and fifth years of study. The class stood firm in its response, and Glueck was forced to give in to the men’s wish to complete their entire course in New York.

⁹³ Ibid, p. 7.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ “Resolution to be offered at meeting of the Assembly of Delegates of the Federation of Reform Synagogues.” 19 October 1953. Box A4-2, HUC-JIRP.

⁹⁶ *Hebrew Union School of Education and Sacred Music, Third Anniversary Report, 1947-1950*, in Meyer, Ibid, p. 188.

The 1953 correspondence involving Rabbis Newman, Berman, Rudin and Klein, leading up to the publication of *The Case Against The "Unification Plan" Regarding The Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion*, reflected the tension, anxiety and determination on the part of the opposing groups – Glueck and his supporters on the HUC-JIR Board, and JIR alumni led by Newman. The tone of these letters is indicative of the strong passions these men felt for American Reform Judaism and their role as its leaders. To Rudin, Berman, who served as a JIR representative in the merger negotiations, wrote:

I finally had to say to them [the HUC-JIR Board of Governors] that what they proposed will reduce the Institute to a hollow shell...I have tried to point out to them, as you have done before, that we [JIR alumni] are not dictated by sentiment, but by what a New York school meant to Wise and to all of us in the light of its location in the largest Jewish community in the world. Frankly, I don't think this means too much to them.⁹⁷

Rudin responded, "We must make him [Glueck] see that it is the future of Reform Judaism which is involved, not merely the sentiment of a few fellows for their school and its founder."⁹⁸ Following the vote approving the Unification Plan Berman wrote Newman, "Your worst premonitions have come to pass...It is a dismal end to a great dream."⁹⁹ But having up until this point allowed JIR alumni, of which he was not an actual member, to engage in the struggle to maintain Wise's seminary, Newman now proceeded to gather the resources with which to halt the implementation of the

⁹⁷ Berman to Jacob Rudin (hereafter "Rudin"). 15 January 1953. Box 1, Folder 3. MBP.

⁹⁸ Rudin to Berman. 19 February 1953. Ibid.

⁹⁹ Berman to Newman. 10 April 1953. Ibid.

Unification Plan. Newman was angry with Berman, Rudin and Klein at having not been fully apprised of the Unification Plan's ramifications. The implication is that Newman did not entirely foresee the manner in which the New York school would be gradually dissembled. Yet, he urged the JIR alumni to begin to work "unitedly to defeat the new unification plans – or at least not to allow them to be imposed by our default."¹⁰⁰ To Rabbi Philip Bernstein of Rochester, New York, Newman wrote:

While it is true that Glueck has permitted the second-year men to remain in New York for their entire study and ordination, nevertheless, we believe he will not allow himself to be deterred by anybody or any group in carrying the [Unification] plan forward with reference to the men in the other classes, including incoming students.¹⁰¹

Among the colleagues with whom Newman sharply differed regarding the Unification Plan was Rabbi Abraham J. Feldman of Hartford, Connecticut. Newman chastised Feldman for affixing his signature to the Unification Plan. Though ordained at HUC, Feldman began his career in the 1920s working with Wise and Newman at the Free Synagogue. In Newman's eyes, Feldman's approval of the Unification Plan was an act of betrayal: "You of all persons should be aware of the true situation with reference to Dr. Wise's work, and you should have been the last person to have linked yourself with any effort to diminish or destroy it."¹⁰² Troubled by what he considered Newman's effrontery, Feldman responded: "...the principle of the merger, of unification, is in my judgment sound, even if some modifications of the plan might be made and I think should

¹⁰⁰ Newman to Edward Klein, 23 April 1953. Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Newman to Philip Bernstein, 5 June 1953. Ibid.

¹⁰² Newman to Abraham Feldman, 26 June 1953. Box 27, Folder 13, ABRAHAM FELDMAN PAPERS, AJA.

be made. What gives you the right to speak – or write – to a colleague in that manner?”¹⁰³

In May of 1953, Newman and Rodeph Sholom’s Board of Trustees issued a resolution criticizing the Unification Plan, declaring that such an undertaking would turn JIR into a “mere preparatory school” while reducing the number of men available to serve congregations in the Greater New York area. Newman and his Board called on the HUC-JIR leadership to “provide facilities for study and ordination for the liberal or Reform Rabbinate in this great center of the Jewish population and community life.”¹⁰⁴ In his column for the *Temple Sinai Bulletin*, a text that was reprinted in the *Rodeph Sholom Chronicle*, Newman’s colleague Rabbi Abram Vossen Goodman of Lawrence, New York added, “It [the Unification Plan] means that Reform Judaism no longer cares to contribute to the intellectual life of New York, the greatest Jewish center in the world. It is an act of abdication from the field of Jewish culture in favor of the Jewish Theological Seminary.”¹⁰⁵

Aware of the forces opposing his plan, Nelson Glueck addressed the New York Federation of Reform Synagogues in May of 1953. He reiterated the need to avoid duplication in rabbinic training and make maximum use of the available physical facilities. He called on his colleagues to “make the intern part of our sixth year program so completely effective that no rabbi will ever come out of our school lacking the training and skill for magnificent congregational achievement.”¹⁰⁶ Glueck acknowledged the vital

¹⁰³ Abraham Feldman to Newman, 29 June 1953. Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ “Text of Resolution, Board of Trustees of Congregation Rodeph Sholom,” 13 May 1953. Box 1, Folder 3, MBP.

¹⁰⁵ Abram Vossen Goodman, “A Crisis In Reform Judaism,” *Temple Sinai Bulletin*, 26 May 1953. Lawrence, New York.

¹⁰⁶ Glueck to New York Federation of Reform Synagogues, 25 May 1953, Box 1, Folder 3, MBP.

role to be played by the New York Jewish community in continuing to support JIR, but also expressed his opposition to the amount of time New York students spent in congregational work. Such endeavors were to be scaled back so that students could devote more time to classroom studies.

Newman persevered in his campaign to defeat, or at least modify, the Unification Plan. To Rabbi Sidney Goldstein of the Free Synagogue Newman wrote, "Every attempt to upbuild the New York School has been directly or indirectly opposed by President Glueck and those who go along with him."¹⁰⁷ To Rabbi Philip Bernstein, Newman described how JIR's stature had been adversely affected by Glueck's plan: a diminished faculty, reduced resources, a "high-handed and undemocratic" management style and an institutional morale that was by now "grievously impaired." Newman offered constructive suggestions for preserving the role of JIR:

...the New York School [must] be maintained in accordance with the standards of the New York State Committee on Higher Education, which entirely without any stimulus on our part, has been investigating the JIR and its inadequate administration. There should be a Provost at the School, a Dean, a satisfactory faculty, a larger number of New York people on the Administrative Committee, a provision for local authority with the JIR, which has a charter from New York State, the Education Investigators of which are not, we are told, satisfied with the absentee leadership and remote control which now prevails."¹⁰⁸

In the same letter, Newman expressed his determination to see the campaign against the Unification Plan succeed: "As long as I can keep my health and strength, and be undeterred by the vexations that are inevitable in such a struggle, I intend to stay by the

¹⁰⁷ Newman to Sidney Goldstein. 3 June 1953. Box 1, Folder 3, MBP.

¹⁰⁸ Newman to Philip Bernstein. 5 June 1953. Ibid.

matter until JIR has the position in New York and American Jewish life it deserves."¹⁰⁹

This statement reflected Newman's total determination to save JIR. Remarkably, it echoed Wise's declaration of ten years earlier: "While I live, the Institute shall not leave new York."¹¹⁰ Newman's total devotion to restoring the New York school is consistent with his battles involving *The King of Kings*, Zionism, the Revisionists and the American Council for Judaism. Newman suggested to Bernstein that, should efforts to defeat the Unification Plan fail, a new rabbinical school would be established under the auspices of the Free Synagogue, Rodeph Sholom or the JIR building itself.¹¹¹

Efforts on the part of Newman and JIR alumni to defeat the merger were strengthened with the publication, in June of 1953, of *The Case Against The "Unification Plan" Regarding The Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion*. This twenty-page document contained remarks by Rabbi Edward Klein, a thirteen-page critique of the Unification Plan by Newman, a reprint of the *Temple Sinai Bulletin* column by Rabbi Abram Vossen Goodman and the texts of resolutions opposing the plan by the Stephen S. Wise Free Synagogue, the Board of Directors of Temple Isaiah of Chicago [Rabbi Morton Berman's congregation], the Rodeph Sholom Board of Trustees, the Flushing Free Synagogue of New York, the New York Association of Reform Rabbis and Federation of Reform Synagogues of Greater New York.

In his introductory remarks, Klein stressed the importance of a united school, with a single faculty and president, situated in the "two great centers" of Cincinnati and New York. Klein reiterated the need for a full rabbinical program in New York. Prospective students, knowing that they must uproot after two years in New York and then again

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ See p. 81 of Thesis.

¹¹¹ Newman to Bernstein, Ibid.

following their required three years in Cincinnati, would be discouraged from applying. These students, in their desire to study and be ordained in New York, would be drawn to the Jewish Theological Seminary instead. Klein added, "It is clear that Dr. Wise did not have in mind a "prep" school, and an interneer arrangement ministering to more than a quarter of the ten million Jews on earth."¹¹²

Newman's extensive text, entitled *A Mistaken, Unworkable And Injurious Plan: An Analysis of the "Unification Plan" for the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion*, argued for the preservation of a full rabbinic school in New York City, and critiqued the entire Unification Plan point by point. He began by calling Glueck to task, accusing the HUC-JIR President of violating the assurance given to Wise of maintaining a meaningful New York program through the forced transfer of students to Cincinnati and the subsequent move back to New York for a sixth, or "intern" year.¹¹³ Newman objected to the overall tone of the plan, calling it a "program of compulsion" within which such words as "mandatory" and "exclusively" dominated.¹¹⁴ The move of the UAHC offices from Cincinnati to New York, in addition to the increasing number of Reform congregations in the New York area made it "all the more necessary to maintain at full strength a New York school."¹¹⁵ In response to HUC's duplication concerns Newman wrote that new and sufficient funds to support JIR could be secured in the Greater New York area. He charged the HUC leadership with undertaking "scarcely any attempt to build up the goodwill towards the New York school by [holding more local] personal appearances and private functions." Bereft of a Dean, Provost and Registrar,

¹¹² Newman, *Unification Plan*, p.1.

¹¹³ Ibid, p. 4.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 5.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p. 6.

and run by an on-site administration that was limited to overseeing minor technical concerns, JIR had been reduced to an operation run by “remote control” from Cincinnati.¹¹⁶

Newman took particular aim at the required sixth, or “intern” year in New York: “Would ordained rabbis be willing to move to New York for a one-year ‘internship,’ knowing they will undoubtedly be expected to ‘move along’ elsewhere at the completion of the year?”¹¹⁷ Responding to the fear that an unhealthy rivalry would exist between two full rabbinical schools, Newman pointed to the Hebrew words *kinat soferim*, or “wholesome competition” for the sake of learning that was well-known in Jewish tradition.¹¹⁸ To those concerned over the lack of available scholars to teach at two schools Newman recalled Wise’s skill in securing the services of teachers at JIR, both in the United States and abroad. Encouragement would also be given to newly-ordained rabbis to pursue academic careers, while funds for establishing chairs in scholarly disciplines could be readily found in the New York area.¹¹⁹

In a conciliatory turn, Newman stressed that opponents of the Unification Plan did not intend that the Cincinnati campus alter its own program or reduce its resources. There need not be any fear that with expansion in New York and, in all likelihood, to the West Coast, insufficient use would be made of the Cincinnati facilities. Rather, the leadership in Cincinnati should look to the growth of Reform Judaism throughout the United States. The recent UAHC Biennial in New York had resulted in the largest number of delegates ever. The presence of a Liberal-Reform seminary in New York,

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 7.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 11.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 12.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 13.

complementing the UAHC's "House of Living Judaism" would benefit the entire Reform Movement. It was "incredible," Newman claimed, that at this moment of growth Cincinnati would be permitted to expand while New York was to be diminished.¹²⁰

In calling for a "truly democratic consultation," Newman challenged the framers of the Unification Plan to heed the concerns of the CCAR, alumni, the UAHC and the New York Federation of Reform Synagogues, each of which possessed a vital stake in the future of JIR. In pointing to the outstanding achievement of HUC over its first eighty years and JIR in its first thirty, Newman wrote:

We congratulate ourselves in Reform Judaism that we have a citadel of Jewish learning in the Middle West, and another in New York with its abundant resources... following the violent destruction of European seminaries, we should be creating and expanding our own American Jewish scholarly institutions.¹²¹

Newman distributed copies of *The Case Against The Unification Plan* to all CCAR members prior to their annual Convention in Estes Park, Colorado in June of 1953. Unable to attend the Convention himself, Newman's arguments, and those of others opposing the plan, were presented by Rabbis Berman and Rudin.

By 1954, Glueck and the HUC-JIR Board had yet to make any substantial changes to the Unification Plan. JIR alumnus Paul M. Steinberg was installed as Dean of the New York campus and Director of its School of Sacred Music. Hebrew Scholar and HUC alumnus Ezra Spicehandler had joined the New York faculty in 1951 as instructor

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 15.

¹²¹ Ibid, p. 16.

in Hebrew.¹²² But the school's teaching staff remained inadequate for a complete program leading to ordination. In both 1954 and 1955 Glueck followed through with his plans to shift students to Cincinnati after completing their second year of studies in New York.¹²³ Rebellion among New York students grew as JIR began to take the shape of a "feeder school" for Cincinnati. In the words of one Cincinnati rabbinical student at the time, the New York school was "dying."¹²⁴ A letter to Glueck signed by New York students Irwin Lowenheim, Sheldon Lilker, Charles G. Agin, Jerry Pine, Louis Stein and Joel S. Goor expressed a desire to maintain their program on the East coast, emphasizing the "familial and economic aspects for all of us which impel us to express our deep wish that we able to complete our studies in New York."¹²⁵ At the same time, an undated resolution signed by the "Student Body" of Cincinnati expressed its opposition at having to transfer to New York for the sixth year internship: "The prospect of moving between Cincinnati and New York will inflict extreme hardship on both married and unmarried students...the current situation in the New York area makes it clearly evident that there will not be a sufficient number of congregations for all the interns."¹²⁶

In anticipation of Cincinnati's negative response to its opponents' proposals, Newman began formulating plans to establish a new seminary for Liberal Rabbis in New York. In 1955, a press release was issued announcing the opening of this seminary, the Academy for Liberal Judaism. With its headquarters at Congregation Rodeph Sholom the Academy would "make possible the training and ordination of Liberal Rabbis in a full

¹²² Ezra Spicehandler, "My Life of Jewish Learning and My Faith in the Jewish Renaissance (excerpts)," *CCAR Journal*, Spring 2003, p. 10.

¹²³ Meyer, *Ibid*, p. 188.

¹²⁴ Isaac Jerusalemi Interview, *Ibid*.

¹²⁵ Lowenheim, et al. Letter to Glueck. 30 November 1955. Merger File. Box A4-2. HUC-JIRP.

¹²⁶ *Resolution of the Student Body*, HUC-JIR Cincinnati, Undated. *Ibid*.

four-year post-graduate course in the great laboratory of New York Jewish religious and community life."¹²⁷ In determining the eligibility of candidates, the Academy's rabbinical and lay leadership would consider "academic and prior Rabbinical training, if any, as well as other factors bearing upon [one's] suitability for the Rabbinate."¹²⁸ With this statement, the Academy indirectly expressed its intention to admit all or most of the current New York students, drawing them away from HUC-JIR. Once accepted into the course, these students would be encouraged to participate in education and social service field work in addition to practical work in synagogue leadership; in essence, perpetuating the ideals of both the Free Synagogue and Wise's original seminary. The Academy, stated Newman, "restores to the New York Liberal Jewish Community the right to train and ordain Rabbis which it held from 1922 to 1953, but which was recently removed from it."¹²⁹ The press release also informed the public of a recruitment drive underway throughout American colleges, universities and synagogues as well as the establishment of a library through gifts received "from a number of scholars and patrons in the field of Jewish religious learning."¹³⁰

An invitation to the "Service of Dedication Inaugurating Its First Academic Year," listed Newman as "Director of the Academy," along with faculty members Cyrus Gordon [Biblical Civilization], Moses Hadas [Hellenistic History and Literature] and David Neiman [Bible and Mishna]. Rabbi Edward Klein was to teach Practical Rabbinics, Newman was to instruct Homiletics, while Rodeph Sholom's Cantor Gunter Hirschberg and Max Feder would lead classes in Music and Liturgy, and Synagogue

¹²⁷ Press Release, 18 October 1955. Box 9, Folder 1. LINP

¹²⁸ *Rabbinical Tutorial Program*, Undated. Newman File. Box A4-2. HUC-JIRP.

¹²⁹ Press Release, Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

Administration respectively. Officers of the Academy included Jacob S. Manheimer, a former President of Rodeph Sholom, and Ira Frank, President of the Stephen S. Wise Free Synagogue.¹³¹

The JIR alumni, who only a few months earlier had been Newman's allies in the fight against the Unification Plan – and ironically, to whom Newman had used the word “unitedly” in describing the coming struggle – now objected strongly to the idea of another seminary in New York City to replace JIR. When apprised of Newman's plans, Morton Berman wrote to Jacob Rudin of the “inestimable damage it [Newman's proposed new school] would bring to the Liberal Movement.” In a remark that aptly describes Newman's combative nature, Berman added: I have written Louis Newman that he cannot count on me to join him in starting a new school. He will probably charge me with treason but this will not be new...”¹³² Rudin concurred, replying that “As strongly as I dislike what has happened to the [HUC-JIR] merger, even more strongly would I object to the creation of another rabbinical school whose existence can only create conflict and divisiveness of a very damaging kind.”¹³³

The announcement of Newman's Academy for Liberal Judaism compelled the HUC-JIR leadership to reconsider the ramifications of the Unification Plan. Looming on the horizon was a new split between CCAR alumni, job opportunities and funding issues.¹³⁴ As Newman no doubt expected, a number of New York students, rather than move to Cincinnati, left JIR and joined the Academy. Twenty-two students were recruited for the fall session of 1956. HUC-JIR Board member Frank Weil wrote to HUC

¹³¹ *Academy for Liberal Judaism: Service of Dedication*: 16 November 1955. Box 14, Folder 14. LINP.

¹³² Berman to Rudin. 30 October 1953. Box 1, Folder 3. MBP.

¹³³ Rudin to Berman. 4 November 1953. Ibid.

¹³⁴ Jacob R. Marcus to Glueck. 28 December 1955, 23 February 1956. Box 516 AJA, in Meyer, Ibid, p. 189.

alumnus Jack Skirball: "Newman has gone ahead and has substantial support, the sole ground being that there should be a large rabbinical seminary in New York City...I am afraid the solution requires the reopening of a complete school in New York."¹³⁵

Pittsburgh's Rabbi Solomon Freehof conveyed similar sentiments to Nelson Glueck:

The local pride of New York has been aroused in this matter and there is enough wealth, in New York, thus aroused, to support this school. Once it graduates four or five classes, then it acquires its own momentum and may continue indefinitely. If this estimate is correct, then the situation slips back to the status that we had before the merger. There will be a separate Reform rabbinical school probably facing us with hostility and rivalry... If that is so, then we would be better off if we had two semi-autonomous schools under your chancellorship, than two rival schools.¹³⁶

Morton Berman, writing to Rabbi Harold Saperstein, described the forces bearing on

Glueck and the HUC-JIR Board:

There has been considerable pressure upon him [Glueck] from some distinguished [HUC] graduates to do something about the matter now before the Liberal Academy becomes too well rooted...I hear reports that the Liberal Academy is moving forward and is bound to threaten the position of the New York School.¹³⁷

In February of 1956, a "newly-constituted Committee on Integration of the Merger" met in New York, within which those for and against the merger were able to speak on the issue. Out of these talks emerged the realization that a diminished JIR

¹³⁵ Frank Weil to Jack Skirball. 7 November 1955. Newman File. Box A4-2. HUC-JIRP.

¹³⁶ Solomon Freehof to Glueck. 2 February 1956. Merger File. Ibid.

¹³⁷ Berman to Harold Saperstein. 22 February 1956. Box 1, Folder 3. MBP.

would mean rabbinic candidates turning to either Newman's Academy for Liberal Judaism or the Jewish Theological Seminary for their training. Adding fuel to the debate was the resolution passed by the second-year New York class scheduled to arrive in Cincinnati in 1956 expressing its refusal to transfer: "The Student Body of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, New York School, refuses to attend the Cincinnati school."¹³⁸

For the HUC-JIR Board and Glueck there was no avoiding the realities that had been presented by Newman's Academy for Liberal Judaism and the revolt of students in both Cincinnati and New York. A new seminary, determined to restore what had been lost through the reduction of JIR's resources, was not an option. On June 1, 1956, HUC-JIR officially returned to its New York School a full five-year rabbinical program. Academy students who met the HUC-JIR academic requirements would be admitted unconditionally, while those who fell short would receive conditional acceptance, with the expectation that in due time the necessary standards would be met. Hopes were restored that the New York school would be "a tower of strength for the service of Liberal Reform Judaism throughout America."¹³⁹ As well, two officers of the Academy, Ira Frank and Henry Hofheimer, were invited to join the HUC-JIR Board of Governors.¹⁴⁰ In August of 1956, a statement was released announcing that, "the monopoly by Cincinnati over the ordination of Reform Rabbis is thus ended, and the

¹³⁸ Student Body, HUC-JIR New York to Glueck. 17 February 1956. Merger File, Box A4-2, HUC-JIRP.

¹³⁹ Ira Frank to Frank Weil. 9 July 1956. Box 3, Folder 5. ROBERT GOLDMAN PAPERS. AJA.

¹⁴⁰ Frank Weil to Ira Frank. 27 June 1956. Ibid.

New York Reform Jewish community “comes of age.”¹⁴¹ In 1958, ordination exercises were fully restored to JIR.¹⁴²

Newman informed Glueck that he wished no recognition, position or title for himself with HUC-JIR. Board member Frank Weil wrote: “We take note with pleasure of Dr. Newman’s assurance recently given us that he is willing to be helpful with reference to the New York School and we shall be most happy indeed to bear this assurance in mind.”¹⁴³ HUC-JIR Librarian and Historian Phillip Miller wrote that “in creating the Academy Newman put himself beyond the pale, even after leaving it when the New York school was fully restored. Nelson Glueck never forgot a slight; and so long as Glueck held the reins, there was no place for Newman anywhere at HUC-JIR.”¹⁴⁴ Newman’s conflict with Glueck “precluded his ever receiving an honorary degree from Hebrew Union College.”¹⁴⁵ An official statement announcing the restoration of JIR left little doubt as to Newman’s status with respects to HUC-JIR.

Now that the great work of Rabbi Stephen S.
Wise, the mentor and teacher of Rabbi Newman,
has been restored, Rabbi Newman will no
longer have any place in the field of Reform
Rabbinic training.¹⁴⁶

The Academy of Liberal Judaism, after just one year of operation, suspended its activity in 1956. Having restored the JIR program to full strength, both Newman and his Dean of Students, Rabbi David Neiman, severed their association with the Academy. To the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York, following the

¹⁴¹ “The Jewish Institute of Religion Restored As A Full School: A Seven-Year Effort Successful,” *Rodeph Sholom Chronicle*, 1 August, 1956. ACADEMY FOR LIBERAL JUDAISM NEARPRINT FILE. AJA.

¹⁴² Meyer, *Ibid*, p. 190.

¹⁴³ Frank Weil to Ira Frank. *Ibid*.

¹⁴⁴ Miller to Tepper. 16 October 2007.

¹⁴⁵ Miller, p. 452.

¹⁴⁶ “The Jewish Institute of Religion Restored...,” *Ibid*.

termination of the Academy's charter, Newman wrote: "Its [the Academy's] creation and work brought about the restoration of the Jewish Institute Religion as a full School with a five-year course and Ordination of Rabbis in New York, under the auspices of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion."¹⁴⁷

Renamed the Academy for Higher Jewish Learning, and since the early 1960s known as the Academy for Jewish Religion, the institution continues today as a center for pluralistic Jewish studies and a "still small voice" in the field of rabbinical training. The school's learning crosses denominational lines and, continuing the vision of JIR founder Stephen Wise, promotes the concept of *K'lal Yisrael*. At both its New York and, since 2000, Los Angeles campuses, the Academy has prepared more than one hundred and twenty-five men and women to serve as spiritual leaders, cantors, educators, chaplains and administrators in Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Renewal and unaffiliated congregational settings throughout the world.¹⁴⁸

The restoration of the New York seminary concluded a crucial and volatile chapter in the history of HUC-JIR and career of Rabbi Louis Newman. The ramifications of Glueck's Unification Plan galvanized Newman's will. According to Alfred Gottschalk, the Academy was a tactic intended to revive and strengthen JIR, and not an end in itself.¹⁴⁹ Michael Meyer writes: "it was the creation of this rival school, more than any other factor, which spelled the doom of the Unification Plan."¹⁵⁰ In assuming the helm left vacant with the passing of Wise, and through his establishment of the Academy,

¹⁴⁷ Newman to Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York. 15 November 1961. Box 9, Folder 1. LINP.

¹⁴⁸ The Academy for Jewish Religion: A Rabbinical and Cantorial School for Klal Yisrael. Website: www.ajrsem.org, December 2006.

¹⁴⁹ Alfred Gottschalk to Tepper 31 January 2008.

¹⁵⁰ Meyer, p. 189.

Newman compelled the HUC-JIR leadership to reconsider its attitude regarding the needs of Reform Jewry in the New York area. Through his role in the preservation of Wise's legacy, Newman won both admiration and derision from his rabbinic colleagues. Few could tolerate the single-mindedness of purpose with which Newman approached his task. Notwithstanding the final outcome, there were those who saw Newman's creation of the Academy as an exacerbation of the problem, rather than a solution. Ultimately, Newman's goal was achieved, Wise's vision was restored, and New York, to this day, retains a liberal seminary as Wise would have hoped, linked together with the resources and tradition of its sister-campus in Cincinnati, Los Angeles and Jerusalem.

An interesting footnote to the story of Newman's involvement in the HUC-JIR merger is that his son Jeremy enrolled there as a rabbinical student in the late 1940s, but withdrew before completing the program, becoming an engineer instead. According to Newman's grandchildren, this fact is indicative of the respect Newman maintained for the institution, in spite of the conflicts created over the merger.¹⁵¹

Shortly after the decision was announced to re-establish New York's full program, Newman received a letter from Wise's daughter, Justine Wise Polier, in which she expressed her gratitude for his efforts in preserving JIR:

I think that what you have achieved through the establishment of the Academy despite all denials that it affected the decision of the HUC-JIR is most noteworthy. I think the courage and determination with which you have tackled this problem forced examination of the issue and caused the organization of public opinion, which in turn demanded the re-establishment of the Institute...my congratulations and admiration for what

¹⁵¹ Saul Newman to Tepper. 28 October 2007.

you have achieved.¹⁵²

¹⁵² Polier, Justine Wise to Newman. 19 June 1956. Box 9, Folder 1. LINP.

Chapter Four

Poet and Playwright

*The Shepherd Psalm is honored well
And nations hail its mystic thrall;
But render praise to Israel
Who knows the Shepherd best of all.*

• *The Shepherd Psalm*
in *Trumpet in Adversity and Other Poems*.

Rabbi Louis Newman was a prolific author whose works are creative, imaginative, and evocative. Despite the active life he led as spiritual leader of Temple Israel, Temple Emanu-El, and Congregation Rodeph Sholom, Newman always devoted a considerable amount of time to writing and publishing poetry, plays, essays and books. Newman's output encompassed a range of topics and demonstrated his skill in utilizing different literary forms. What was common to all of the writing was its focus on the strength and resolve of the Jewish people, their traditions and their faith. In certain works, such as *Herdsmen from Tekoa* and *Tamar and Judah* may be found the Jewish idea of justice, understanding and compassion: namely, the Jewish commitment to ethical living. As *The Shepherd Psalm* illustrates, Newman found in poetry, as well as drama, a medium through which he could express the character of the Jewish people. A survey of his essays, published sermons and books will further illuminate how Newman utilized the written word to communicate thoughts and ideas that, from his perspective, were integral to the survival of the Jewish people.

Newman's Poetry

One of Newman's earliest publications appeared during his years in California as leader of the First Hebrew Congregation of Berkeley (FHCB). *A Vision of Jewish Womanhood: A Series of Tableaux* (hereafter "*Vision*") was written in 1915 and published in 1920. *Vision* is a collection of poems and monologues that pay tribute to the role of women in Jewish history. Newman cited as his inspiration the poems in the *Hebrew Anthology*¹ by well-known scholar and rabbi George Alexander Kohut.² The women who are the subjects of *Vision* are Jochebed (Moses's mother), Deborah, Ruth, Hannah, Abigail, Judith (from the Apocryphal literature), Esther, Beruria (wife of the second century C.E. rabbi, Meir), and Minna (a Jewish woman burned at the stake during the Crusader era for refusing to convert). Written in an era during which the suffrage movement and women's rights were emerging prominently onto the national stage, *Vision* demonstrates how the women of Jewish history personified strength, loyalty and faith. In writing of these women, Newman may also have been inspired by such figures as poet Emma Lazarus, Hadassah founder Henrietta Szold and health care pioneer Lillian Wald, each of whom contributed to Jewish welfare and identity. As Newman saw it, Jewish women equaled their male counterparts in lending their intellectual, emotional and spiritual resources to the perpetuation of Israel. Perhaps Newman felt that the classical Jewish texts and history were too understated in acknowledging the role of Jewish woman.

¹ George Alexander Kohut, *A Hebrew Anthology* (Cincinnati: S. Bacharach, 1913).

² George Alexander Kohut (1874-1933), Rabbi, Educator and lifelong friend of Stephen Wise. Served as a pulpit rabbi in Dallas, subsequently as an Educator with various organizations in New York. Author of many scholarly and popular essays. Son of noted Rabbi and Scholar Alexander Kohut (*Encyclopedia Judaica*).

In *Vision*, the unnamed "Scribe" sets the tone for the poem with his opening words:

Behold these women, maids of latter days;
From their majestic names, your name has come;
Their virtues deck your queenly ancestry.
So lift your gaze; incline your ear; and may
The God of Israel and all mankind
Lend you increased power, strength and insight.³

Through Jochebed, Newman expresses the quiet yet powerful influence of the Jewish woman:

Whence came his [Moses's] loving virtues as a man,
His sturdy passion for his suffering own?
A mother's work, as noiseless and unseen
As is the dew that glistens on the earth.
Jochebed slept in death ere she beheld
The harvest of her mother-influence...⁴

Newman's depiction of Deborah strives to capture the quality of leadership that inspired the Israelites to battle, resulting in victory over their enemies.

Oh, modern maids, born under freedom's sun,
This woman, rare beyond all common stamp,
Tells leadership, the knowledge to command.
With flashing eye she turns to move away,
Remember her, Deborah, prophetess.⁵

Vision was originally conceived to be more than just a volume of poetry. Newman created the piece to be presented before an audience. It was produced by the Women's Circle of the FHCB, the YWHA of San Francisco and later at the High School Association of New York's Free Synagogue. Music by classical composers such as Schubert, Chopin, and Brahms was incorporated into the performance. The stage

³ Newman, *A Vision of Jewish Womanhood: A Series of Tableaux* (hereafter *Vision*) (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1920), p. 4.

⁴ *Vision*, pp. 4-5.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 6.

directions reflected Newman's understanding of what was theatrically effective. *A Vision of Jewish Womanhood* remains meaningful material for the teaching of Jewish history, serving as a supplement to the study of Jewish texts. It might contribute to a congregational *Havdallah* program, or as a presentation by a synagogue Sisterhood. The text would also be suitable as a Confirmation class project.

Newman's *Songs of Jewish Rebirth* was published in 1921. It is a collection of poems written between 1919 and 1921 that Newman had originally written for publication in *The American Hebrew*, *The Jewish Daily News* and *The American Israelite*, among others. In his Author's Note, Newman informed his readers that the poems "represent the thought of a few precious leisure moments over a period of two years."⁶ This remark suggests that Newman found in the writing of poetry both a respite from the demands of his synagogue work, as well as a means through which he might, as an alternative to essays and sermons, express his ideas regarding Judaism and Israel. Newman added in his Note, "I am further prompted to collate these verses by reason of the recent dearth of poems relating to the life of the American Jew."⁷ The fourteen poems deal with Jewish history, New York City, Palestine's pioneers and Theodore Herzl. The poems reflect Newman's sensitivity to Judaism's place in history and its role in humanity's past, present and future. In "Changeling: A Trialogue" Newman expressed Jewish strength while balancing its commitment to both one's own kind and the greater humanity:

"A Midrash tells," proclaimed the Sage,
 "That Israel in every age
 Must make his voyage like a dove

⁶ Newman, *Songs of Jewish Rebirth* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1921).

Author's Note, no page number.

⁷ Ibid.

On one wing – universal love,
And rest on one – the love of kin.”

“But Rabbi,” bold disciples ask,
“Needs must the dove refuse its task;
Unless its weary pinions rest,
Its fresh wings hasten to the test,
‘Twill flutter to the ground.”

Then spoke the heretic his mood:
“My people is no feeble brood;
To undreamed heights we now aspire,
On giant wings that never tire.
For Israel an eagle is!”⁸

Joyful Jeremiads: A Collection of Legends, Folktales, Children's Poems and

Other Light Verse was printed in a limited edition of five hundred copies in September of 1926.⁹ It is a handsome volume; the cover features a design by artist Henry Dreyfuss¹⁰ that whimsically depicts Jewish life in medieval times. A number of these poems had previously appeared in *The London Jewish Guardian*, *B'nai B'rith Magazine*, *The American Israelite* and *The Jewish Tribune*.¹¹ Included in this volume is Newman's short play, to be discussed later in this chapter, entitled *The Alphabet and the Creation*. Newman dedicated the book to his son Jeremy, the title being a play on his name. In the book's preface, Newman credited the writings of Solomon Schechter on the *Kabbalist* Isaac Luria, *The Jewish Anthology*¹² by Edmond Fleg,¹³ and *Midrash Rabbah* on the Scroll of Esther.

⁸ Ibid. p. 21.

⁹ The Klau Library, Hebrew Union-College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati possesses Number 453.

¹⁰ Henry Dreyfuss (1904-1972), noted Industrial Designer. Designer of many commonly-used appliances and utensils. Worked for Hoover, McCall's Magazine and General Electric. Also designed for the stage.

¹¹ Newman, *Joyful Jeremiads: A Collection of Legends, Folk Tales, Children's Poems and Other Light Verse* (hereafter *Joyful*) (San Francisco: The Lantern Press, 1926), p. x.

¹² Edmond Fleg, *The Jewish Anthology*, Translated by Maurice Samuel (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1925).

Many of the poems in *Joyful Jeremiads* were written for children. "In Hebrew" demonstrates Newman's ability to combine Jewish subjects with a whimsical use of language in order to draw the attention of young people. Though written in English, the poem reminds its readers that Hebrew remains the Jews' both ancient and modern language:

They say, little son of mine,
That in far-off Palestine:

The tots in the gardens play
In Hebrew!

The birds in the tree tops sing
In Hebrew!

And even fuzzy dogs bark
As they romp away for a lark
- In Hebrew!¹⁴

Among the more clever poems in this collection is "L-I-B-E-R-T-Y," in which each letter of the word "liberty" is assigned to an important figure in American Jewish history. The poem whimsically reflects Newman's belief in the importance of the Jewish contributions to the American nation. The second verse of the poem reads:

I is for Isaac, whose last name was Franks,
A soldier of Washington, bravest of Yanks,
A friend of the President, lover of pranks,
For Jews such as he, let us offer loud thanks.¹⁵

Other poems in this collection, including those compiled in the section "Songs of a Modern Jew," contain the more mature themes of courage, pride and the relationship between man and God. Their titles include "Fortitude," "To The Fundamentalists" and

¹³ Edmond Fleg (1874-1963), prominent French playwright, essayist, poet, critic and translator. Translated Shakespeare, Sholom Aleichem and Passover Haggadah into French. A devout Zionist, strongly influenced by the Alfred Dreyfus Case (*Dictionary of Jewish Biography*).

¹⁴ *Joyful*, p. 55.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

“Both Man and God Together.” Many of the poems in *Joyful Jeremiads* also deal with matters of Jewish history, ethics and morality. One of these is entitled “When I Shall Die,” an expression of Jewish pride and the desire to both live and die in dignity:

When I shall die, may I win praise or blame
As one who little prized an honored name,
For deeds he wrought within the market-place
Which pleased the fancies of the populace.

But I demand that men shall give me due,
As one who loved his anguished brother-Jew;
Who tilled a plot of scorned, forsaken earth
And helped it give eternal harvest birth.¹⁶

When Newman died in 1972, this poem was printed on the cover of the *Rodeph Sholom Chronicle Memorial Issue*.

Poetry was a medium for Newman to convey his ideas on Jewish history, ethics and values, all of which were vital for nurturing Jewish identity. The poems are expressions of Jewish pride. Poetry was a means through which Newman could share his devotion to the Jewish people. The collection is also a testament to Newman’s love and affection for his own children. It is possible that *Joyful Jeremiads* was used as a teaching resource in Newman’s congregational religious school classes.

In 1929 Temple Emanu-El published Newman’s *The Bridge Between Two Lands and Other Poems of Faith* in its monthly bulletin. The poems in this collection focus on themes such as the relationship between humankind and God, the Revelation at Sinai, the human soul, and the beauty of America. Newman combined his love for the Jewish people with his love for America. “America, America, Anointed of the Lord” conveys Newman’s passion for the American idea of freedom. This poem was written to the

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 118.

melody of composer Ernst Bloch's¹⁷ anthem in the symphony *America*, and was first performed by the students of the Temple Emanu-El Religious School.¹⁸ The second verse captures the essence of this patriotic poem:

Here none oppresses another
The word of God is near,
The lowly find a haven here,
The new and old are brother.¹⁹

The poem "But God Chose Sinai" is based on legends recorded in *Genesis Rabbah* 99:1 and *Numbers Rabbah* 13:3. Edmond Fleg also adapted this legend for his book *The Life of Moses*.²⁰ In Newman's poem the mountains of Israel plead to God for the privilege of serving as the one from which the Torah will be given to the people. The poem reflects Newman's appreciation for Judaism's sacred texts and literature, and demonstrates his skill in combining tradition with poetic form to provide a lesson in Jewish character. Like Sinai, the people of Israel have stood alone in the desert, faithful to God and determined to survive.

But God chose Sinai, saying: "On thy stone,
The tablets of the Torah shall be read;
For in the desert thou dost stand alone;
In solitude thou liftest up thy head.

"As Israel my people is alone,
Amid the desert of a world perverse;
As I the Lord am lonely on my throne.
Amid the desert of the universe."²¹

¹⁷ Ernest Bloch (1880-1959), Swiss-born composer and conductor. Composed *America* in 1926, and *Avodath HaKodesh* for Sabbath morning in the 1930s. Toured America as a conductor; spent last years living in Oregon and teaching in California (*Encyclopedia Judaica*).

¹⁸ Newman, *The Bridge Between Two Lands and Other Poems of Faith* (hereafter *Bridge*) (San Francisco: Temple Emanu-El Pulpit, October 1929), p. 3.

¹⁹ *Bridge*, p. 17.

²⁰ Fleg, Edmond, *The Life of Moses*. Translated from the French by Stephen Haden Guest (Pasadena, CA: Hope Publishing House, 1995), p. 61.

²¹ *Bridge*, p. 16.

It is interesting to note that, within the collection *The Bridge Between Two Lands*, the poems “But God Chose Sinai” and “America, America...” were published side-by-side. Perhaps this printing choice was deliberate, as if to suggest Newman’s loyalty to both the Jewish tradition in which he was grounded and America’s ideals of liberty, justice and brotherhood that helped to shape to his view of the world.

The longest poem in this collection, “The Scroll of Parchment or The Death of Eleazar of Worms (1176-1238),”²² is a narrative of the medieval mystic’s faith in God’s law during the time of the Crusades. Through this poem Newman conveys the idea that Jewish devotion to God persists despite suffering. Though his wife and children have died at the hands of the Crusaders, the narrator reiterates his faith in God:

My parchment scrolls shall testify to me;
 Revenge, O Lord, has never stained my soul;
 Not like thy servant Job have I rebelled.
 And made the heavens thick with my complaints!
 The paths of patient cheerfulness I trod,
 And loved my fellow-men no less because
 They doomed my days to woe and loneliness.²³

No new collection of Newman’s poetry appeared for almost twenty years. The pressures of the 1930s – Zionism, Nazism, the Depression and World War II – most likely compelled Newman to direct his energies elsewhere.²⁴ In 1948 a new collection of Newman’s verse was published under the title *Trumpet in Adversity and Other Poems*. Like *Joyful Jeremiads*, this volume is an attractive work, printed on high quality paper and with an evocative cover that depicts a cantor blowing his *shofar* in a sanctuary. The *shofar* may have been the inspiration for the book’s title, in that it represents Israel’s

²² Eleazar of Worms (c. 1165-1230), medieval German halakhic scholar. Witnessed and suffered personally from the outburst of persecution of Jews by the Crusaders of the 12th and 13th centuries. Author of liturgical poetry (*piyyutim*), theological and exegetical works (*Encyclopedia Judaica*).

²³ *Bridge*, p. 10.

²⁴ Martha Newman to Tepper. 28 October 2007.

eternal clarion call. Though the book includes many poems that were reprinted from Newman's earlier collections, it also contains new poetry that had been shaped by the effects of the Holocaust, World War II, and the establishment of the State of Israel. A sonnet entitled "Give Praise, O World" was inspired by the historic United Nations Partition Vote favoring the establishment of two independent states, one Jewish and one Arab. The second of the sonnet's two verses pays tribute not only to Israel's determination to survive, but also to the many non-Jews who were sympathetic to the Jewish cause:

Give praise, O World, to all who toiled and fought,
Whose endless sacrifice this triumph wrought.
Remember Israel's tribunes through the years
And Christendom's great sons who dried our tears.
A myriad martyrs have not died in vain,
For Zion, Phoenix-like, is born again.²⁵

Beside The Western Wall is a long narrative poem written following Israel's stunning victory in the Six-Day War. The Publication Fund of Congregation Rodeph Sholom printed it in August of 1967. The poem expresses Israel's joy at being reunited with the remnant of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. The poem also captures the anguish that accompanied the loss of Israeli soldiers who were killed by sniper fire while on their way to pray there with their comrades:

Among the troops who stormed the City gates,
Was one, a lad, who nineteen years before,
Had been an infant, like his comrades staunch
Who now bore arms in freedom's young brigade.
Not once in all his years had he beheld
The storied Wall of which his Fathers spoke,
Where cruel assailants struck the pious down,
And gave to *Tish'a B'Av* an added grief.

²⁵ Newman, *Trumpet in Adversity and Other Poems* (hereafter "*Trumpet*") (New York: Renaissance Press, 1948, p. 43.

And so he ran across the Esplanade
Where silently the Mosque Al-Aksa stood;
He scurried down a flight of narrow steps
To join his thankful brothers at the Wall.

An Arab sniper, still uncaught, unbound,
Beheld the lad, forgetful, at the steps,
And as his foot was poised above the ground,
The sniper's bullet pierced him, and he died.²⁶

In his Note on the poem, Newman wrote:

The riddle of their [the Israeli soldiers']
martyrdom at the very moment of their
achievement and their prayers to the
God of Israel and the Universe, is one
of the "mysteries of eternity." The answer,
if any, is known only to God, but we must
seek to interpret it on earth, according to
our meager comprehension.²⁷

Beside The Western Wall expresses Newman's identification with the Jewish homeland and sensitivity to the events that created it. Today, this poem still might serve as an effective text for commemorations such as *Tisha B'Av* or *Yom Yerushalayim*.

Newman's Dramatic and Theatrical Compositions

A few months after writing *Beside The Western Wall*, Newman collaborated with Rodeph Sholom Cantor Ephraim Biran and Organist Alan Van Zoeren on another work commemorating Israel's "miraculous victory" in the Six-Day War in June 1967.²⁸ *The Ramparts of Zion* was a musical performance marking the close of Rodeph Sholom's

²⁶ Newman, *Beside the Western Wall: A Narrative Poem* (hereafter *Beside*) (New York: Congregation Rodeph Sholom, August, 1967).

²⁷ Newman, Note on *Beside*.

²⁸ Newman, Foreword to *The Ramparts of Zion* (hereafter *Ramparts*) (New York: Congregation Rodeph Sholom, 22 December 1967).

125th Anniversary Year. Newman referred to this work as a “cantata,”²⁹ and it featured such Israeli works as “Yerushalayim shel Zahav” by Naomi Shemer, “Song of the Palmach,” and other pieces selected from *The Jewish Songster*,³⁰ *Songs of Israel*³¹ and Harry Coopersmith’s *Songs of Zion*.³² Newman’s narrative, within which music was interspersed, chronicled Israel’s struggle to overcome her enemies on three fronts: at Sharm-a-Sheikh against Egypt, in the Golan Heights against Syria and on Mount Scopus and the West Bank against Jordan. The narrative also called on its audience to remember the martyrdom of those who defended Tel Hai³³ and fought in the War of Independence and at Suez. Besides celebrating the events of June 1967, Newman sought to introduce American Jews to Israeli music hitherto “known in this country only through victrola records and in the original Hebrew.”³⁴ In addition to conveying Newman’s devotion to Israel, *The Ramparts of Zion* was representative of the dramatic-musical form, or pageant, that Newman employed in order to celebrate Jewish holidays, history and special events in the life of his congregation.

Throughout his life, Newman demonstrated a strong attraction to theater and drama. Along with music and the fine arts, drama for Newman was an important tool in the dissemination of Jewish themes. Newman recognized that drama served as a vital

²⁹ A short narrative or descriptive composition with vocal solos and usually a chorus and orchestral accompaniment (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

³⁰ Israel Goldfarb and Samuel E. Goldfarb, Editors, *The Jewish Songster* (Brooklyn: Religious Schools of Congregation Beth Israel Anshe Emes, 1919).

³¹ *Songs of Israel* (New York: Young Zionist Actions Committee, 1949).

³² Harry Coopersmith, *Songs of Zion* (New York: Behrman House, 1942).

³³ Tel Hai, a Jewish colony – along with Metulla – near Palestine’s border with Lebanon. Attacked by Arabs on March 1, 1920. Among those killed defending the fort was Joseph Trumpeldor, leader of the Zion Mule Corps during WWI. The Tel Hai Memorial, a short distance from the reconstructed fort, is an important site for tourists and those paying homage to the Zionist dream (Howard M. Sachar, *A History of Israel*, 1985, p. 123).

³⁴ Newman, Foreword to *Ramparts*.

cultural activity within the synagogue – one that enhanced lay involvement in the life of the congregation:

They [Jewish plays and pageants] thus stimulate a preoccupation with synagogue interests, and emphasize in creative, novel form the traditional message of the Festivals. They attract large groups to the Temple and Temple House for rehearsals, and then for the dramatic or musical event itself when eventually produced.³⁵

It is important to recall that a major feature of Newman's vision for the new Temple Emanu-El building in San Francisco was the fully-equipped nine hundred-seat theater named for Rabbi Martin Meyer. Between 1927, when the Temple House was dedicated, and 1930, when Newman departed, the Temple Players of Emanu-El, under the direction of an acting student from Stanford University named Paul Bissinger, presented five full-length plays.³⁶ Perhaps Newman's greatest theatrical achievement at Emanu-El was persuading renowned Director Nahum Zemach of the Habimah Theater to stage S. Anski's *The Dybbuk* at Emanu-El in 1928.³⁷ To Wise Newman wrote: "It [*The Dybbuk*] will be a great Jewish experience for the community. We are happy to have secured the rights to the play; ours will be the first English production outside of New York, Chicago and Boston."³⁸ The critical response to the production was unanimous in its praise of the sets, lighting and acting.³⁹

³⁵ Newman, *Preface to Pangs of the Messiah and other Plays, Pageants and Cantatas* (hereafter "*Preface*") (New York, Bloch Publishing Company, 1957), p. xii.

³⁶ See Mortimer Fleishhacker and Janet Choyński Fleishhacker, "Family, Business and the San Francisco Community" (WJHC, oral history, typescript, 1975), pp. 105-106, 315-316, 328, 330, in Rosenbaum, p. 150.

³⁷ See Rinder, "Music, Prayer and Religious Leadership," p. 89, in *Ibid.*

³⁸ Newman to Wise, 16 July 1928, Box 27, Folder 15, JIRP.

³⁹ *Temple Chronicle*, 9 November 1928, in Rosenbaum, *Ibid.*

From the 1920s through to the 1960s, Newman authored plays and pageants on a variety of Jewish subjects. Many of these were written for the holidays of *Purim*, *Hanukkah* and *Shavuot*, as well as for Confirmation Services and congregational celebrations. Among his earliest and most appealing works was *The Alphabet and the Creation*, cited earlier as being included in the collection *Joyful Jeremiads*. This play appeared in the Cincinnati publication *Young Israel* in 1926 and was first performed by students in the Religious School at the dedication of Emanu-El's new Temple House in 1927. As his source, Newman turned to a legend from the *Midrash*.⁴⁰ This legend is also found in the *Zohar*⁴¹ and had been adapted by Edmond Fleg in *The Jewish Anthology*⁴² and by Louis Ginzberg⁴³ in *The Legends of the Jews*.⁴⁴

The Alphabet and the Creation - a "playlet," as Newman called it - is a verse dramatization of the Angel Gabriel's efforts to select the appropriate letter with which to begin the Torah. This drama demonstrates Newman's skill in adapting material from the Jewish texts to provide a lesson in Jewish tradition and language. The story is told in an informative and entertaining way. Beginning with the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, *tav*, and moving back towards the alphabet's first letter (*aleph*), each of the twenty-two letters appears before Gabriel to plead its case as to why it should be chosen, and each is given a reason for its rejection. But when the Angel encounters the letter *bet*, the outcome is different:

BET: ...O Angel Gabriel, beseech the Lord
To make Creation's work commence with me.

⁴⁰ *Genesis Rabbah* 1:10.

⁴¹ *Zohar* 1: 2b-3b.

⁴² Fleg, *The Jewish Anthology*, pp. 196-198.

⁴³ Louis Ginzberg (1873-1953), Talmudic, Midrashic and Aggadic Scholar. As a faculty member of the Jewish Theological Seminary from 1903, he was a principal architect of the Conservative Movement.

⁴⁴ Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, Volume 1, Translated by Henrietta Szold (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1909-1937; Johns Hopkins Press Paperback Edition, 1998), pp. 5-8.

For do not all the dwellers in the world
 Give praise to God through me the Letter BET,
 As it is said: BARUCH, or "Blessed be
 The Lord forever. Amen and Amen!"

GABRIEL: My task is done at last! Behold my sons,
 The Lord shall choose the second Letter BET,
 "For Blessed be he who cometh in God's name."
 Through BET the Lord shall make the universe,
 And write: BERESHIT BARA ELOHIM;
 "In the beginning God the heaven and earth Created."
 Hail the Servant of His will.⁴⁵

In the preface to his collection *Pangs of the Messiah*, Newman expressed the hope that his plays would "prove worthwhile for Little Theatre Groups in Temple Houses and Jewish Community Centers, regardless of their Festival associations."⁴⁶ More importantly, Newman believed that plays dealing with Jewish topics were a valuable means of enhancing Jewish identity:

In a sense, they [the plays] may be said to offer a new art form for conveying to modern audiences the heritage of Jewish history and Judaism. They focus attention upon religious themes and indicate the potentialities, still latent and unrealized, in the domain of Jewish religious drama.⁴⁷

Pangs of the Messiah includes a selection of photographs that are indicative of the resources and ingenuity that went into these productions: elaborate costumes, large casts, and detailed sets erected within the Rodeph Sholom sanctuary. In a published review, Theodore Lewis wrote: "Dr. Newman writes with deep passion and in a style which makes the reading of the volume a genuine pleasure." Lewis also described the collection as "ideal for schools and for use at worship..."⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Newman, *The Alphabet and The Creation* (San Francisco: The Temple Publications, 1927), p. 8.

⁴⁶ Newman, *Preface*, p. xiii.

⁴⁷ Newman, *Ibid*, p. xii.

⁴⁸ Theodore M. Lewis, "Religious Plays and Cantatas (review of *Pangs of the Messiah*)," *Congress*

Pangs of the Messiah contains four short pieces written to celebrate *Purim*: (a) *Star Over Shushan*, a cantata (1950), (b) *Daughter of the Queen* (1954), (c) *The Queen's Choice* (1956) and (d) *Miracle of the Scrolls*. Two works, *The Candlestick of Spears* (1951) and *Ein Bereirah: No Alternative* (1949), focused on the heroics of the Maccabees and were intended for presentation during *Hanukkah*. *Ein Bereirah*, in addition to borrowing from the Apocryphal literature, draws parallels between the Maccabean struggles and those members of the *Palmach*, the *Haganah*, and all Jews who fought to establish Israel's statehood:

Within the Old City they ravaged the ancient synagogues; there was desperate fighting on the walls, at the gates and in the narrow streets. But in the New City which we had reared and adorned, we were unconquerable. We mourn the slain on the road to Mount Scopus, crying out: "Thy beauty, O Israel, upon the high places is slain; How are the mighty fallen in the midst of battle."⁴⁹

A number of the *Purim* and *Hanukkah* works included songs with both words and music written by Newman. Other works incorporated music from various anthologies such as *Songs of Zion* and *Songs of Israel*. An Appendix to *Pangs of the Messiah* includes the music and lyrics for each of the songs used in the various productions.

Three of the plays included in *Pangs of the Messiah* have no direct connection either to *Purim* or *Hanukkah*. These three plays are dramas rather than comedies or musical pageants. Each one focuses on a theme of great significance to Newman. The first of these three plays is a one-act drama that lends its title to the entire collection. Originally published in *The Menorah Journal* in 1944, this play is set in a small

Weekly, 27 May 1957, p. 14.

⁴⁹ Newman, *Ein Bereirah: No Alternative*, in *Pangs of the Messiah and Other Plays, Pageants and Cantatas* (hereafter *Pangs*) (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1957), p. 230.

synagogue and depicts the suffering of European Jewry during the years of World War II. The play expresses, both to his congregation and American Jewry, Newman's identification with the anguish of the Jews of Europe. Even under these tragic conditions there remained within these people the fervent hope that a Messiah or a Messianic Era would eventually appear and introduce a time of peace for all of humanity:

Every people, all humanity must learn to be its own Messiah...and we who are the people must labor also for the coming of the Messianic days. The torments and horrors we are enduring – these may truly be the pangs of the Messiah...our age will know Messiah has come when hatred, cruelty, poverty, injustice and war have vanished...⁵⁰

Pangs of the Messiah: A Play of World War Two, received the Second Prize in a contest jointly sponsored by Aleph Zadik Aleph Fraternity, the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization and the American Association for Jewish Education.⁵¹

Son of his Generation: A Kibbutz Play of 1949 is a one-act drama that focused on the experiences of an American Jew who has left behind the security of his native land to take part in the struggle for Israel's statehood. Essentially a dialogue between the young American named Dan and an older *kibbutznik* known as Mr. Gafni, the play incorporated flashbacks from Dan's life that illustrated his alienation from American Jewish life, leading to his decision to settle in Palestine. At one point, Dan explains to Gafni his decision to forsake the love of a young woman in favor of the Jewish homeland. In making the American Dan the ardent Zionist and the Israeli Gafni the supporter of the Diaspora, Newman expressed his commitment to the Jewish state and Jews residing

⁵⁰ Newman, *Pangs of the Messiah*, in *Pangs*, pp. 27-28.

⁵¹ Newman, *Ibid*, p. 2.

elsewhere. He acknowledged the lifeline connecting Israel and the Diapsora, through which both Jewish constituencies would remain strong:

DAN: Judy and her husband will be loyal synagogue members; he may invest in Israel's industries; they may take a Mediterranean cruise and even visit this very Kibbutz. Their whole life will be secure, steady and conventional, without risk – except for an occasional flare-up of anti-Semitism or worse. But they'll be semi-Jews, Jews at long last – they and all their social set. It remains for others to preserve the authentic Jewish life.

GAFNI: It isn't all black and white, Dan Kishor. We mustn't write out of Jewry – out of *Kelal Yisrael* – such Jews! They need us for what we can give them, and we need them – for whatever they can give us. It may not be their very presence here – but sympathy and help are good, too.⁵²

Like *Pangs of the Messiah, Son of his Generation* was honored for its role in supporting Israel. The play was awarded a prize in the National Playwriting Competition presented by the Zionist Organization of America in 1950.⁵³

The third – and, in the opinion of this writer – most important drama in this collection is *Herdsmen from Tekoa: A Play of the South, in the 1930s*. A long one-act play, *Herdsmen* centers on the experience of a liberal rabbi serving in a Southern town of the United States. The rabbi in this drama, whose name is Amos Lynn, battles to overcome the prejudice against the black people within his community. Beneath the play's title Newman wrote: "Dedicated to the memory of a gallant friend, dauntless to the end."⁵⁴ Although the fictional Rabbi Lynn could be a composite of the numerous rabbis who spoke out against racial injustice, Newman may well have drawn on the

⁵² Newman, *Son Of His Generation*, in *Pangs*, p. 55.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 30.

⁵⁴ Newman, *Herdsmen From Tekoa, A Play of the South in the 1930s* (hereafter "Herdsmen"), in *Pangs*, p. 59.

example of Rabbi Benjamin Goldstein of Temple Beth Or in Montgomery, Alabama. In 1933, Goldstein courageously defended the "Scottsboro Boys."⁵⁵ In his essay "How Free Should Clergymen's Preachment Be?" Newman alluded to Goldstein's experience in Alabama:

Too often the laity act as if they "own" the church and the clergyman, and expect him to do their bidding. If he runs counter to their economic or political prejudices, he is thrown to the wolves. Another young clergyman who had defended the Scottsboro boys and the Tuscaloosa share-croppers was given a few hours to betake himself from the community where he had ministered with distinction.⁵⁶

With some exceptions, the CCAR, apparently, failed to provide adequate support for Goldstein.⁵⁷

In *Herdsmen from Tekoa*, Newman drew a parallel between the biblical shepherd-prophet named Amos who chastised Israel for her moral flaws and the modern-day clergyman named Amos who fights to change the attitudes of his congregants. Despite his belief in goodness and justice, Rabbi Lynn accepts his limitations in trying to change the views of his community. He also realizes that within such a community there is no

⁵⁵ The "Scottsboro Boys" were nine black youths convicted during the 1930s of raping two white women in Scottsboro, Alabama. The convictions came about despite weak and contradictory testimony, and a recanting by one of the alleged victims. The case went to the U.S. Supreme Court where the original death sentences were overturned. Considered one of the worst travesties of justice in U.S. history. All of the accused were eventually acquitted, paroled or pardoned (*Wikipedia*).

⁵⁶ Newman, "How Free Should Clergymen's Preachment Be?" (hereafter "Preambment"), undated, p. 7, Box 8, Folder 10, LINP.

⁵⁷ Leonard Mervis, "The Social Justice Movement and the American Reform Rabbi," *American Jewish Archives*, Volume VII, June 1955, Number 2., pp. 195-196, and Mark Cowett, "Morris Newfield, Alabama, and Blacks: 1895-1940," in Mark K. Bauman and Berkley Kalin, Editors, *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880s to 1990s* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1997), pp. 47-48.

place for a man with his ideals. Before departing his community, Rabbi Lynn prophetically admonishes the leaders of his congregation:

The time will come when all of you in Brooktown will see a great change; your own children will force it upon you, if I understand them correctly. You'll have to join with them in treating the blacks fairly, if you want to keep your families united... Your Temple Sisterhood will do genuine welfare work for Negro families. You, and your cronies, will have to stop exploiting them on the farms and in the factories. They'll be given decent education and housing... You'd be real aristocrats if you showed the way to the Gentiles in treating the blacks like human beings. If you don't, Judaism here and everywhere is lost. Maybe you'll even learn to live up to the name of Rodfei Zedek, which, I needn't remind you, means "Followers of Justice."⁵⁸

In *Herdsmen from Tekoa*, Newman breathed dramatic life into a tragic chapter in American history. He articulated the agonies of Reform rabbis who sought to make a difference in the South during the era of racial inequality. With Rabbi Amos Lynn as his mouthpiece, the play allowed Newman to express his beliefs and passions regarding the Jewish idea of social justice.

One of Newman's most ambitious works was *The Woman at the Wall*, a three-act play published in 1958. *The Woman at the Wall* dramatized the narrative of *Genesis 38*, the biblical chapter describing the relationship between Judah, son of Jacob, and his daughter-in-law Tamar. The "wall" of the play is the site where Judah first encounters Tamar in her disguise as a courtesan. The play is a meaningful rendition of life in the time of the Patriarchs. Newman's language and characterization conveyed Judah's over-protectiveness of his remaining son Shelah, the stubbornness with which he denies both Shelah and Tamar the freedom to live as they wished, and the emotional turbulence out of

⁵⁸ Newman, *Herdsmen*, pp. 90-91.

which Tamar takes the necessary steps to bear a son and cast off the reins of her domineering father-in-law.

TAMAR: But I, had I no feelings? If the man is warrior and builder, the woman is a partner in the Divine creation. You speak of the Law as if it were inhuman. Isn't there the higher, the first law of Creation: "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth?" Were the years to hurry by until I couldn't end my barrenness? Was I to be sentenced to lifelong widowhood? ... Was I to be deprived of the fruit of my womb, the child of whom I dreamed? ... Judah ben Jacob, the Lion, the Ruler, the hero, answer me: am I to be chastised because I'm gaining that which would have been withdrawn from me – a child, a child that is blossoming within me at last?⁵⁹

Newman was drawn to dramatizing *Genesis 38* after reading Cyrus H. Gordon's *Introduction to Old Testament Times*.⁶⁰ "It [the Judah-Tamar story] impressed me decisively as a story of vigor and color, complete in itself, and possessing dramatic totality which augured well for its development as a play."⁶¹ Newman also credited Theophile J. Meek's *Hebrew Origins*⁶² for its material on "Assyrian and Hittite precedents for the Judah-Tamar union,"⁶³ and Thomas Mann's *Joseph and His Brethren*⁶⁴ for its detailed description of the relationship between Tamar, Judah and Judah's sons. Newman also drew heavily from a wide range of midrashic, historical and archaeological materials to enrich his dramatic writing.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Newman, *The Woman At The Wall: A Play In Three Acts* (hereafter *Woman*) (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1958), pp. 83-84.

⁶⁰ Cyrus H. Gordon, *Introduction to Old Testament Times* (Ventnor, NJ: Ventnor Publishers, 1953).

⁶¹ Newman, *Woman*, p. 111.

⁶² Theophile J. Meek, *Hebrew Origins* (New York: Harper and Brothers, Revised Edition, 1950).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁶⁴ Thomas Mann, *Joseph And His Brethren*, Volume I (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), pp.1015-1042.

⁶⁵ Newman, *Woman*, p. 112.

An important issue that emerges from this play is that of the Levirate marriage and *chalitzah*, involving a childless widow who must either marry or seek release from her dead husband's brother. *The Woman at the Wall* may not only be read as a drama evoking a dynamic narrative from the Torah, but also be understood as a statement through which Newman transmitted his compassion for the many displaced persons and women who became *agunot* [an *agunah* is a woman whose husband has been missing for some time with no proof of his death] as a result of the Holocaust and the ravages of World War II. In the play's Appendix, Newman cited the example of an Israeli woman in Moscow who successfully obtained *chalitzah* through the cooperation of the Chief Rabbis of Israel and Moscow. Newman wrote:

... the Chief Rabbi of Israel expressed the hope that this successful cooperation between the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and Moscow might be extended to the many instances of *Agunot*, now resident in Israel, whose husbands disappeared in Russia during World War II. Thus it is clear that many woman have been confronted by an authentic dilemma under Jewish Law...⁶⁶

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, Newman read in the experience of Tamar the need for similar compassion towards the *agunot* and childless widows of his time. Newman's plays reflected their author's desire to reach as wide a readership and theatrical audience as possible, in order to educate, entertain and provide rewarding opportunities for lay involvement in the life of the synagogue. More significantly, through such works as *Herdsmen from Tekoa* and *The Woman at the Wall* Newman demonstrated how the narratives of the sacred texts might serve to enhance Jewish understanding of the challenging ethical issues posed by life in his own day.

⁶⁶ Ibid, pp. 113-114.

In 1970 Congregation Rodeph Sholom presented its "Third Annual Festival of the Jewish Arts." In its two previous incarnations, this Festival had hosted professional theater, dance, music and art exhibits. For its third Festival, Rodeph Sholom presented the world premiere of the opera *Tamar and Judah*, with music by renowned Israeli composer Marc Lavry, who had passed away in 1967, and a libretto by Newman. The music for this opera had been composed in 1958 and selections had previously played on radio in Israel, the United States and other countries. The performance at Rodeph Sholom marked the first presentation of the opera in its entirety. *Tamar and Judah* also helped mark the fortieth anniversary of both the Rodeph Sholom building on 83rd Street and Newman's arrival as its spiritual leader.

Tamar and Judah has fewer characters than *The Woman at the Wall*, the non-musical work upon which it is based, and is shorter in length than Newman's dramatic version. For its performance at Rodeph Sholom, professional singers sang the roles, with the congregation's Cantor, Ephraim Biran, playing the part of Judah. Mr. Lavry's music is beautiful, appealing and expressive, while the text by Newman evokes the tension and dramatic force of the *Genesis* narrative. As she awaits the opportunity to seduce and humiliate her father-in-law, Tamar sings:

See, I wait with trembling
 Him who bears his manly virtue,
 Him whom I shall snare to serve Thee.
 Who shall receive,
 And who shall give
 Joyous offering.
 Ah, Ashtoreth, my Sovereign,
 Grant me Thy boon of love.
 Mother, Ah,
 Come now, come now, come now,
 We shall worship Thee.
 Twilight is approaching,

Wondrous hour of love,
 He, the strong, the mighty,
 I am ripe to greet him.⁶⁷

Upon realizing that he is the father of Tamar's child, Judah admits his flaws and acknowledges Tamar's courage:

I am contrite;
 Heal me again.
 May God send me a son,
 Heir and prince, of royal blood.
 Tamar mine, be thou gracious,
 Tamar mine, be thou kind;
 Only thy strength and thy beauty
 Have won for my majesty,
 A child.⁶⁸

In his Foreword to the published edition of this opera, Rabbi Gunter Hirschberg, Newman's associate at Rodeph Sholom, observed how the spiritual and human qualities of the biblical narratives continued to speak to Jews in modern times:

[*Tamar and Judah*] bears witness to the fact that the Bible, in the true sense of the word, is a human book, that its characters are imbued with the passions and aspirations of all humankind and that its heroes, the heroes of our people which at that time began its millennia-long pathway through history, derived their uniqueness from their spiritual commitment as much as from their physical prowess.⁶⁹

Over the years, Newman created numerous theatrical presentations for *Shavuot* and special synagogue anniversaries. These presentations incorporated music, liturgy, Hebrew and English songs and texts from Scripture. Rodeph Sholom confirmands and laity presented them. One example of this genre is *The Law God Gave On Sinai*, which

⁶⁷ Marc Lavry (Music) and Newman (Libretto), *Tamar and Judah: An Opera* (New York: Third Annual Festival of the Jewish Arts - Sponsored By Congregation Rodeph Sholom, New York City, 1970). Act II, pp. 20-21.

⁶⁸ Ibid, Act III, pp. 33-34.

⁶⁹ Gunter Hirschberg, Foreword to *Tamar and Judah: An Opera*, Ibid, p. 1.

was presented at Rodeph Sholom on *Shavuot* in 1946. This combination of performance and service took its audience on a guided tour through Jewish history with the Jewish holidays as signposts, culminating in the Torah service for *Shavuot*. Such presentations served as an innovative way for confirmands, the future leaders of the community, to express their learning and appreciation of Torah and Jewish tradition. Near the conclusion of *The Law God Gave On Sinai*, one of the confirmands proclaimed:

Like flowers in garlands, we weave words into phrases; phrases into books; books into libraries; the matchless treasures of Israel and mankind, life speaking to life across the years. Even as the Scroll is read unendingly from year to year, so may Israel's chronicle be unending. May the timeless thoughts of God's mind enter into our own, as the fragrance of these blossoms touches our soul.⁷⁰

The Eternal Temple: An Anniversary Pageant was presented on the occasion of Congregation Rodeph Sholom's one-hundredth anniversary in December of 1942, and in an expanded form for the one hundred and tenth anniversary in 1952. *The Eternal Temple* used biblical and Jewish history, references to Jewish Festivals and holidays, music, song, dance and monologues to celebrate Rodeph Sholom as a house of worship, learning, and communal activity. The cast consisted of more than one hundred speaking parts. The performance took place in the sanctuary of the synagogue and incorporated its *bimah*, entrance and aisle space. Costumes were created by the participants and secured from professional costumers.⁷¹

In panoramic fashion, *The Eternal Temple* acknowledged the role of Israel's sanctuaries as well as the "chain of ideals" – worship, charity, love of Zion, the Hebrew

⁷⁰ Newman, Assisted in the Music by Joseph Yasser, *The Law God Gave On Sinai: A Cantata for Confirmation* p. 20.

⁷¹ Newman, *The Eternal Temple*, in *Pangs*, p. 333.

language, justice, mercy and friendship – that have contributed to the preservation of Jewish tradition. The pageant also expressed the value Newman placed on congregational and communal life. It acknowledged the various synagogue groups - Sisterhood, Men's Association and youth groups - that are integral to the vitality of congregational life:

These virtues and ideals of Israel
Are built in our Temple, line by line;
To form a chain which links us by its bands,
And knits our fellowship with loving hands.⁷²

As with those pageants devised for Confirmation, holidays and Jewish Festivals, *The Eternal Temple* illustrated how Newman employed the musical and theatrical arts to amplify special moments in both Jewish and synagogue life, and to create meaningful opportunities for lay participation.

It is important to examine one of Newman's most charming dramas, *The Little Zaddik: A Play in Three Acts on The Ba'al Shem Tov and the Wolf*. The play is about the Ba'al Shem Tov (hereafter, known through his acronym, the *Besht*) or Israel ben Eliezer, the eighteenth-century Polish rabbi and founder of Hasidism.⁷³ An outgrowth of the Chmielnick Massacres and the Sabbetaian fiasco, Hasidism taught that all were equal before God, purity of heart was superior to study and that devotion to prayer and the commandments was to be encouraged. Ordinary men, "imbued with the naïve faith, and able to pray fervently and whole-heartedly, were nearer to God than the learned formalist

⁷² Ibid, p. 353.

⁷³ Israel ben Eliezer, the Ba'al Shem Tov (the *Besht*) (c.1700-1760), founder and first leader of Hasidism in Eastern Europe. Began as a travelling healer and spiritual leader whose influence grew in the course of his journeys. Believed in prayer rather than study as the way to approach God. Emphasized the importance of joy in prayer and discouraged melancholy and fasting. (Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *A Concise Encyclopedia of Judaism*, Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1998).

spending his whole life in the study of Talmud.”⁷⁴ In his Appendix, Newman acknowledged his sources: Martin Buber’s *Tales of the Hasidim*⁷⁵, Simon Dubnow’s *Geschichte des Chassidismus*⁷⁶ and Hayyim Schauss’ *The Lifetime of a Jew*⁷⁷, among others. Newman also credited the music of Shalom Altman’s *The Judean Songster*.⁷⁸

The Little Tzaddik focuses on Israel ben Eliezer as a young boy - a lover of life, people and God - who protects the children of his village, saves the heart of a charcoal maker-turned-wolf and defeats Satan. The play incorporated song, dance and comic moments to tell a story about the need for humans to possess a kind heart. This theme is expressed in an exchange between the young Israel and Zev, the unhappy charcoal maker:

ZEV: But how can God love me? I know so little Torah.

ISRAEL: It’s not the book learning, but the intention which counts. An unlearned man can be just as pious as a scholar. If a shepherd-boy should blow his whistle in synagogue on *Yom Kippur*, God would accept his offering. If an orphan, untrained in our Holy Tongue, would bring to the altar the whole Prayer Book, God would receive it gladly. If the heart is pure, God looks upon it with favor.⁷⁹

Though grounded in the liberal-Reform Judaism of twentieth-century America, Newman identified with the *Besht*’s conviction that, in the words of historian Simon Dubnow: “the study of Jewish religious legislation is of secondary importance, and is useful only when

⁷⁴ Simon Dubnow, *A History of the Jews in Russia and Poland, From the Earliest Times Until the Present Day*, Volume I, Translated from the Russian by I. Friedlaender (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1916), p. 225.

⁷⁵ Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim* (New York: Schocken Books, 1947-1948).

⁷⁶ Simon Dubnow, *Geschichte des Chassidismus* (Berlin: Judischer Verlag, 1931).

⁷⁷ Hayim Schauss, *The Lifetime of a Jew Throughout the Ages of Jewish History* (Cincinnati: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1950).

⁷⁸ Shalom Altman, *The Judean Songster* (New York: 1934).

⁷⁹ Newman, *The Little Tzaddik: A Play in Three Acts on the Ba'al Shem Tov and The Wolf* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1961), pp. 63-64.

it succeeds in arousing an exalted religious disposition."⁸⁰ The play was indicative of Newman's desire to teach a lesson in Jewish piety and articulate the value upon which the Jewish faith places ethical behavior. Newman may also have recognized in the *Besht* some of his own personal qualities: a love of God, active involvement in human affairs, and a devotion to enhancing the quality and enjoyment of human life. In his introduction to *The Hasidic Anthology*, he wrote:

To offset the gloom and hardships of the Jewish masses, the *Besht* began a ministry, seeking to underscore the joyful admiration of life. He counseled against asceticism and self-affliction, preaching instead the hallowing of all passions and delight in the service of God. He condemned retirement from the world and recommended active participation in human experiences, accepting life with gratitude, enthusiasm and resolution.⁸¹

In *The Little Tzaddik*, Newman described how the innate goodness of a single person could make a difference in the lives of others. It is a meaningful expression of Jewish values and a worthwhile drama for presentation by synagogue drama clubs, in youth groups or in the religious school.

Richard Cumberland: Critic and Friend of the Jews represented Newman's foray into the realm of literary history and criticism. This small-sized volume, published in 1919, contains a long essay by Newman describing the achievements of Richard Cumberland, the 18th century English playwright, journalist and politician. Newman conveyed his admiration for the tolerance that Cumberland exemplified; a tolerance that Newman no doubt felt was called for in his own time as well. The book includes an

⁸⁰ Dubnow, p. 226.

⁸¹ Newman, Editor, in collaboration with Samuel Spitz, *The Hasidic Anthology: Tales and Teachings of the Hasidim* (hereafter "*Hasidic*"), (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1944), p. lxi.

abridged version of Cumberland's play *The Jew*, which offered a sympathetic and enlightened portrait of Jews in late 18th century England. The publication of Newman's volume coincided with the performance of Cumberland's play by the "Confirmants Club" of the Bronx Free Synagogue, to which Newman was assigned at the time. Newman concludes his essay on Cumberland by writing:

If to revive his [Cumberland's] work and his fame be a reward, however inadequate, for the seeming indifference of 18th century to Cumberland's friendly activity, then the author of this essay on "Richard Cumberland, Critic and Friend of the Jews," rejoices that he is able to pay honor and tribute in America to the British pioneer of pro-Jewish liberalism.⁸²

However, for Newman, no art form was acceptable when it denigrated the Jewish people. A drama such as *The Merchant of Venice* represented the antithesis of toleration and respect for Judaism to which Newman devoted his life and career. Despite his love for the theater, Newman was quick to protest when, in his eyes, drama performed a disservice to the Jewish people. In 1962, Newman, along with Conservative and Orthodox rabbis in New York, publicly objected to Producer Joseph Papp's selection of Shakespeare's play as the inaugural production in Central Park. Newman considered *Merchant* to be:

A drama which has been demonstrated beyond peradventure of a doubt as a breeding center for those destructive forces which eventuated in the disasters of the 1930s and 1940s.⁸³

Though Papp went ahead with the performance in Central Park, the rabbis' protest successfully prevented a planned national broadcast of the play on the CBS television network.⁸⁴

⁸² Newman, *Richard Cumberland: Critic and Friend of the Jews* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1919), p. 60.

⁸³ *Time Magazine*, 29 June 1962. www.time.com/time/magazine/article

Newman's Literary Miscellany

Poetry and drama represented only two of the many different literary genres to which Newman applied his ideas and beliefs on Judaism. Anthologies, collected essays and sermons, in addition to numerous articles for journals and magazines round off Newman's diverse literary *oeuvre*. Newman thrived in utilizing different literary forms; each served to articulate the passion its author possessed for Jewish faith, tradition and peoplehood. Through all of his writings, Newman demonstrated a fierce protectiveness of Jewish traditions, culture and identity. Though the form varied, the message remained the same: that Jews are a learned, proud and persevering people who, in upholding the values of ethical behavior, justice and faith had contributed to the welfare and prosperity of American life. Such values, operating in harmony with the American ideals of freedom and tolerance that Newman cherished, enhanced Judaism's role as a light to the nations.

Anglo-Saxon and Jew: Jewish Questions of the Day, published in 1923, is a collection of essays culled from Newman's sermons while at Temple Israel in New York. Newman's intended audience was not only fellow-rabbis and scholars but the general laity as well. Though only thirty years old when this book was published, the writing reflects a maturity and thoughtfulness beyond Newman's years. The collection includes essays on Jewish-Gentile relations, Jews and their community, as well as Newman's poetry, letters to the editor and analyses of works by such writers as John Galsworthy and H.G. Wells. For Newman, the book served as a response to the issue of the Jewish

⁸⁴ Edna Nashon, "A Triumvirate of Evil," 29 December 2006. www.forward.com/articles/a-triumvirate-of-evil.

people and their faith within a non-Jewish environment.⁸⁵ Three of the collection's strongest pieces are about the holiday of *Tu b'Shvat*, the compatibility between Zionism and Reform, and freedom of the pulpit. Regarding *Tu b'Shvat*, the Jewish New Year for Trees, Newman pointed out the relationship between the bounty enjoyed by Jews in America and the commitment to the upbuilding of the Jewish homeland in Palestine. Newman tied together the gift of living in America with the accompanying obligation towards the welfare of the Jewish homeland. His devotion to both lands is clear:

Once more are we reminded that we are
expected by reason of our abundant
opportunities in this blessed land of
America, to help make the Land of Israel
to blossom as the rose of Sharon.⁸⁶

In "The Compatibility of Zionism and Reform Judaism," Newman explained why American Reform Jews should embrace Zionism. The essay is characteristic of Newman's lifelong commitment to forging connections between America and Israel. Newman called Reform Judaism "the religious expression of Jewish adjustment to the demands and opportunities of Diaspora life."⁸⁷ Zionism, meanwhile, implied a concentration of Jewish life in Palestine, "enriched by Diaspora experiences."⁸⁸

Newman added:

Thus the new Jewish situation will be, not
Palestine versus the Diaspora, but Palestine
plus the Diaspora. Zionists must reconcile
themselves to the existence of a powerful
Diaspora Jewry; Diaspora Jews must learn
to welcome the growth of the Jewish
homeland. Each will sustain and nourish
the other, at the same time that each is

⁸⁵ Newman, Foreword to *Anglo-Saxon and Jew*.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 45

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 86.

⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 87.

independent and self-directive.⁸⁹

“On Pulpit Freedom” was Newman’s response to an editorial in *The American Israelite* urging Reform congregations to avoid selecting a rabbi “tainted”⁹⁰ by Zionist ideals.

Having learned the importance of pulpit freedom from Stephen Wise, Newman

condemned congregations that sought to restrict the rabbi’s right to speak as he saw fit.

Throughout his career, it remained an issue on which Newman would not compromise.

At the conclusion of his letter, Newman wrote:

The rabbinate is too high a calling to be injured by such implications as your editorial bears; those who humbly carry its banner are ready to battle, whatever the sacrifice, to preserve it unstained.⁹¹

Three of Newman’s most important publications were *The Hasidic Anthology*:

Tales and Teachings of the Hasidim, *The Talmudic Anthology: Tales and Teachings of the Rabbis*, and *Maggidim and Hasidim: Their Wisdom, A Companion Volume to the Hasidic Anthology*. Each of these was produced in collaboration with Samuel Spitz.⁹²

The Hasidic Anthology, first published in 1934, is a vast compilation of parables, folktales, fables, proverbs and anecdotes expressing the lore and wisdom of the Hasidic Movement of eighteenth century Europe. In his Introduction Newman wrote of his “desire to enrich the homiletical literature of American Jewry and to display to English readers some of the masterpieces of Hasidic wisdom.” Such writings, according to Newman, “have therefore stood the test of time, [and] they have particular value for

⁸⁹ Ibid. pp. 87-88.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 90.

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 94.

⁹² I have been unable to uncover any details pertaining to Samuel Spitz’s life or career. It is possible that Spitz was an authority on Hasidic literature; he may also have been a congregant of Newman’s at Rodeph Sholom. – WST.

preaching."⁹³ A topical index enhanced the value of *The Hasidic Anthology* by making it accessible to rabbis as a useful resource for teaching and for homiletics. Writing to his Wise, Newman remarked "the men of the Institute [JIR] will find it helpful for their preaching, as I do for mine."⁹⁴ In his review of this collection, Leo Jung⁹⁵ praised Newman and Spitz for "invading the German, Yiddish, and Hebrew treasuries of Hasidism and in carrying away for restatement in this opus well nigh all of their main gems and nuggets."⁹⁶ However, Jung also expressed reservations regarding the "the legitimacy of some transliteration" and the "repetitious tales which swell the volume without adding to its weight."⁹⁷

The Talmudic Anthology, published in 1945, is an equally comprehensive resource in that it topically gathers in one volume an array of ethical, spiritual, legal and sociological material from the Talmud, Midrash and Zohar. In an introduction titled "The Ethical Message of the Talmud," Newman referred to the Bible and Talmud as "eternal emblems of the creative power of the eternal people."⁹⁸ Newman further described the Talmud as:

...the rich harvest of those powerful, intellectual, moral judicial and religious forces which have moved within the Jewish people for ten centuries, and carried forward the message of the Bible and the Apocrypha.⁹⁹

⁹³ Newman, *Hasidic*, p. lxxxix.

⁹⁴ Newman to Wise, 8 July 1932. Box 27, Folder 16. JIRP.

⁹⁵ Leo Jung (1892- 1987), American Orthodox Rabbi. Born in Moravia, ordained in Berlin and arrived in US in 1920. Rabbi of the Jewish Center, New York and Professor of Ethics at Yeshiva University and Stern College for Women. Associated with American Joint Distribution Committee, National Jewish Welfare Board and was a noted writer and editor (*Encyclopedia Judaica*).

⁹⁶ Leo Jung, "Review: Newman's Hasidic Anthology," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, Volume 26, Number 1, July 1935, pp. 96.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 97.

⁹⁸ Newman, Editor, in collaboration with Samuel Spitz, *The Talmudic Anthology: Tales and Teachings of the Rabbis* (New York: Behrman House, Inc., Publishers, 1947). p. xiii.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

The Talmudic Anthology, like *The Hasidic Anthology*, has served as a resource for rabbis and educators in crafting sermons and teaching lessons on Jewish subjects. Yet these volumes were not intended for the use of Jewish professionals alone. Indeed, Newman noted that he had conceived his collection with the average reader in mind.¹⁰⁰

The third collaboration by Newman and Spitz, *Maggidim and Hasidim: Their Wisdom*, published in 1962, is a companion volume to *The Hasidic Anthology*. As with the earlier collection, *Maggidim* is a compilation of tales, stories and fables of great folk preachers and their disciples. Reviewer Jerome R. Malino, a graduate of the Jewish Institute of Religion and long-time rabbi in Danbury, Connecticut, called the selections “helpful in providing us with an insight into the methods of these earlier preachers.”¹⁰¹

However, Malino added that

...far too many [of the selections] are trite and strained and often irrelevant to contemporary Jewish life...If our preacher is to turn with profit to homiletical material, he is best advised to go to the classic sources of our religious tradition, Scripture and Commentary, Talmud and Midrash.¹⁰²

The Jewish People, Faith and Life: A Manual and Guidebook of Information

Concerning Jewry and Judaism, published in 1965, was intended for those who wished to know more about the Jewish religion. The book was written prior to the advent of Reform Judaism’s Outreach programs; thus, resources of this nature were hard to come by at the time of its writing. Newman hoped that the book would be of use to high school study groups, adult learners, confirmation classes or newcomers to Judaism. He also perceived

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. xxxi.

¹⁰¹ Jerome Malino, *CCAR Journal*, January 1964, p. 62.

¹⁰² Ibid.

the book as useful to those born into Judaism but who rediscovered their faith later in life.¹⁰³ The book is divided into chapters entitled “The Jewish People” [historical background, anti-Semitism, social qualities, acculturation], “The Jewish Faith” [values, morals, theology, messiah concept, the unity of God] and “The Jewish Life” [holidays, festivals, customs, rituals, life-cycles]. Newman also explained the distinctions between the three major Jewish denominations: Orthodox, Conservative and Reform, and included Mordecai Kaplan’s “The Principles of Reconstructionism.” There are also useful appendices of Hebrew-Secular names and transliterations of Hebrew blessings and prayers. The text concludes with a comprehensive bibliography of works covering a range of Jewish subjects.

Newman always recognized the importance of fostering Jewish identity among youth. In 1920, *The Hebrew Standard* published an eleven-page address given by Newman at the National Conference of the Intercollegiate Zionist Association at Harvard University, entitled “Jewish Youth At The Crossroads: Nation Breaking or Nation Building.” Newman called on America’s Jewish youth to dedicate themselves to the upbuilding of Jewry’s “three centers of gravity: America, the most influential; Eastern Europe, the most populous, and Palestine, the most Jewish center.”¹⁰⁴ Newman encouraged young people to consider entering the fields of Jewish service – social, communal, educational or rabbinical – and lending their skills and expertise to the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe. Above all, Newman stressed the “arch labor”¹⁰⁵ of

¹⁰³ Newman, *Jewish People, Faith and Life: A Manual and Guidebook of Information Concerning Jewry and Judaism* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1965), pp. ix-x.

¹⁰⁴ Newman, “Jewish Youth At The Crossroads: Nation-Breaking or Nation-Building,” An Address delivered at the Sabbath Services of the National Conference of the Intercollegiate Zionist Association in the Union of Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 3 January 1920, p. 7 (Reprinted from *The Hebrew Standard*, 2 July 1920).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p. 8.

aiding in the development of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. During the 1920s through to the 1940s Newman contributed a weekly column to *The Scribe*, the Portland, Oregon Jewish newspaper that offered “a consistently enthusiastic Zionist viewpoint.”¹⁰⁶ The title of Newman’s column, “Telling It In Gath,” was adapted from *II Samuel 1:20*.

Whereas the biblical David commanded his troops to withhold the truth regarding the death of Saul and Jonathan, Newman’s devoted his columns to expounding on American-Jewish affairs as well as providing extensive and critical coverage of the work of anti-Zionist rabbis and the American Council for Judaism.

Over the years, Newman contributed numerous memorial essays to the *Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook*, the *American Jewish Yearbook* and the *American Jewish Historical Society Quarterly*. For the *CCAR Yearbook*, Newman wrote tributes to his Northern California colleagues Rabbis Jacob Nieto of San Francisco¹⁰⁷ and Rudolph Coffee of Oakland.¹⁰⁸ For the *American Jewish Yearbook*, Newman contributed a lengthy memorial essay on Martin Meyer, citing Meyer’s many accomplishments in his brief [forty-four year] life.¹⁰⁹

Among Newman’s most important published tributes was to a living colleague, Rabbi Jacob Weinstein of Congregation Sherith Israel in San Francisco. In 1931, the twenty-nine year-old Weinstein delivered a *Yom Kippur* sermon in which he expressed his support for striking dockworkers; he was compelled to leave his post shortly afterwards. Newman’s undated article, most likely from sometime in 1931 or 1932, was a response to Weinstein’s final address to his congregation, in which he “confessed

¹⁰⁶ Ellen Eisenberg, “Beyond San Francisco: The Failure of Anti-Zionism in Portland, Oregon,” *American Jewish History*, Volume 86, Number 3, September 1998, p. 320.

¹⁰⁷ Newman, “Jacob Nieto,” *CCAR Yearbook*, Volume XL, pp. 216-219.

¹⁰⁸ Newman, “Rudolph Isaac Coffee,” *CCAR Yearbook*, Volume LXV, pp. 152-153.

¹⁰⁹ Newman, “Martin Abraham Meyer,” *American Jewish Yearbook*, 5686, Volume 27, p. 246-259.

failure" in the "spiritual battle" with those he meant to serve. Newman's words reflect his identification with the manner through which Weinstein, who moved on to a prominent career as a rabbi in Chicago, remained firm in his principles:

...he [Weinstein] hoped for a great and sudden victory and a remaking of men. And because he did not achieve that gentle conquest, he feels that he has failed. He is mistaken...He is part of the great protest of millions against a world that is not quite good enough for the best that is in humanity. That is not his personal problem. It is everybody's...And Rabbi Weinstein knows that.¹¹⁰

For the *CCAR Journal*, Newman wrote articles on the issues of voluntary gifts to rabbis and the place of the *Bat Mitzvah* ceremony in Reform Judaism. In 1953, Newman discussed the subjects of honoraria and gifts offered to rabbis and congregations for services rendered, focusing on the flexibility called for when the rabbi served unaffiliated Jews.¹¹¹ Regarding the place of the *Bat Mitzvah* in Reform Judaism, Newman wrote: "Reform Judaism has given to the woman complete religious equality in the synagogue. Why should we object to allowing a thirteen year-old to read from the *Sedrah* and *Haftarah* and to receive the Rabbinical blessing in the same way as a thirteen year-old boy?"¹¹²

In addition to the aforementioned articles, Newman also wrote two additional articles of consequence for the *CCAR Yearbook*. One of these essays, "The Organization of American Jewry," discussed the role of fraternities, social service organizations, welfare funds, synagogues, community centers, and religious schools in Jewish communal life. In another article, entitled "Prayer In Our Times," Newman presented a

¹¹⁰ Newman, "Rabbi Weinstein's 'Failure' No REAL Failure at All." Undated. No publication information. Courtesy of Temple Emanu-El, San Francisco, California.

¹¹¹ Newman, "Voluntary Gifts for Rabbinical Service," *CCAR Journal*, October 1953, pp. 7-8.

¹¹² Newman, "Taking Issue With the Responsa on Bas Mitzvah and Circumcision," *CCAR Journal*, January 1955, p. 43.

detailed study on the role of prayer in Jewish life. Newman also published a twenty-page pamphlet called "A New Reform Judaism and the New Union Prayer Book." In this essay Newman offered his intellectual response to the 1940 revision of the *Union Prayer Book* (UPB). Newman asserted that the appearance of a Newly Revised UPB augured well for a reinvigoration of Jewish worship in Reform synagogues. Newman called for a renewal in other areas of synagogue life, including committee work, the *Oneg Shabbat*, the synagogue bulletin, and the religious school. The Newly Revised UPB, according to Newman, could become the cornerstone upon which a "New Reform Judaism" might be built.¹¹³ Near the end of this essay Newman wrote:

...mere listeners do not create a pious congregation, or an informed generation. I look forward to the day when the Reform synagogues will have regained a spirit, not merely of social, but of mystical and emotional solidarity, in the name and practice of our religion.¹¹⁴

In his article "Marriage Without Judaism?" which appeared in *Opinion: A Journal of Jewish Life and Letters* in 1951, Newman described the conditions under which he believed intermarriage was acceptable; namely, if the non-Jewish partner pledged to "enter our religious community, abandoning any previously-held religious attachment."¹¹⁵ Though Newman did not explicitly state whether he would officiate under these circumstances, he added that the Hebrew wedding service was "a crucial symbol of loyalties assumed. It cannot be treated carelessly or cavalierly."¹¹⁶ For

¹¹³ Newman, "A New Reform Judaism and The New Union Prayer Book: A Personal Statement," Congregation Rodeph Sholom, New York City, 19 February 1943, p. 5.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 20.

¹¹⁵ Newman, "Marriage Without Judaism?" *Opinion: A Journal of Jewish Life and Letters*, September-October 1951, p. 14.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 15.

Newman, the marriage ceremony had to be carried out so as to “maintain our integrity as Jews.”¹¹⁷

“Where Jews Succeed: A Reply to Mr. Feuerlicht,” published in 1937 in *Forum Magazine*, was Newman’s response to an earlier article in the same journal, “Where the Jews Fail,” in which author Maurice Feuerlicht, the son of Rabbi Morris Feuerlicht,¹¹⁸ disparaged his Jewish upbringing and wrote of Judaism’s “martyr complex”:

I believe we Jews will never be normal individuals so long as we maintain and foster our martyr complex, so long as we remain shy of self-appraisal and self-improvement, and so long as we find it easier to blame the other fellow for our own faults.¹¹⁹

Feuerlicht’s essay ran counter to the Jewish pride and respect for tradition to which Newman spent his life perpetuating. Newman considered self-hating Jews such as Feuerlicht ripe targets for rebuke. Countering Feuerlicht’s claims of Judaism as an alibi for a perceived sense of persecution, Newman described how Jewish parents “for the most part, succeed in awakening love and respect for Jewish values among their children and young people.”¹²⁰ Newman upheld the importance of the *Passover seder* as a “rugged ethical preachment of emancipation for the enslaved”¹²¹ while *Shabbat* represented a time when “the home becomes a sanctuary.”¹²² Newman listed some of the

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 16.

¹¹⁸ Morris M. Feuerlicht (1879-1959). Ordained at HUC in 1901 and Rabbi of Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation for forty-seven years. He also served thirty-one years on the faculty of Butler University. Feuerlicht was involved in many communal activities in Indiana: Red Cross, chaplaincy, childrens’ aid (*CCAR Yearbook*, Volume LXX).

¹¹⁹ Feuerlicht, Maurice M. “Where The Jews Fail.” *Forum Magazine*, October 1937, www.codoh.com/zionweb/ziwtjf.html, p. 5.

¹²⁰ Newman, “Where Jews Succeed: A Reply to Mr. Feuerlicht,” *Forum Magazine*, December 1937, Volume XCVIII, Number 6, p. 273.

¹²¹ Ibid, p. 274.

¹²² Ibid.

notable figures who had succeeded in elevating Jewish pride and identity: Moses Mendelssohn, Moses Montefiore, Israel Zangwill, Theodore Herzl, Achad HaAm, Hayim Bialik and Mordecai Kaplan. As a cure for the “empoisoned spirit”¹²³ that afflicted Jews like Feuerlicht, Newman turned to the words of the poet Tennyson: “Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control; these three alone lead a life to sovereign power.”¹²⁴

Newman’s Rodeph Sholom sermons were published in several volumes. A sampling of their titles reflects the scope of Newman’s interests and concerns as they pertained to Jewish life: “Our Nerves and How To Control Them,” “Building Up Self-Confidence,” “Our Old People’s Security,” “The Modern Clergyman and his Duties,” and “Mixed Marriages: The Catholic, Protestant and Jewish Viewpoints.” In a sermon entitled “Who is the Man of Courage?” Newman wrote:

No leader entrusted with the mission of speaking forthrightly concerning his own generation can fail to say unpalatable and unpleasant things... It is always easy for the crowd to gather in protest against the individual who speaks to it in criticism of its conduct. True courage is displayed not when a member of the anonymous mob picks up a rock to hurl it at the dissenter, but when an individual steps out of the infuriated crowd and bids it halt its murderous intent.¹²⁵

Words such as these further reflected the value that Newman placed on the rabbi’s right to serve as the conscience of his congregation. Rabbis were not meant to speak what congregations wished to hear, but what they had to hear. Self-censorship diminished the rabbi’s stature. It was vital to speak the truth, in the hope that at least one listener, rather than shout back in protest, recognized the validity of the rabbi’s words. For *Rosh*

¹²³ Ibid, p. 278.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Newman, “Who Is The Man Of Courage?” June 1930, in *Sermons and Addresses*, Volume III, (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1941), p. 8.

HaShanah, Yom Kippur and the Jewish Festivals, Newman composed sermons that bore such titles as “The Endless Struggle,” “Keepers of the Light,” “What Immortality Have We?” and “The Sukkah Within.” In the latter sermon, delivered in 1946, Newman writes of the *sukkah* as a metaphor for the protective and decorative enclosure within which meaningful Jewish lives can be created. The *sukkah* is a physical reminder of the Jewish ties with Palestine. For Newman, the *sukkah* served also as a link in the perpetual chain of Jewish tradition, connecting to the past, enhancing the present and laying the groundwork for continuing reward in the future.

It is for us, then, in Israel, and for all our fellow Jews as well, to build not merely a *Sukkah* on the Altar, but a *Sukkah* within our heart. For is our heart is adorned with grace, abundance of feeling, energetic impulses towards helpfulness, and the desire to achieve unity with our fellows, even as the *Sukkah* and *Lulav* are united, then we can make the life of Jewry in Palestine as joyous as the experience of our fathers in the *Sukkah* in the home and the synagogue, or in the wilderness centuries ago.¹²⁶

Newman used his pulpit to express his views on the important figures of his time: “Mr. Fosdick’s Religion and the Pope’s Appeal to Protestants as seen by a Jew,” “Clarence Darrow’s Agnostic Faith” and “Cardozo and Brandeis: Two Masters of Letter and Spirit.” Expressing the pride that accompanied seeing two Jews, Louis D. Brandeis and Benjamin Cardozo, serve on his nation’s highest court, Newman wrote:

Cardozo and Brandeis! Shall not Israel rejoice mightily and take honorable pride in their words and works? And shall not all mankind be blessed because through them the Supreme Lawgiver on High makes known His will for His children everywhere!¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Newman, “The Sukkah Within,” 10 October 1946, in *Becoming A New Person: Volume VI of Sermons and Addresses*, (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1950), p. 6.

¹²⁷ Newman, “Cardozo and Brandeis: Two Masters of Letter and Spirit,” 13 March 1932, in

In keeping with his interest in drama and its role in evoking Jewish ideals and values, Newman devoted several sermons to analyses of the major plays of his day: "Elmer Rice's *Counsellor-At-Law*: An American-Jewish Portrait," "*Mourning Becomes Electra*: The Ethical Ideals of Eugene O'Neill's Masterpiece" and "[Phillip Barry's] *The Animal Kingdom* and the Kingdom of the Spirit." In the character of *Counsellor-At-Law*'s George Simon, Newman recognized the Jewish quality of combativeness and determination:

We are told that a Hasid said to the Kotzker Rabbi concerning another Rabbi whom rumors credited with the power to work miracles: "Now I would like to know, if he is able to work the miracle of making one real Hasid." Elmer Rice has apparently succeeded in this onerous task by calling into being the appealing, magnetic and great-hearted George Simon.¹²⁸

It is perhaps appropriate to conclude this section on the sermonic writings of Rabbi Louis Newman by citing his undated essay "How Free Should Clergymen's Preachment Be?" The purpose of preaching, Newman wrote, was "to instill in the souls of [the congregation's] members an appreciation of the troublesome problems of the age, and a readiness to be of assistance in overcoming them."¹²⁹ Preaching meant directing the opinions, character and ideals of the laity towards social righteousness and betterment.¹³⁰ The preacher, Newman insisted, had to remain independent, free to believe and express thoughts and ideas according to his conscience and to convey judgment in spite of the criticism of his laity. He must remain "the symbol of the more

Sermons and Addresses, Volume I, (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1941), p. 11.

¹²⁸ Newman, "Elmer Rice's 'Counsellor-At-Law: An American-Jewish Portrait,'" Undated, in *Ibid*, p. 8.

¹²⁹ Newman, "Preachment," p. 2.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 4.

solemn and somber values of life.”¹³¹ Newman included in this text stirring words as to how the clergyman must be prepared to stand firm in his principles in the face of whatever opposition that may appear:

The clergyman who cuts across the bias of a congregation or a community at any particular time – regardless of the issues involved, the correctness of the cause he espouses and the ultimate vindication of his views which time brings – must be prepared to fight for his ministerial life...No Elijah fleeing from Jezebel has suffered more than the clergyman who must at times go into the desert before the secular priests of Baal and their royal patrons today.¹³²

Common themes run through Newman’s poetry, drama, books and articles: the value of Jewish identity, the importance of Jewish survival and reverence for Jewish tradition. From Newman’s poems and dramas may be heard the voice of a writer who believed passionately in the strengthening of Jewish identity. In his many sermons, articles and books are to be read Newman’s beliefs regarding the welfare and continuity of Jewish life, in America, Israel and elsewhere. In his poems, musical creations and anthologies is to be found Newman’s devotion to amplifying Jewish identity and skill in dramatizing the crucial events in history and the qualities of historical figures – the *Besht* is a prime example – that serve as links in the chain of Jewish tradition. But Newman also loved America, the country whose fundamental values of liberty and justice so well complemented his own liberal Jewish beliefs.

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 6.

¹³² Ibid, p. 7.

Conclusion: Against The Current

*I sought to hear the voice of God,
And climbed the topmost steeple
But God declared: "Go down again,
I dwell among the people."*

*From the Louis I. Newman Memorial Issue,
Rodeph Sholom Chronicle*

What are the characteristics that constitute a significant and distinguished rabbinic career? Are they the skills with which one crafts and delivers a sermon, or the energy and resources with which one creates a dynamic congregational life? Do we look to the rabbi's scholarly attainment, or to the realm of political activism, or to a fervent determination to preserve the continuity of Jewish life? Does a noteworthy rabbinic calling depend on the rabbi's interpersonal skills – his or her sensitivity, compassion and concern for the needs of others? Does a rabbinic career merit our admiration when the rabbi exhibits a willingness to paddle against the current, to hold fast to his or her convictions and chastise peers when circumstances demand so – even if such behavior provokes professional isolation and even the outright enmity of colleagues? If the answer to all or any of the foregoing questions is "yes," then it is possible to conclude that Louis I. Newman's rabbinate was both distinguished and historically significant.

Pulpit rabbi, scholar, poet, playwright, essayist and political activist, unflagging advocate of Jewish issues and concerns, Newman's career was filled with achievement and fervent devotion to Judaism. His life intersected with many of the significant political and social events that affected both American and world Jewry during the course of the twentieth century. His was a life that was in step with the great spiritual, communal

and cultural strides made by American Liberal Judaism. It was also a life that involved conflicts pertaining to Jewish political and social policy, conflicts over which Newman could not compromise. For many of his contemporaries, Newman became a gadfly, a source of perpetual annoyance and moral indignation. Till the end of his life, the vitality and strength of Jewish identity, culture and faith were foremost in Newman's mind and heart. He embraced a fervent vision of an indomitable Judaism standing proudly upon the bedrock of its rich heritage and inspiring tradition. These ideals constituted the lense through which all of Newman's writings, political activities and endeavors in congregational life may be properly understood.

Within the intellectual milieu of Brown University, the University of California and Columbia University, Newman acquired the knowledge and the scholarly underpinnings that would fortify him throughout his life. According to his grandson, Newman possessed all the credentials to be a great academic.¹ Instead, Newman applied his learning, together with his deeply felt love for the Jewish heritage and its values, to a career in the rabbinate. During his years as a student in California, under the tutelage of Rabbi Martin Meyer, Newman began to develop the leadership and organizational skills that would secure his future as a rabbi in San Francisco and New York. In New York, fortified by the guidance and counsel of Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, Newman refined his gifts as a spiritual and communal leader. The historical record leaves little doubt that two rabbinic mentors, Meyer and Wise, profoundly influenced Newman in his decision to become a rabbi. It was fitting that these two men – both of whom were prominent American rabbis – conferred private ordination on Newman in 1918. At Temple Emanuel in San Francisco, Newman realized his vision of a synagogue that went beyond

¹ Saul Newman to Tepper, 28 October 2007.

serving as a house of worship. Under his rabbinic direction, Emanu-El developed as a synagogue center where Jewish learning, culture and social activity could also flourish. The Temple House of Emanu-El epitomized his vision of the synagogue as a communal hub. Notwithstanding the respect he earned and the success he achieved in San Francisco, Newman's tenure also presented him with the challenges – over Zionism, intermarriage and the teaching of Hebrew in the Temple religious school. In defending his ideas, Newman proved to be a formidable advocate. His forceful personality frequently enabled him to win battles and thereby remain firm in his principles. However, his intractable will also cost him the friendship of members and set the tone for the rest of his career. As one who responded intensely to any form of anti-Jewish behavior, Newman took on Hollywood director-producer Cecil B. De Mille and his film *The King of Kings*. The controversy put him at odds with the more complacent attitude of Reform's rabbinical hierarchy. But as with other conflicts that highlighted his career, it was one from which he refused to back down.

As rabbi of Rodeph Sholom in New York, Newman was dedicated to the upbuilding of his congregation. The scope of lay activity – cultural, social and educational - that encompassed his forty-two year career with this community testifies to the value Newman placed on synagogue life. During the same period, Newman immersed himself in the two major Jewish political issues of his time: Zionism and the fight against Nazi oppression. Through the 1930s and 1940s Newman achieved recognition as a rabbi who was unafraid to challenge mainstream political attitudes. Newman frequently found himself at loggerheads with prominent colleagues in the Central Conference of American Rabbis and with notable members of American Reform Jewish leadership. Even within

American Zionist circles, Newman's embrace of Revisionism and his friendship with Revisionist ideologue Vladimir Jabotinsky, put him at odds with his beloved mentor, Stephen Wise, and underscored his image as an unapologetic maverick. However, the fact that Newman was chosen by the CCAR to serve as an official observer during the United Nations historic deliberations on the report of its Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), which took place in the fall of 1947, reflected a measure of the sometimes begrudging respect with which their iconoclastic colleague was viewed.

In the 1950s, Newman's combativeness arose again when the Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR), which he had helped to found, fought for its survival as a presence in New York City. The fervor with which Newman applied himself to all of his endeavors was perhaps never more apparent than in his determination to ensure that, after its merger with the Hebrew Union College, the JIR would remain in New York and continue to ordain rabbis just as it did when it was under the direction of its founder, Stephen Wise. While successful in preserving Wise's legacy, Newman's act of brinksmanship wherein he established an alternative liberal rabbinical seminary designed to absorb JIR students effectively made him an outcast among the HUC-JIR establishment.²

A lover of literature and music, Newman wrote poetry and plays as a means of conveying his deep love for America, Israel, and the Jewish people. For Newman, drama and music were vehicles through which Jewish identity and self-esteem could be effectively expressed. They were undertakings that enriched the quality of congregational life, bringing pride and admiration to the community. It was for similar reasons that Newman found joy in collating and publishing the literature of the Hasidim.

² Miller to Tepper, 16 October 2007.

Borrowing from the teachings of his mentor, Stephen Wise, Newman embraced the “free synagogue” concept. Like Wise, he insisted on preserving the notion of a “free pulpit,” wherein the rabbi – as the conscience of his laity – was entitled to speak his mind without constraints. In 1940, when the New York Board of Jewish Ministers attempted to enact a “code” on preaching, Newman responded:

I believe there should be neither a “code” nor an unofficial “statement” on the subject of the Rabbis’ preachment. Each man, consulting his colleagues if he wishes, should be free to say that which seems to him necessary and important, in the light of his own conscience... I will refuse to obey any restrictive code on preaching, even if it were passed by a whole Synod...³

As Newman saw it, only through the preachment of truth, unencumbered by any form of censorship, could a rabbi make a difference in the lives of his listeners. As his beau ideal Wise wrote in his autobiographical volume, *Challenging Years*, “The minister is not be the spokesman of the congregation, not the message-bearer of the congregation, but bearer of a message to the congregation.”⁴

Precious little is to be found in the historical record that pertains to Newman as husband and father. Though there is scant detail to be found regarding family matters, Newman’s decades-long correspondence with Stephen Wise suggests his strong love and devotion to his wife Lucile and sons Jeremy, Jonathan and Daniel. The poetry anthology *Joyful Jeremiads* is an affectionate expression of Newman’s love for his children. Rodeph Sholom records indicate that Lucile, besides overseeing the upbringing of her sons, was a strong presence in the life of the congregation. According to family lore,

³ Newman to Wise. 11 September 1940, Box 13, Folder 10, LINP.

⁴ Wise, *Challenging Years*, p. 92.

Lucile was “absolutely crucial in softening his [Newman’s] uncompromising nature and getting him out of corners when it came to both professional and personal concerns.”⁵

Eulogizing Newman at his funeral, Rabbi Gunter Hirschberg wrote:

One of the things which could make Rabbi Newman truly angry was when someone dared suggest that romantic love could not endure as the years went by. His own marriage and his own life proved that he had every right to be angry. He was a believer and participant in the romantic attachment between husband and wife...⁶

On Newman the father, Hirschberg added:

When he spoke of his sons and daughters-in-law it was always with love and pride... he was a most active father who fulfilled the Commandment: “Thou shalt teach them to your children.”⁷

The enduring and formidable influence of Stephen Wise is evident in almost every facet of Newman’s career. No individual had a greater influence on Newman than Wise. No other person shaped Newman’s perception of Judaism more than Wise. Their extensive correspondence, covering a period of thirty years, reveals a relationship founded on mutual respect, trust, honesty and affection. Little pertaining to American or world Jewry was not covered in these letters. Detailed discussions of salient concerns such as synagogue life, the American rabbinate, Palestine, Zionism, Nazism and the Holocaust appear prominently throughout this copious correspondence. Though differences in opinion occasionally arose, their friendship remained intact. On the occasion of Wise’s sixtieth birthday, Newman wrote:

⁵ Saul Newman to Tepper, *Ibid.*

⁶ *LIN Memorial Issue*, p. 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*

Stephen Wise is more than a teacher, a
 spokesman for social justice, an orator,
 a tribune to his people, a statesman of
 wisdom and remarkable gifts of strategy.
 He wears the mantle of the Hebraic
 prophets, whose spirit finds in him a
 genuine reincarnation.⁸

At no time did Newman ever consider himself Wise's equal. Certainly, Wise brooked no equal in terms of leadership and Newman always knew where he stood in relation to his senior colleague and rabbinic mentor. In fact, Newman frankly acknowledged the special qualities in Wise that he himself would never acquire. Herein lies the difference between the two rabbis: Wise possessed extraordinary gifts with which to engage persons of all backgrounds and viewpoints, gifts that raised him to the peak of American Jewish leadership. Wise's life was one in which he earned profound respect from both friend and foe alike. Newman, on the other hand, though possessed of a potent pen, commanding oratory and driving intensity, also bore an intense and unyielding personality that could both repel and attract others. The force of Newman's personality produced in those who knew him joy and bitterness, respect and contempt, in equal measure. Despite the sharp disagreement over the issue of Jabotinsky and the Revisionists, the Wise-Newman correspondence continued to express warmth and understanding between teacher and disciple.

Louis Newman was a thoroughly American rabbi. He was born and raised in the United States, a graduate of three of its great American universities. He served as a much-respected spiritual leader in San Francisco and New York. His dedication to the Menorah Society and his ability to involve his laity in the life of the congregation is reflected Newman's determination to produce another generation of young leaders who

⁸ Newman to *Christian Century*, Box 13, Folder 7, LINP.

would safeguard the future of American Jewry. Though well versed in the classical Jewish texts and blessed with a broad knowledge of his people's history, Newman also expressed an emotional attachment to and admiration for the historical narrative and democratic ideals of his country of birth. Though uncompromising in his commitment to Zionism and Israel, Newman's sermons, writings and role as an activist lent weight to his stature as leader, critic and nurturer of the American Jewish community he served. I believe that Louis Newman was a Jewish particularist. He loved Judaism, the Jewish people and Israel. The zeal with which he undertook his pulpit work, political activity and writings reflects a consuming passion for intensifying Jewish identity in all its permutations. It was this very ardor and unflinching passion that made Newman – throughout his career – the source of both admiration and disaffection.

A memorial service for Newman led by the Rodeph Sholom Youth Group included the brief poem "The Voice of God," from Newman's 1948 collection *Trumpet in Adversity*. The words to the poem are: "I sought to hear the voice of God / And climbed the topmost steeple / But God declared: 'Go down again, / I dwell among the people.'" ⁹ This poem - as with all of Newman's entire life and career - is a source of inspiration. It is reminder that for Newman true piety cannot be found within the walls of a sanctuary or merely in the recitation of the prayer service. It is reminder that, though Newman sought and attained great heights within American Judaism, his enduring legacy derives from his ardent, even single-minded determination to serve the Jewish people and ensure its future. It was Newman's prophetic temperament that made him both a respected person and an angry man. His anger, however, was rooted in his impassioned desire to cultivate, protect and elevate the spirit of his fellow Jews. Newman's life

⁹ "The Voice of God", in *Trumpet*, p. 57, and *LIN Memorial Issue*, p. 5.

embodies the rabbi's potential to serve as an exemplar, to break new ground, to take risks, to use both pen and pulpit towards the betterment of Jews everywhere.

In 1955, on the occasion of Newman's 25th anniversary at Rodeph Sholom, his friend and colleague the Reverend John Haynes Holmes wrote:

When you sir, came to Rodeph Sholom, I knew upon the instant that you would succeed. You had every quality befitting a chosen servant of mankind: tall, handsome, a noble voice, scholarship, exquisite taste in the appreciation of beauty, art and literature... You loved men and were unfailingly sensitive to exploitation and injustice... You tirelessly served whomsoever turned to you for aid and comfort, and in every struggle stood bravely by the ideals of brotherhood and peace... ¹⁰

¹⁰ John Haynes Holmes to Newman, 3 February 1955, Box 11, Folder 3, LINP.

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