The Struggle for Unity

Attempts at Union in American Jewish Life: 1654-1868

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In 1790 the first six American Jewish congregations found themselves unable to agree on a text of the proposed joint letter of congratulation to President Washington on the occasion of his inauguration. Since that day the problem of establishing unity within the American Jewish community has continually been a vexing issue with almost as many failures as attempts. Only here and there can we point to occasions in which the American Jewish community was able to set aside inter-organizational rancor and personality clashes and establish some form of effective unity. It is the purpose of this study to examine the early efforts made in this direction, in order the better to understand later attempts to establish unity in American Jewish life.

Starting with the first half of the nineteenth century, as the Central European Jews began to join in ever-increasing numbers their Sephardic brothers in the United States, issues and problems which required

With this essay the Editors of the American Jewish Archives present the first of a series of précis of theses on American Jewish historical themes. Since the establishment of major courses in the field of American Jewish history at the Hebrew Union College a number of students have presented rabbinical and doctoral theses in partial fulfillment of the requirements for their degrees. Obviously the publication of a complete thesis has no place within the limited scope of this periodical. It is the intention of the Editors, therefore, to epitomize the best of these dissertations and to present them to our readers. Rabbi Buchler's study in its complete form numbers 163 pages and 324 notes. Inasmuch as his text has been recast, it has been found inadvisable, in this particular instance, to annotate this epitome in any detail. However, the completely documented thesis, based almost solely on primary sources, may be consulted in the Library of the Hebrew Union College. Among the basic reference materials and works carefully utilized by Rabbi Buchler are the following: the Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society; The Board of Delegates of American Israelites (an unpublished rabbinical thesis) by Allan Tarshish; The Rise of American Judaism (an unpublished doctoral thesis) by Allan Tarshish; The Occident (Vols. I-XXVI); The Asmonean (Vols. I-XVII), The Israelite (Vols. I-XIV), and The Jewish Messenger (Vols. I-VIII). This epitomization was prepared by Mr. Daniel Silver of the Hebrew Union College.—THE EDITORS.
the effective backing of the whole Jewish community, arose. Problems of adjustment of the new immigrant to a new society, language difficulties, economic hardships, and a social cleavage between the older Sephardic "aristocracy" and the recently-arrived Ashkenazic communities were but a few of the problems which began to complicate the picture of Jewish life in the United States. Later there was added the split in Jewish life caused by the growth of the Reform Movement. But most important, the few small Jewish communities of the eighteenth century grew and expanded until the lack of any unity began to react adversely on the Jewish group. Philanthropic and social welfare, the care of the poor, the burial of the dead, the collection of funds for Palestine, and the religious training of youth could effectively be dealt with only on a communal or national level. Yet, despite it all, by 1868 (when this thesis ends), Jewish life had taken only the first tentative steps toward order and cooperation. There was as yet no broad union of American Jews, no religious union, no central authority or board of control, no representative council or conference recognized as the authoritative spokesman for the mass of Jews in this country. There was a beginning certainly in the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, but for the rest, Jewish life was still in a chaotic, if not rampantly anarchic state.

To find out why is the purpose of this essay. We shall see that the answer can be formulated along these lines. American Israel, during the time of this study, though vaguely recognizing the many advantages of inner cooperation, had not as yet arrived at the stage where union was either imperative or pressing. A handful of far-sighted men might see the effect disorganization was having on Jewish life, but to the majority it was as yet of no consequence; its ill effects hardly touched their daily existence. To the measure that union was achieved, it was in those fields in which even the average Jew could recognize the need. Thus, in local charitable efforts, especially during periods of severe depression, the different congregations and societies met their immediate problems together. On a national scale, too, the direct threat which events in Damascus (1840) and in the Papal states (1858) seemed to hold over world Jewry was of sufficient strength to suppress some of the strong isolationist tendencies of the several communities, and out of this challenge the Board of Delegates was born (1859). But, generally, the period was one more of gestation than of actual birth and development.

**The Role of the Periodical**

Throughout the three middle decades of the nineteenth century, the Jewish periodicals exerted a two-fold influence on this problem which we are discussing, and we must now analyze their influence. The most
important, though the more subtle influence they rendered, was their aid in breaking down the barriers between the various groups and points of view in Jewish life. The facts they published gave the reader a much broader picture of Jewish life than he had ever had before. The subscriber, despite his limited experience within one congregation, one lodge, or one charity, began to understand and appreciate the problems of dozens of similar organizations in his own and other cities, and in this manner he came to realize how a union of organizations and talent would make for a much fuller, more productive—in fact, better—Jewish life.

Secondly, the editors as a group advocated and editorialized for closer contact, greater cooperation, and better understanding among the many different organizations and groups. They advocated concrete plans for union, and, if these failed, they pointed out the reasons so that the same mistake need not be repeated. Each had his own axe to grind, his own position to maintain; nevertheless, there was probably no greater force at work striving to bring a little order out of the existing chaos.

Isaac Leeser's *Occident* began with its very first number (1843) to advocate a religious union along standard Orthodox lines. During its years of publication (1843-1868) this periodical was used to back any plan which seemed to further Leeser's idea of an ecclesiastical authority to establish authoritative norms of practice for the growing American Jewish Community.

On the other hand, Robert Lyon's *Asmonean* was not so much interested in a plan for a religious authority as in a broader union embracing all the secular aspects of Jewish life. During the nine years of its existence (1849-1858) Lyon devoted its pages primarily to the practical aspects of unity. The steady stream of immigrants, together with recurrent financial panics, convinced Lyon of the need for cooperation among the many philanthropic organizations, and he did all in his power in this direction:

"We strenuously advise consolidation, for in it lies strength and efficiency; while separation into nationalities fritters away the power a community like the Hebrews of New York are expected to exercise."

Isaac M. Wise used his *Israelite* from the very beginning (1854) as a means of advocating a union of all groups along moderate Reform lines, and though he was willing to compromise in order to include all but the extremes on both sides, he knew from experience that only a union of those who had some point of view could be expected to succeed. So he bent all his efforts towards achieving a unity among

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the Reform groups of the West. That is not to say that he did not advocate a broader union, for he took an active part in calling the Cleveland Conference of 1855; nevertheless, as failure followed failure (for want of any common ground between the Orthodox and Reform leaders) Wise turned his attention more and more towards a strengthening of Reform in the West:

"We, for our part, have not the least doubt that at least the western congregations (and the west grows fast), will in a few years be a united body with Synagogue, Synod, Orphan Asylum, and College."

The Jewish Messenger (1857-1903), published under the aegis of the Rev. Samuel M. Isaacs of New York, advocated throughout its existence a strong national union along Orthodox religious lines. He emphasized the influence which the Jewish group might have in dealing with its own problems of existence and of security if the various Jewish groups were united:

"What better . . . than the feeling that we have contributed our portion to the amelioration of our own people, by uniting them for every purpose destined for their own welfare, and for entitling them to the respect of those among whom they are destined to dwell."

These capable and influential men were all clearly aware of the need for unity, and were committed to the task of forging a bond of cooperation among the various groups. All were well qualified for these tasks, all had energy and imagination, as well as ability; yet they accomplished so little. For, though all had a genuine desire to see a broad union of all Jews, each wanted it organized along his own line of belief and practice. They reflected the many disagreements and factions which had split Jewish life. That they, the champions of the union idea, had difficulties combining for their much-desired union, shows that the need was not great enough to force a union. How much more so, then, for the average American Jew whose daily life hardly depended on the solution of this problem.

That these men could not even agree as to the line such a union should take is indicative of how loosely and how vaguely the need was felt. Should the union be for a better ordering of the religious life? To facilitate the collection and dispensing of charity? For political reasons? All these were issues which these men could not agree upon; yet such a decision would seem a necessary prerequisite to any effective planning for union.

2The Israelite, III (1856), 196.

3The Jewish Messenger, IV (1855), 140ff.
Local Attempts at Unity

Those broad problems, which the newspaper editors recognized as demanding some form of cooperation in American Jewish life, were the outgrowth of confusion and overlapping on the local level, much magnified. The existence of many congregations gave rise to conflicts of one kind or another. Ritual questions, the validity of divorces, shehitah (ritual slaughter of cattle), problems of dual membership, responsibility for aiding the poor and hungry, the burial of the dead—all required some consultation among the several congregations, and in all these issues certain common steps were taken during this period.

The coordination and consolidation of philanthropic activities was also attempted at this level. Robert Lyon had called attention in 1855 to the chaos and overlapping which existed among such organizations in New York City:

“We are obliged to acknowledge that no unity of action or interchange of sentiment exists among our societies. Each society is an independent organization, irresponsible to all, excepting its own members, and in a majority of cases assumes an indifference to outside impressions.”

Yet, despite his plea, the only concrete result was a combining of the two Ashkenazic Benevolent Associations, the Hebrew Benevolent and the German Hebrew Benevolent societies in 1859, and an “off again—on again” Passover Distribution Committee first established in 1855 which facilitated the distribution of unleavened bread to the poor. In August of 1858 The Jewish Messenger renewed the struggle for a union of charities, and called for one strong central charitable association, representing all the smaller organizations, which should establish a fair and effective system of dispensing relief. But in spite of the efforts of such able men as Isaacs and Lyon, no further concrete steps were taken at combining the New York social agencies during the remainder of our period (to 1868).

In Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and Chicago, where there were fewer congregations, fewer charities, and proportionally fewer personality differences, the movement for a consolidation of charities was more successful. Thus, Philadelphia formed in 1858 a General Relief Association which, though only conceived as a temporary venture, worked so well that it was reorganized into a permanent organization. Cincinnati, under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Max Lilienthal, organized in 1856 a society for the coordination of all relief work, with the hope that all charitable societies would eventually join; and Chicago

*The Asmonean, XI (1864), 156.*
created its United Hebrew Relief Association in 1859, an organization which was probably the most efficient of all these councils.

There was one other area of fund-raising—the collection of funds for the Jews of Palestine—in which some measure of cooperation between the several congregations and communities was achieved. In the '30's a branch of the Terumat Ha-Kodesh (Society for the Offerings of the Sanctuary) was established in New York to transmit funds to Palestine without the loss incurred through supporting itinerant solicitors, and to get the various synagogues to subscribe a definite sum to Palestine relief. This organization, however, never clearly met these issues, and seems to have gone out of existence in the early '50's. The year 1853-1854 saw a terrible famine in Palestine, and on an appeal from Chief Rabbi Adler and Sir Moses Montefiore of England, a national campaign was organized which collected over $5,000, and the North American Relief Society was organized:

"for the sole purpose and motive of affording permanent aid to poor [Palestinian] Israelites. . . and that they be supported by remitting now, and at stated periods, all amounts you and your congregations can spare for so necessary and sacred a cause. . . ."5

Thus, on the local level, whatever unity existed was achieved only when the average Jew could recognize the necessity, though even then not without a great deal of difficulty. Overlapping demands made on their pocketbooks by various agencies led to some measure of coordination, not only in the collection of funds for Palestinian Jewry, but even, in a modest way, in the establishment of joint religious schools. But more than this was not achieved inasmuch as the necessity of a more embracing union was not self-evident.

**Toward a Religious Union**

The first attempt at a permanent national religious union took place in 1841 when the Rev. Louis Salomon and the Rev. Isaac Leeser proposed to a meeting at the Beth Israel Synagogue of Philadelphia that a plan be worked out to unite the congregations of the country into one religious organization. A full plan was worked out for presentation to all congregations along a two-fold line: to establish an ecclesiastical authority to promote education, and to effect unity of action and arbitration of differences among the American Jewish congregations. The plan was both comprehensive and ambitious, but immediately aroused strong opposition from the infant Reform Movement. And, in truth, there can be no question that it was intended to strengthen orthodoxy. The Reformers argued that the ecclesiastical

5_The Asmonean_, VIII (1853), 97-98.
authority was to be invested with such power "that it would easily exercise the most despotic hierarchical sway" and thus not only prevent the spread of reform, but even order abolition of whatever had already been achieved. In fact, Congregation Beth Elohim of Charleston, South Carolina, adopted the following resolution at a general meeting on August 10, 1841:

"Resolved that all conventions, founded or created for the establishment of any ecclesiastical authority whatever, . . . are alien to the spirit and genius of the age in which we live, and are wholly inconsistent with the spirit of American Liberty."

"Resolved that even if it were practical to unite the various views of the several congregations throughout the United States of North America, so as to establish for their government any union of action or plan of regulation, it would nevertheless be unwise and inexpedient to aid in the building up of a system that cannot be lasting, and which from its very nature must be hostile to the march of improvement, or the progress of enlightened and rational reform."6

Besides the Reform group, there were others who opposed this attempt at an ecclesiastical union. For instance, the Spanish-Portuguese Shearith Israel of New York refused to support the plan because they feared that the German Jews would outvote the Sephardim, and thus gain ascendancy in American Jewish life. This first attempt at Union was imaginatively conceived and carefully planned, but it came to naught as the result of fears within the Orthodox group itself and between it and the infant Reform, conflicts which were to become more and more pronounced as the century progressed, with a corresponding lessening of the chances for union.7

A brief and unsuccessful attempt to achieve some measure of religious unity was made by Dr. Max Lilienthal of New York in 1846. He invited Wise and one or two other men to join him in a Beth Din (court) which would offer its services as a religious advisory council to the American community. Various religious issues were to be aired, such as the agunah (remarriage for a deserted wife) and halizah (releasing a widow from marrying her deceased husband’s brother) and the contents of Wise’s Minhag America prayerbook, but when it came time to meet in 1847, all but Wise had lost interest, and the plan died a stillbirth.

The second major attempt at a union of congregations took place

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6Minutes of Congregation Beth Elohim of Charleston, South Carolina, August 10, 1841.

7Isaac Leeser’s circular calling for a conference in 1841 is printed as Appendix I to this essay.
in the years 1848-1849, and failed for a reason just the converse of the reason of the first failure, that is, from a fear on the part of the ultra-orthodox group that Wise and his followers would use the union to further Reform ideas. And, indeed, though Wise was associated in this call for "a Chamber of Deputies of American Israelites" with such representative orthodox leaders as Leeser and Isaacs, he yet seemed to toy with the idea that all Jews could be united around his standard of Reform. This worried the ultra-orthodox groups no end, and their fears were increased when some radical Reformers in New York (inspired by some of Wise's remarks) organized a "Society of Friends of Light" which advocated both union and Reform. This frightened the orthodox congregations into believing that the union plan was a scheme of the Reformers to advance their own purpose. They charged that the society had come into being as a direct result of Wise's speaking in New York, and demanded that any established union be pledged to refuse to authorize any reforms. Though Wise publically disavowed the Society and offered to withdraw if it was felt this would help matters, the enthusiasm he had tried to evoke for the union had been taken over by the Society, and the more conservative wing naturally, therefore, identified the union proposals with the radical ideas of the Society. In addition, various personality conflicts arose, and agitation for this plan gradually lessened during 1849.

It was Wise who renewed the call in 1855 for a religious union. He aroused interest in this plan by editorials in the Israelite advocating a private, unofficial meeting of rabbis to thrash out certain problems, to see what basis could be found for uniting all groups in a conference and a synod. He was more than willing to compromise, but he expected the Orthodox leaders to do as much. What he meant was that nothing would be done contrary to the Bible and the Talmud and which was not in keeping with the spirit of progress revealed in Mosaic legislation. Yet, though his ideas might actually already have found acceptance among Orthodox circles, the Orthodox leaders mistrusted Wise's basic intention, and many stayed away from the Cleveland meeting. They chose rather to fight the battle from the safety of their studies through the media of the printed word, and thus, in fact, doomed the Cleveland Conference as a failure from the outset so that it did not bring together all men representing the various facets of American Judaism.

Thus, when the Conference did convene on October 17, 1855, the Orthodox leaders present were outnumbered ten to six, though in

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8 Isaac Leeser's circular appealing for support for the proposed Wise-Lilienthal conference in 1849 is reproduced as Appendix II. The call to the Cleveland conference in 1855 is reproduced as Appendix III.
THE STRUGGLE FOR UNITY

Isaac Mayer Wise — Protagonist of Jewish Unity

Courtesy of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations
reality they represented a major share of American Jewry. This fact alone gave rise to a belief among Orthodox circles that Wise and the Reformers “pressured” their ideas by sheer force of numbers.

Wise showed a keen awareness of the basic split between the two groups when he presented the first paper of the Conference, a paper in which he stated that the Bible is the “revealed word of God, given to us by divine inspiration,” and that the Talmud “contained the logical and legal development of Holy Scriptures, and that its decisions must bind us in all matters of practice and duty,” that the Conference and all future synods should and would act in accordance with these principles, but that the “illiberal assertions of the Talmud are not the kind referred to, and have no binding force on us.” The Orthodox were at first astonished, but then beamed with satisfaction. Leeser came forward and expressed his regret that his Orthodox colleagues did not know of this statement in advance, since some of them had stayed away out of fear of reform tendencies, and he suggested a future conference where they might be present.

But both Leeser and Wise were to be disappointed in the reaction of the Jewish community to this apparent agreement on basic issues which the Cleveland Conference had developed. Neither the Eastern Orthodox group nor the radical Reform leaders were at all satisfied. Wise and Leeser were both denounced as traitors: Wise for supposedly embracing Orthodoxy, and Leeser for endorsing, by his participation, Reform.

The happy compromise, which was achieved through Wise’s speech, was based on each side’s having its own idea of what the Talmud was. To the Orthodox it could only be the strict legal decisions as codified in the Shulhan Aruch, the established code, while for Wise and Lilienthal it was the spirit of progress and growth by which the Talmud had advanced Judaism beyond the Bible. Wise revealed this basic difference of approach when he presented to the Conference his Minhag America, and as men began to consider the Reform character of this work, this basic difference became clear. Then charges and counter-charges began to fly thick and fast. David Einhorn attacked Wise and was himself attacked by the Orthodox Rabbi Abraham Rice. Others also joined the fight, which was often conducted on a very personal level. Even Leeser, partly to defend his own position and partly out of disappointment, turned about and attacked the Conference, saying that the cause of union had been damaged because the Reformers had taken control of the project and had forced through a broad religious platform which, in essence, backed the spirit of Reform. Few men kept their heads, as did Lilienthal, who tried to point out that there was no real basis for all this agitation: that the Conference had only laid the foundation for future discussions and
that it had adopted a platform on which both parties should be able to agree; that the Conference's committees could, in the future, work out scientifically, and based on Talmudic principles, any necessary reforms; that the Conference had in fact cemented friendships, allayed suspicion, and had laid a foundation on which a great union of American Jewish Congregations could be erected.

Those Orthodox leaders who had stayed away from the Conference never realized the real sense of achievement which its meetings had evidenced, and they had no use for a platform even showing a tinge of Reform. On the other hand, the ultra-Reform Baltimore group felt that much too much of a concession had been made by Wise and Lilienthal to the Orthodox group in the interests of harmony; that a rational faith should not be encumbered with the spirit of Talmudic and Rabbinic legislation. In fact, even the moderate Reform wing was not solidly behind Wise, for they felt that the synod, if established, could compel congregations to accept decisions as to ritual which might be counter to the spirit of Reform and progress which they felt was basic to Judaism. Reform rabbis, like Mayer of Charleston, advised Wise to set up a workable synod of Reform congregations where this fear would not exist and where real constructive work might take place among like-minded congregations. Even Wise, bitterly disappointed by the Cleveland failure, came to recognize the validity of this point of view, and in the future directed his actions toward strengthening Reform.

The attempt of the religious Reformers to create a united American Jewry, then, ended in failure, in fact, in vituperation and active antipathy. From the point of view of an all-inclusive unity, the religious field was definitely beyond hope. The two sharply divided parties could not be drawn together on a religious basis. Union would take place after 1855 within each of the two groups, but could never be all-embracing.

**Educational Projects—Spurs to Unity**

To promote Jewish education, especially on a higher level, and to train ministers for the American Jewish community was considered by all parties as a national problem. There were schools attached to congregations, and, in some cities, attempts had been made to run a school that would serve several congregations. But, for the most part, such solutions were on an elementary level, and did not come to grips with the problem of promoting Jewish scholarship or of providing trained leaders for the American congregations. Any attempt to establish such a college, university, or seminary demanded some measure of national participation, for it was too much for a single congregation to undertake such a project.
It was Wise who first began to agitate for a seminary and college of advanced Jewish studies. He sought to

"establish a college on the pattern of German universities, connected with a theological seminary, and a seminary for teachers, in order to promulgate science and the interests of Judaism among our fellow-citizens." 9

In 1854 he founded in Cincinnati the Zion College Association which proceeded to call on other cities to aid in this project. Response was at first heartening and Wise's optimism was unbounded. Wherever he went he organized branches of the Z.C.A. and broadened the original scope of the plan until, in 1855, the Cincinnati Z.C.A. announced through Wise that it would open and finance, the coming year, a four-year preparatory school as a forerunner of whatever institution might eventually be established.

Such unilateral action by the Cincinnati group angered their sister societies in the East, though technically Wise could argue that the agreement among the several Z.C.A. chapters was with regard to a university, whereas the Zion College which they were establishing was only a preparatory school. Nevertheless, even Wise later came to recognize that it was an unwise decision, for the New York group, angered by this act, severed its relations with the Z.C.A. in order to reorganize independently as a new organization "for the moral and religious education of youth."

Nevertheless, Zion College proudly opened its doors in the fall of 1855 to twelve Jewish and two Christian students. Only two years later it was forced to close because of financial difficulties. The Cincinnati Z.C.A. could not pay the costs of operation, and thus ended Wise's first attempt to establish a college. Its failure can principally be traced to Wise, who had failed to see that such an institution was more than any one community could carry, that it demanded the united support of at least a large segment of the American Jewish community.

Zion University was to be backed by all segments of American Jewry, but ended by being the project of the Reform Jewish community of Cincinnati. On the other hand, Maimonides College, which was set up in Philadelphia in 1867, was the handiwork of the Board of Delegates whose Orthodox leanings we shall discuss more fully in the next section. Ever since 1860 Leeser and Isaacs both urged the Board of Delegates to establish this school, but the Civil War prevented further progress. Finally, in 1866, the Board resolved to raise sufficient funds to establish both a rabbinical seminary and a general university in Philadelphia. The doors were opened in 1867 to four students

9The Israelite, I (1854), 99.
who, despite the financial crisis of that winter, continued their studies. The school was of very modest proportions and, in part for this reason, had very few antagonists. The exception was Wise, who opposed the College because it was organized in the East and not the West, because its leadership was Orthodox and not Reform, and mainly, because someone else, and not he, had been the chief agent in its creation.

There were several other even less successful attempts at organizing such a college on a national basis during our period. In 1864 the Jewish Library Societies of Baltimore tried to raise money for a Hebrew National College, but soon found that their resources were inadequate. In 1865 Temple Emanuel of New York decided to establish a theological seminary, but nothing more seems to have come out of this project during our period except that two students were given scholarships at Columbia. Similar projects were undertaken elsewhere. In New Orleans, St. Louis, and Savannah there were attempts at higher Jewish learning and institutions, but none of the projects seems to have materialized.

**The First Real Need — Jewish Defense**

Though the Jews could not seem to find ground on which to unite in the religious sphere, secular matters, particularly questions of civil rights at home and defense of co-religionists abroad tended to exert a cohesive force among the Jews. American Jews were made to realize that there was at least one area of danger which confronted all of them, and that was the danger of an anti-Jewish flare-up either in the United States or in the western world. Jews, by the second quarter of the nineteenth century, had come to believe that riots and anti-Jewish outbursts were a thing of the past; that the power of the medieval ruler would never be exercised as tyrannically as before; that those vestiges of legal discrimination which still remained would gradually disappear. But the Damascus affair in 1840, the Mortara Affair in 1858, and the question of the Swiss Treaty (1850-1874) were factors in awakening the Jew to the realization that "things were not what they seemed." Despite all differences over ritual questions and philanthropic matters, despite the disputes between various personalities, these three manifestations of the validity and strength of anti-Jewish feeling did much to force upon the Jews of America a certain measure of unity.

The first time that the Jews of America joined with their European brethren in a matter of international defense was in 1840 when the Jews of Damascus were charged with the ritual murder of Father Thomas. Jews all over the world were shocked by the imprisonment of thirteen members of the Damascus Jewish community, by the tor-
ture they underwent as the government tried to gather from them confessions to the crime of ritual murder, and by the recommendation of the Moslem Governor of Damascus in favor of capital punishment for all of them. After three months of futile attempts to get consular agents of the European governments to intercede in behalf of the Jews, a meeting was held in London of the Board of Deputies of British Jews at which it was decided to dispatch Sir Moses Montefiore and Isaac Adolphe Crémeieux to intervene directly with the Pasha of Egypt (June 15, 1840) to demand the release of those Jews who had survived the torture and were yet alive. The mission was crowned by the release of those unfortunates on September 6th.

While these events were taking place, a protest meeting was held in New York under the leadership of S. I. Joseph and supported by all the synagogues and important societies which framed a letter to President Van Buren (August 19, 1840) requesting that the American Consul in Egypt cooperate with all other consular agents to obtain a fair trial for all Jews involved. Shortly thereafter an answer was received from Secretary of State Forsyth that action had already been taken along these lines. Richmond and Philadelphia also held similar meetings. In aiding the victims of the Damascus Affair, American Jewish action was of little significance, due to its tardiness. Any action by the government resulting therefrom would have taken place after the release had already been effected. Nevertheless, it did have a great effect on the subsequent attitude of the Jews towards the question of seeking governmental assistance in such matters. The prompt action taken by the government was cited again and again, and the techniques of mass protests, petitions, and even joint action were bound to be a highly successful means of political pressure.

In 1850 a treaty was negotiated by the American representative in Basle, Mr. A. Dudley Mann, with the Swiss Confederation, providing for a mutual trade agreement. President Fillmore transmitted the treaty draft to the Senate in February 1851, specifically objecting, however, to a clause in the first article which provided that Christians alone were to be entitled to the privileges guaranteed by the Swiss Confederation. Individual Jews immediately registered protests and urged strong opposition to the ratification of this clause. Cries arose for protest meetings, petitions, political pressure of all types to induce the government to assure equal rights for all American citizens abroad, regardless of religion. Some – Robert Lyon, for instance – even advocated the establishment of societies to promote the emigration and resettlement of Swiss Jews who had been disenfranchised by the constitution of 1840. Under the leadership of Alexander Kursheedt of New York, there was circulated a petition from the American Jews to the Senate requesting that reciprocal religious privileges be assured all nationals abroad,
regardless of the religion they professed. This petition was presented to the Senate by Senator Lewis Cass of Michigan on April 19, 1854. As a result, the Senate declined to ratify the treaty as it stood, and amended it, removing certain objectionable clauses, though still not preventing the Swiss from discrimination against American Jews.

Things were quiet for a year and a half until an American Jew, A. H. Gootman, was expelled from one of the Swiss cantons. A swarm of protests swept over the country and a widespread feeling was abroad to induce the Senate and President to abrogate the treaty unless the restrictive clauses were stricken. In response to appeals from both Wise and Leeser, protest meetings were held in all the large cities, memorials were drafted, and a need was felt for joint action by the American Jewish communities; in fact, Baltimore called for a national convention of delegates from all cities to meet and discuss this issue. However, the conference in September to meet the following month was both too hastily and too poorly planned, and this, combined with old personal antagonisms, kept all but five cities away. (Charleston, Washington, and Philadelphia even presented separate petitions to the President.) Nevertheless the Baltimore Conference opened on October 25th, elected Wise as Chairman, drafted a memorial to the President and proceeded to meet Buchanan in Washington on the following day. In an interview with him they received the answer that instructions had already been sent to effect a modification of the treaty to meet their objections; he also promised to use his good offices to effectuate the wishes of the delegates.

No sooner had this triumph been achieved than those delegates who were sorry they had not attended—together with embittered rivals—began to air the whole issue of the legality and representative character of the Baltimore convention in the Jewish periodicals. Arnold of Baltimore attacked Wise, claiming he had capitalized on the whole issue for his own ends. Herzburg answered Arnold, and so on. At Louisville a business man, Gerstle, well summed up this situation:

"It is a shame, that every public demonstration, every action undertaken for the welfare of our nation, turns out to be a personal affair. . . . Such men as Dr. Arnold and Dr. Wise would be an honor to Judaism, if their abilities would not be used to lower one another in the estimation of the Jewish nation."

Actually the Swiss treaty issue was not settled until 1874 when the Swiss Constitution, not the treaty, was changed. During the intervening years, however, no attempts at further united action was taken.

In late 1858 news came from Europe that a Jewish child who had

10 The Asmonean, XVII (1858), 93.
been converted secretly by his Catholic nurse in Bologna (Papal States) had forcibly been taken from the parents by agents of the Church. The news of this affair reached the United States via the press, together with letters and appeals for aid from Montefiore and the British Board of Deputies. The Central Consistoire of France, the British Board of Deputies, the Consistoire of Sardinia, and also groups of German Jews addressed petitions to their respective governments to intervene on behalf of the distressed parents. The Jews of the United States were urged to add their protests.

The Cincinnati community met in October under Lilienthal and addressed a petition to the Pope to be forwarded through the State Department, but no action was proposed on a national scale. It was Philadelphia with Leeser at the helm which issued a call on November 18th for a national convention of delegates and national action, but there was still no response, and the Philadelphia delegates met the President alone on January 9th. New York, in the meantime, had set up its own permanent Board of Representatives under Dr. Raphall to handle such affairs as the Mortara incident and had already been told by the President that he could not interfere in the internal affairs of another state. The Philadelphia delegation, of course, accused the New York group of having caused this unfavorable answer by spiking its attempt at calling a national convention, and much bitterness ensued. Actually, President Buchanan was unwilling to antagonize the large American Catholic population.

The Philadelphia delegation, disappointed by its experiences, recommended, in order to prevent the recurrence of such abortive action, that:

"the different congregations throughout the Union take into consideration the propriety of electing delegates to represent them in the future, so as to form a body similar to the Board of Deputies of British Jews in London."

They hoped for the establishment of a board or federation which could unite all Jewish congregational, philanthropic, mutual benefit, or fraternal organizations into a body that would deal with matters of civil and religious rights both at home and abroad, whenever the occasion required it. It was to fulfill this very pressing need that the Board of Delegates was organized.

The Board of Delegates — the First Successful Union Plan

The more conservative religious groups were very much disturbed by the Mortara Affair. They did not anticipate, as did Wise and the German Reformers, the imminence of a Messianic era of freedom; they

11*The Occident, XVI (1859), 541-542.*
THE STRUGGLE FOR UNITY

could not reconcile themselves to the "melancholy idea of Galuth" (the Diaspora) with its implication of insecurity for the Jews; they felt that the Reform group was too optimistic about the present. It was out of this feeling that the Board of Delegates was conceived.

It will be recalled that New York had organized a permanent Board of Representatives during the Mortara Affair to deal with whatever problems of this type might confront the New York community. Men like the Rev. S. M. Isaacs urged that other communities establish similar boards, that these local units then elect delegates to a national organization which would watch over the general welfare of American Jews, as well as cooperate with similar European bodies in matters of world-wide importance for Jewry. Spontaneous action by individual congregations had proven too ineffective; some national organization must provide the leadership.

Isaacs first had to reorganize the New York Board of Representatives and persuade it to take the initiative in calling a national conference. After many preliminary meetings during the spring of 1859, a meeting was held on October 9th by seven of the congregations, at which time it was decided to send every congregation in the United States an invitation to participate in the establishment of a national Board of Representatives. Response among the Orthodox groups was fairly good—even Leeser endorsed the plan, though he argued that the Board should also supervise religious affairs—but the real opposition came chiefly from the Reform group. Fearing that any union established might venture to throttle Reform, the religious liberals were led into opposition by Wise, who again objected because the Board was an Eastern organization not of his own creation. As it turned out, the Orthodox leaders who were present at the first meeting of the Board soundly defeated a measure by Leeser to set up an ecclesiastical authority.

Congregations all over the country began electing delegates until on November 27, 1859, forty-six delegates, representing twenty-five congregations in thirteen different cities met at Cooper Institute and went about the business of creating "The Board of Delegates of American Israelites" as a permanent organization designed to: (1) gather statistical information; (2) promote Jewish education and literature; (3) promote charity; (4) watch over occurrences at home and abroad relative to Israelites; (5) establish arbitration procedures for disputes between congregations.

An Executive Committee was created to meet in New York periodically and supervise the work of the organization. Officers were elected and the Board signified that it was ready for action. Its first business was to raise funds for certain refugees from Morocco who had taken refuge in Gibraltar during the war between Spain and Morocco. Some
$7,000 was raised despite Wise and Einhorn, who refused to acknowledge the Board as a legal fund-raiser for such appeals.

In spite of opposition the Board grew in strength, and within four months of its organization represented thirty congregations. Isaacs and Leeser answered ably the charges leveled against it of "politics" and "anti-Reform." In August of 1860 the Board held its first annual meeting when its scope was broadened to include the establishment of a high school to train teachers and ministers when the funds should be available. Again Leeser attempted to establish some sort of religious authority, and again the Board, though Orthodox, voted him down.

The Board was prevented by the Civil War from meeting during the next five years, but it survived the difficulty due to the energy and ability of its Executive Committee. This group dealt with diplomatic problems like the Swiss treaty, relief for Jews in Palestine and for victims of Moroccan persecution, sent memorials and protests to Washington, and spoke out strongly whenever Jewish rights were in danger. On the chaplaincy issue, Grant's discriminatory General Order No. 11 against Jews, and the proposed amendment to the Constitution establishing Christianity as the recognized religion of the land, it took direct and constructive action. Though men like Wise, Lilienthal and Einhorn remained in vigorous opposition, nevertheless, when the full Board of Delegates met again after the war on June 11, 1865, forty-two congregations were on its rolls, and by May of 1868, when this study ends, fifty-four of the 180 odd congregations in the United States were members.

The Board was thus the first success, though a limited one, because its range of activities was rigidly circumscribed, in the long movement toward unity among American Jews. It was successful in whatever measure it undertook because it fulfilled a need recognized by the average Jew. Up to 1868 the Board had grown each year, and it seemed likely that it would continue to grow. If it kept refusing Leeser's demands for an ecclesiastical authority, the suspicion of its anti-Reform tendencies would be allayed, and Reform congregations might even join its ranks.

In retrospect, then, by 1868 there was the prospect of an eventual stabilization of Jewish life in America. Charities were beginning to be unified along local lines, the Board of Delegates was growing in stature, and the two religious groups were beginning to organize within themselves rather than attempt the impossible, and establish a common religious union. By 1868 Jewish life had already begun to show a certain resourcefulness, some ability to meet situations of challenge. There was, it seemed, good reason to appear hopeful and confident, that whatever problems would face the Jewish community, the necessary reserves of strength and courage were there to meet them.
APPENDIX I

A meeting of Israelites of all the different congregations in the City and County of Philadelphia, was held pursuant to public notice, on Sunday the 27th day of June, 1841, corresponding with the 8th day of Tamuz, 5601, at the Synagogue Beth Israel, to take into consideration the plan for establishing a religious union among the Israelites of America, proposed by the Rev. Louis Salomon, minister of the congregation, Rodef Shalom, and Isaac Leeser of the congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia.

Lewis Allen, Esq., President of the congregation of Mikveh Israel, was called to the chair, and Mr. Henry Cohen, Treasurer of the congregation Beth Israel, was appointed Secretary.

Mr. Leeser then addressed the meeting on the utility of such union, and offered a resolution that a committee be appointed to take the plan into consideration and report to a future meeting.

The resolution having been amended on motion of Joseph S. Cohen, Esq., as follows:

"Resolved, That a committee be appointed to consider the propriety of endeavouring to establish a plan of religious union of the different congregations of America, and that they report a plan for obtaining the views of the several congregations as to such union, and such other matters as may be thought necessary to carry the union into effect, and that the plan submitted by the Rev. Messrs. Salomon and Leeser, be referred to that committee," was carried; and it having been further resolved, that the committee should consist of seven, exclusive of Messrs. Salomon and Leeser; the chair appointed Messrs. A. Hart, J. L. Hackenburg, Lewis Bomeisler, Frederic Samuel, Hyman Gratz, Zadok A. Davis, and Hyman Polock, on said committee.

The committee met, pursuant to notice of A. Hart, Esq., Chairman, at the house of Mr. Allen, on Thursday evening, the 1st of July, and appointed a sub-committee, consisting of Messrs. Hackenburg, Davis and Leeser, with directions to report on Thursday evening following.

The committee met that evening, absent Messrs. Samuel and Gratz, when the sub-committee laid their draft on the table, which was examined by sections, altered and amended that same evening, Sunday morning and Monday evening, absent the above together with Mr. Polock, when the whole having been gone through, it was ordered to be transcribed and to be reported on the following Sunday, to the adjourned general meeting.

At an adjourned meeting of Israelites, held on Sunday the 18th of July, at the Masonic Hall, L. Allen, Esq., in the chair, Mr. H. Cohen, Secretary, the committee made the following report, accompanied with the plan they had agreed upon.

To the Israelites of the City and County of Philadelphia.

The Committee appointed at a general meeting, held on the 27th of June, have taken the plan proposed by Messrs. Salomon and Leeser, into consideration, and offer the accompanying rules and regulations, together with the preamble, to your favorable notice and adoption; the whole of which is

Respectfully submitted,

J. L. Hackenburg,
L. Bomeisler,
Z. A. Davis,
Dr. L. Salomon,
Isaac Leeser.

Committee.

LEWIS ALLEN,
Chairman of the Meeting.

Philadelphia, 12th July, 5601.
PREAMBLE

The Israelites of Philadelphia, in common with their brethren in other places of America, have long since been alive to the many evils under which they labour in the great downfall of religious observance, and the want of proper religious education among them. But deeming it their duty to leave no means untried to counteract the deplorable state of want of proper observance, and to promote a due knowledge of the blessed religion they have received from their fathers: they have resolved to propose a union of all Israelites residing in America, to effect by a common and united effort, that which would evidently be beyond the power of accomplishing by any one of the small congregations in which the Israelites of this country are divided; they therefore offer the following suggestions, which they hope will forward greatly the desired result; in first establishing a competent ecclesiastical authority, agreeably to the injunction of the law in Deuteronomy xvi. 18: “Judges and officers shall thou appoint for thyself in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee throughout thy tribes;” secondly, by establishing schools for general and religious education under Jewish Superintendence, as commanded in Deut. vi. 7: “And thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children;” and thirdly, by promoting harmony and a concert of action among all their brethren scattered over the Western Hemisphere, in accordance with the lofty aspiration of the Psalmist who says (cxxxiii. 1), “Behold how good and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity.” With these views the committee recommend the adoption of the following rules and regulations for the government and action of the Israelites in America.

PLAN.

ARTICLE I.

The Ecclesiastical Authority.

Section 1. The delegates of the different congregations, as hereinafter described, or of so many as may come into the measure, shall elect at their first meeting, or as soon after as practicable, three gentlemen of undoubted moral and religious character, who are duly learned in the written and oral law, who shall have the authority conferred upon them, by their election, to act in, and to decide on all cases of religious inquiry, and to determine all questions laid before them, according to the law, and the approved rabbinical authorities: the members of this Central Religious Council not to be at any time subject to any authority abroad, nor under the control of any congregation, except in cases of misdemeanor, and willful false decisions, in which cases, one or all of such offending parties, are to be removed by the delegates of the Union as above; and a majority of the delegates present shall be required for a vote of suspension for a period of from three to twelve months, and a majority of two-thirds for a suspension for a longer period, or expulsion from office.

Sect. 2. Whenever any case for adjudication comes before any one of the Board hereby constituted, he may decide for himself only, if the emergency will not permit him to consult his colleagues; but if otherwise he is bound to consult them, either in person or in writing, before he gives any answer; in order to insure that the laws of God be properly expounded, and strictly obeyed, as far as lies in the power of the Board here-with proposed.

Sect. 3. In case a decision is made by one member in the absence of his colleagues in any emergency, the said decision must be transmitted without delay to the President of this Union, for the approbation of the other members of the Central Religious Council, and a copy of all decisions is to be forwarded to the recording secretary, as hereinafter described.

Sect. 4. The Hazanim [cantors] of all the congregations of this Union, are to be ex officio associates of the Board, provided always, that nothing is to prevent the delegates from electing a Hazan to
be a member of the Central Religious Council, if he duly qualified for the office in character and capacity.

**SECT. 5.** In a place where no one of the members of the Central Religious Council resides, the Hazan, or Hazanim, or other persons, in whom the community have confidence, may decide in any emergency, but the decision must also at once be transmitted to the Central Religious Council for their approbation.

**SECT. 6.** Any party deeming himself aggrieved by the decision of any one member of the Board, or any other person acting under an emergency, may appeal to the whole Central Religious Council, whose decision by a majority shall be final.

**SECT. 7.** The associates, as above provided, shall merely have power to speak at a meeting of the members of the Central Religious Council, but not to vote.

**SECT. 8.** One of the three members as above shall be the President of the Board, and shall be specially elected for this purpose by the delegates. He shall have the power to convene the Board, whenever he may deem the public good requires it, and have a general supervision of strictly ecclesiastical matters in this Union.

**SECT. 9.** As the authority herewith delegated is merely advisory, the Central Religious Council shall never exercise the power of excommunicating any one, for any offence whatever; nor to possess the right of summoning any individual who, in their opinion, might be guilty of any transgression of the Mosaic Law; but shall merely designate the offences which of right deprive any offender from the usual Jewish rights and privileges.

**SECT. 10.** The privilege of performing the marriage ceremony being the right of each congregation, the customary authority heretofore exercised by the Hazanim remains inviolate; nevertheless the party to be married has the option of selecting the Hazan or any member of the Central Religious Council to perform said ceremony.

**SECT. 11.** The Congregations belonging to this Union shall not elect any Shochet [slaughterer] who has not been examined as to qualifications by one or more members of the Central Religious Council; and it shall be the duty of the respective Shochetim belonging to this Union, to be examined once at least in three years by one or more of the Central Religious Council, for which examination no fee whatever is to be required.

**SECT. 12.** No Shochet is to be suspended for frivolous reasons; and if any member of the Central Religious Council should find it his duty to exercise this prerogative, he must state the reason for so doing in writing to the person so suspended.

**SECT. 13.** It is expected that the Central Religious Council will watch over the state of religion, and use every proper occasion to exhort the people in sermons or lectures; and whenever any member of the Central Religious Council wishes to address any congregation, he shall have the privilege so to do, upon giving notice to the Parnass of said congregation.

**SECT. 14.** Whenever a new Hazan is to be elected, he must be examined as to his qualifications by one or more members of the Central Religious Council, so as to prevent any incompetent person being forced upon the respective congregations; and if any congregation should elect a Hazan who has not obtained a certificate of the Board, or who has been rejected by them, such Hazan shall not be admitted an associate of the Central Religious Council.

**SECT. 15.** The superintendence of the schools is herewith vested in the Central Religious Council and the above associates, and it is made their duty to report any delinquency in the teachers to the Board of Control, as hereinafter mentioned.

**ARTICLE 11.**

**The Schools.**

**SECTION 1.** As soon as practicable, schools for both sexes are to be established in
every town where Israelites reside, and the teachers are to be paid out of a common local fund, and on no account to receive any pay or fee whatever from the parents.

SECT. 2. Whatever rates for education it may be necessary to charge, are to be paid to the local treasurer of this Union, who is to pay the amount of salary which may be agreed upon, to the teachers, upon warrant of the local president.

SECT. 3. The system of education is to be strictly Jewish, and is to embrace,

a. Hebrew reading, grammar, translation, catechism, Biblical commentaries, and at least an introduction to the Jewish Oral Law, and if possible, an elementary knowledge of the Talmud.


c. For the higher classes, in addition to the above, Hebrew composition, Talmud, general Jewish literature, Latin, Greek, French, German, Spanish, mathematics, natural history, natural philosophy, moral philosophy, political economy, and chemistry.

d. Any other useful matters to be added, as occasion may require.

SECT. 4. The government of the schools is to be moral throughout, and on no account can any cruel punishment be permitted.

SECT. 5. A High School for education in the higher branches, is to be established in some central point whenever practicable, in which the branches enumerated under c are to be taught; and where young men are to be educated in such a manner, that they may be fit for the office of Hazan, lecturer, and teacher; and young women be educated for the high calling of female instructors; and all persons educated in our schools, are to have the preference if any vacancy occurs, for any office in the gift of this Union.

SECT. 6. No teacher to be appointed, whether Jew or gentile, who has not been examined, by one or more members of the Central Religious Council in the first instance, and afterwards by the local President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Hazan, as to capacity and moral worth: Provided, That the distance from one of the members of the Central Religious Council be not above 500 miles, in which latter case, the local authorities may temporarily appoint a teacher or teachers, till one of the members of the Central Religious Council visits the place, when the teacher or teachers must be examined by him; and if an Israelite, he is to be examined also as regards religious knowledge and conformity.

SECT. 7. Though it may be found requisite to charge for education to those able to pay – yet no person, who brings evidence of his inability to pay, shall have his children or wards refused admission into our schools, provided he or she sign a pledge to send them regularly to school at least three months in the spring, and four months in the winter.

SECT. 8. Whatever regards books to be used and other regulations, is to be left to the Central Religious Council and to the Central Board of Control for their action and advisement.

ARTICLE III.

The Union.

SECTION 1. It is recommended that all regularly organized congregations in America do elect delegates to meet at Philadelphia on the 7th day of November, 1841, for the purpose of carrying the above recommendations into effect.

SECT. 2. The ratio of representation to be as follows: Every congregation numbering fifty male seat-holders or under, to send one delegate; from 50 to 150, two delegates; from 150 to 500, three delegates; and one additional for every 200 additional seat holders.

SECT. 3. All votes of delegates shall be decided by the majority, under the usual parliamentary restrictions and regulations.

SECT. 4. The delegates shall be empowered to elect, in the first instance, the members of the Central Religious Council, and to fill all vacancies therein.
from time to time, provided always, that
the persons to be elected be duly quali-

Sect. 5. They shall assemble, after the
first organization, every two years, on
the 4th Sunday after the first day of the
Passover, and remain in session, by daily
adjournments, till all the business before
them be duly transacted, or postponed
to another meeting.

Sect. 6. An extra meeting may be
called whenever the majority of dele-
gates, or a sufficient number of congre-
gations entitled to send a majority of all
the delegates, shall require it; in which
case they are to notify the President of
the Central Board of Control, who is
then to issue general notices, and sum-
mon the delegation, by giving them at
least sixty days notice.

Sect. 7. The delegates shall be ap-
pointed by the respective congregations
in the manner they may themselves
direct.

Sect. 8. The delegates shall elect a
President to preside over them, and a
Secretary to keep the minutes, whose
offices are to continue till the next gen-
eral meeting.

Sect. 9. In addition to the above two
officers, they shall elect, at every biennial
meeting,

One Vice-President,
One Corresponding Secretary,
One Treasurer,
Four Councillors,

Who, together with the President and
Recording Secretary, shall constitute a
Board of Control to direct the affairs of
the Union in the vacation of the as-
sembly.

Sect. 10. In addition to the above
Central Board, each town shall elect
a President, Treasurer, and Secretary,
to take charge of all local matters and
moneys for local school purposes, but it
shall be their duty to report every six
months in full to the Central Board of
Control.

Sect. 11. The biennial meetings shall
be held alternately, unless otherwise or-
dered; first at Philadelphia, next at New
York, and lastly at Baltimore.

Sect. 12. The Central Board shall sit
in Philadelphia unless otherwise ordered;
and if the President of the delegation
should not be a resident of the place
where the Central Board meets, then the
Vice-President shall act for him, unless
the President happen to be present,
when he has the precedence as a mat-
ter of course; the same rule applies to
the Recording Secretary, whose place, in
his absence for the above or any other
reason, shall be supplied by one of the
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when he has the precedence as a mat-
ter of course; the same rule applies to
the Recording Secretary, whose place, in
his absence for the above or any other
reason, shall be supplied by one of the
Councillors.

Sect. 14. The delegates in general as-
sembly shall have power to deliberate on
all subjects, which may tend to the gen-
eral welfare of the Israelites, with the
exception of matters properly belonging
to legal points of the Mosaic law, which
shall be left, as is reasonable, with the
Central Religious Council.

Sect. 15. They shall devise ways and
means to defray the expenses attending
the execution of this plan, and to fix
salaries and other outlays properly com-
ing under the object of the Union.

Sect. 16. They shall not interfere di-
rectly or indirectly in the internal af-
fairs of the congregations, except to offer
their advice when any thing should be
undertaken in opposition to the law and
the commandments, and to judge be-
tween contending parties, if such should
unfortunately arise in our congregations.

* * * * *

The report having been read, Mr.
Lazarus Arnold moved that the same be
adopted, which, after some debate, was
carried by a large majority.

Mr. Jacob Ulman then moved that the
report and plan be printed, which was
unanimously adopted.

On motion of Mr. A. Hart, it was
resolved that 750 copies in English, and
500 in German, be printed for general distribution.

On motion of Mr. Z. A. Davis, a committee of correspondence of five members, with power to fill vacancies, was ordered to be appointed by the chair; and the President and Secretary were, on motion, added to the above five. Whereupon the chair appointed Messrs. J. L. Hackenburg, Isaac Leeser, Joseph M. Asch, Simon Elfelt, and Mayer Arnold.

On motion of Mr. Leeser, Mr. A. Hart was unanimously elected Local Treasurer, in accordance with the above plan, and Mr. Allen was also elected Local President, and Mr. H. Cohen, Local Secretary pro tem.

It was further resolved, that the Israelites of Philadelphia, be requested to meet in general meeting, on the 5th of September, the second Sunday before the New Year, to elect local officers; and that no one who is not attached to one of the Congregations of Philadelphia, either as Member or Seatholder, shall be allowed to vote.

LEWIS ALLEN, Chairman.

H. COHEN, Secretary.

Have the goodness to give this plan an extensive circulation among your friends, and use your personal influence to promote its being carried into effect.

CIRCULAR

Philadelphia, Ab, 5601, July, 1841.

To the President and Members of the Congregation——— at——— the Israelites of Philadelphia, send greeting:

Brethren!

May long life and spiritual and temporal prosperity be your portion from our Father in heaven, and may He, the most High, move your hearts to piety to Himself, and good will towards all Israel your brethren. Amen.

In the full confidence that you will favourably entertain our plan for a general union, we, on the part of the Israelites of this vicinity, affectionately invite you to deliberate well on the proposition and regulations which accompany this, and to elect without delay suitable persons for delegates, to meet us in general convention, on the first Sunday in November, being the 7th of that month, corresponding with the 23rd day of Marcheshvan, 5602, at Philadelphia.

We deem it scarcely requisite to admonish you to select men who have the fear of God before their eyes, whose interest in the welfare of the House of Jacob is of an abiding nature, whose moral character is unblemished, and who are of sufficient intelligence to judge with impartiality and reasonable conviction, and of such men there are doubtless many among your number; and have the goodness to instruct them, without exacting pledges, with regard to the measures you wish proposed, and what persons elected for the high stations embraced in our plan, that they who are chosen may step abroad with the seal of public approbation stamped upon them and their characters.

Although we can scarcely believe that any congregation, who are duly impressed with the paramount obligation to uphold our blessed faith, can refuse uniting with us in a measure which evidently promises so much general good: we would, nevertheless, thank you to let us hear from you with the least possible delay, if you decline the union we herewith offer to you.

In the full confidence of a favourable issue, and a fervent hope that you will be found united with us in a common effort to spread the kingdom of Heaven, we remain,

Beloved brethren, your friends and servants in the Lord.

J. L. HACKENBURG,
LEWIS ALLEN,
ISAAC LEESER,
SIMON ELFELT,
MAYER ARNOLD,
HENRY COHEN,
JACOB ULMAN.

Committee.
APPENDIX II

CIRCULAR

Many persons and communities who have read in the Occident communications from Dr. Wise, and others, relative to a meeting of our people, having for its object the adoption of measures for our spiritual and temporal welfare, although highly approving of the suggestion, still hold back from taking any active measures towards carrying it out, not being in possession of sufficiently definite information as to the nature of the objects contemplated. It having, moreover, been represented that the method at first suggested for bringing together the desired meeting, is open to various and weighty objections, this circular is put forth, which will be found to comprise:

1st. A brief exposition of the evils existing among us,
2d. Proposed measures of remedy,
3d. Mode of organization for the first meeting.

The evils existing among us will be found to exist of,

1st. A want of proper concert.
2d. The fact that our teachers have, in many cases, but few necessary qualifications.
3d. A great want of schools of any worth.
4th. No means of correct information on our ancient and present history and our religion.
5th. No constituted authority to which we can refer questions of doubt or contingency.
6th. No means or medium to supply our poor and our children with proper books of devotion and instruction.
7th. A want of proper devotion, alike in our houses and our Synagogues, amounting in some cases to a departure from the true principles of our faith.

The remedy proposed is to call a meeting or convention of Jews in the United States, having for its object,

1st. A union of all the congregations by delegation and stated meetings.
2d. Education of youth.
3d. Instruction of all classes by the establishment of schools and publication of books, informing our people of their destiny, their religion, their duties, and their history.
4th. The discussion of such other subjects as may be brought to the notice of the assembly by petitions from congregations.

The proper mode of representation and assembly is,

1st. A meeting of Jews shall be held in New York.
2d. It shall consist of none but delegates to be elected by any Jewish congregation in the United States, each congregation sending one delegate; and if more than one delegate should be present from any one body, then such whole delegation shall have but one vote.
3d. Every delegate shall bring a certificate of his election, signed by the president and secretary of the congregation sending him.
4th. The number of delegates for the first meeting shall not be less than 20.
5th. Any congregation agreeing to this plan shall notify the same to the Rev. Isaac Leeser, who, when 20 congregations have so signified to him, shall have power to appoint the day of meeting, and arrange other required preliminaries.

Arise, O Israel! you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation, saith the Lord.

This circular is issued under the auspices of Rev. Dr. Wise, of Albany, N. Y., and Dr. Lilienthal, of New York, and it is requested that all persons into whose hands it may fall, will present it to their friends and ask the cooperation of their respective synagogues.

You will confer a favour by informing
the subscriber, Corresponding Secretary pro tempore, of the determination of your body with respect to the election of delegates, whether favourable or not. In case you resolve to attend the proposed meeting, you will then state the name of the person or persons elected to represent your congregation. The subscriber will duly inform you whether a sufficient number of congregations have joined, and it is hoped that the meeting may convene at New York on the Third Monday in Sivan next ensuing, corresponding with the 11th of June.

ISAAC LEESER, Cor. Sec. pro tem
Philadelphia, Adar 5th, 5609.
[February 28, 1849.]

APPENDIX III

שלום על ישראל
[Peace be unto Israel]
The First Conference

In the name of Israel's God and Israel's religion, the ministers and delegates of the Israelitish congregations are respectfully requested to assemble in a conference, to take place the 17th day of October 5616 A. M. [1855] in the City of Cleveland, Ohio, to deliberate on the following points:

Firstly. The Articles of Union of American Israel in theory and practice.

Secondly. A plan to organize a regular synod, consisting of delegates chosen by the congregations and societies, whose powers, privileges and duties shall be defined, to be sent to the several congregations for their approbation.

Thirdly. To discuss and refer to a committee a plan for a Minhag America [an American liturgy], to be reported to the synod at its first session.

Fourthly. A plan for scholastic education in the lower and higher branches of learning.

Fifthly. Other propositions either sent in by congregations, or made by the ministers or delegates at the conference.

By order of the American rabbis,

Rev. Doctors Cohn of Albany,
Guenzburg of Baltimore,
Hochheimer do.
Illo wy of St. Louis,
Kalish of Cleveland,
Lilienthal of St. Louis,
Merzbacher of New York,
Rothenheim of Cincinnati,
Wise of Cincinnati.

ISAAC M. WISE, Corresp. Sec'y.