

## TO OUR READERS...

The distinguished American Jewish financier, statesman, and presidential advisor, Bernard M. Baruch (1870–1965), was known for his clever aphorisms. On one occasion he quipped: “Vote for the man who promises least; he’ll be the least disappointing.”<sup>1</sup> A few years ago, the editors of this journal promised to publish, in rapid succession, the back issues and return this periodical to a timely publication by the summer of 2009. With this edition, we have made good on that promise, and we pledge to maintain our traditional publication schedule in the future. We have no intention of being the least bit disappointing!

In light of the recent media attention that has focused the public’s interest on the impending changes in the overall structure of the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR), it is an ironic coincidence that this volume of *The American Jewish Archives Journal* sheds new light on almost fifty years of fascinating scholarly activity at the College-Institute. At the very time that HUC-JIR struggles to find the sure footing on which it will stand for the coming decades, the articles in this edition bring the school’s distinguished academic achievements into bold relief. The content of this particular journal offers a timely perspective on the influential role that HUC-JIR and its distinguished faculty have played in the unfolding saga of one of the most fascinating events in the entire history of biblical studies: the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in the caves near Qumran.

The essays in this issue demonstrate that the College-Institute has been actively involved in Dead Sea Scroll scholarship and has been at the epicenter of numerous controversies associated with the scrolls from the beginning, only months after a Bedouin in 1947 stumbled on the ancient parchments in a cave on the cliffs facing the Dead Sea. Collectively, these articles illuminate how HUC-JIR’s academic involvement with the Dead Sea Scrolls influenced the field of biblical studies and, concomitantly, captivated generations of HUC-JIR rabbinic students, who became genuinely interested in the fierce scholarly debates that ensued. After completing their studies, HUC-JIR’s rabbinic alumni applied this interest to their communal endeavors. They used what they learned in their sermons and, through their lectures on the Dead Sea Scrolls, HUC-JIR ordines helped to popularize the subject matter in Reform congregations all across North America.

Readers will also note that this fascinating reconstruction of the history of Jewish scholarship in the United States is almost entirely based on primary source material preserved at The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives. The AJA’s holdings contain the papers of numerous Jewish academics, many of whom taught at HUC-JIR but also many who taught elsewhere. The contributors relied heavily on the AJA’s rich holdings in this realm, and we are particularly pleased to offer readers the fruits of their scholarly labors.

---

In light of the thematic content of this edition of our journal, it should come as no surprise to see the face of HUC-JIR president Nelson Glueck (1900–1971) on the cover. Forty years ago this summer, Glueck negotiated a deal that brought a security copy of the Dead Sea Scrolls in Israel’s possession for safe (and secret) storage at the Klau Library, located on the school’s historic Cincinnati campus. Glueck was uniquely positioned to engineer this important acquisition for HUC. After earning his doctorate in biblical studies from the University of Jena in 1926, Glueck traveled to Palestine to study biblical archaeology. He succeeded in persuading HUC’s Bible scholars that archaeological research was a “handmaiden of history” that would enrich the modern study of the Bible. “The ground shall be made to reveal its secrets,” he insisted. By the time he was appointed president of HUC in 1947, Glueck had become one of the world’s most prominent and highly respected biblical archaeologists.<sup>2</sup>

Jason Kalman’s carefully documented essay provides us with a highly detailed analysis of the role that many of HUC-JIR’s faculty members played in the study of the scrolls. Kalman shows that for more than four decades, HUC-JIR scholars studied the scrolls and debated their significance in academic circles. We also learn that the faculty’s active involvement with the Dead Sea Scrolls captured the interest of many HUC-JIR students. Kalman pays particular attention to the heated debate over scholarly access to the scrolls. After many years and, in part, as a result of the work of two HUC-JIR scholars, the Dead Sea Scrolls became widely available to serious researchers around the world. As the editors of *The New York Times* observed, “two Cincinnatians [seemed] to know what the scroll committee [in Israel] forgot: the scrolls and what they say about the common roots of Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism belong to civilization, not to a few sequestered professors.”<sup>3</sup>

Richard Freund’s article demonstrates how the scholarly activities of the faculty influenced HUC-JIR’s rabbinical students and helped them to understand the significance (or lack thereof) of the scrolls. After leaving HUC-JIR, these rabbinic alumni introduced their congregants to the Dead Sea Scrolls and explained how these scrolls enhanced our understanding of the Bible and Jewish civilization (even while their teachers might have disagreed with their conclusions). Using many of the rabbinic sermons in the holdings of the AJA, Freund analyzes what the rabbinic leadership thought was important about the scrolls for their communities. Through an examination of Reform prayer books and Torah commentaries Freund also explores how American Reform Judaism adopted material from the scrolls for use in the ritual life of the community as well as how historical knowledge of the Dead Sea Scroll community in antiquity helped to shape Reform Jewish self-understanding.

Finally, Marc Saperstein and Jason Kalman provide us with a documentary analysis of two rabbinic sermons that focus on the importance of the Dead Sea

Scrolls. Saperstein has been a pioneer in advocating the use of topical rabbinical sermons as primary source material to enrich our understanding of the past:

As a historian,... my interest in past sermons is [that they] bring us back to a unique moment in the past and allow us to recover the complex dynamics, the agonizing dilemmas, the deep passions of a point in time that seems ever more elusive.... While no single sermon may deserve the description “historic,” I would imagine that in their totality [topical sermons] significantly enhance the historical record of American Jewry.<sup>4</sup>

In this documentary analysis, Saperstein and Kalman focus on two sermons written by Marc Saperstein’s father, Rabbi Harold I. Saperstein (1910–2001), in 1955 and 1968, respectively. By serving as an interpreter and transmitter of modern scholarly research, Harold Saperstein explains why twentieth-century (and, by implication, twenty-first century) Reform Jews should be interested in the Dead Sea Scrolls. These two sermons provide us with a useful case study as to how the Dead Sea Scrolls became a salient topic for American Jewry.

---

Jacob Rader Marcus repeatedly asserted that the study of history provides us with “perspective” on contemporary circumstances. With the benefit of historical knowledge, we become better able “to assess what is happening, to sense the direction in which [we are] moving.” Wise and reflective leaders will inevitably rely on historical perspective to assess and prepare for the unfolding future. By studying the past, we fortify ourselves to meet the future. “A perceptive community can then plan socially and, if successful, assert itself as the subject, not merely the object, of history.”<sup>5</sup>

The articles in this journal vividly demonstrate how the faculty, students, and library of the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion influenced the course of biblical scholarship over the last half of the twentieth century. What role will HUC-JIR play in shaping the scholarly agenda during the twenty-first century? Will the school continue to assert itself as the subject and not the object of history? The answers to these questions will be evident many years from now. In the meantime, the American Jewish Archives will continue to promote the study of the American Jewish past, unalterably committed to the conviction that “a people that is not conscious of its past has no assurance of a future.”<sup>6</sup>

**G.P.Z.**  
**Cincinnati, Ohio**

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in *Meyer Berger's New York* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 288.

<sup>2</sup>Jonathan M. Brown and Laurence Kutler, *Nelson Glueck: Biblical Archaeologist and President of the Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2005), 64.

<sup>3</sup>See Jason Kalman, “Optimistic, Even with the Negatives,” 68.

<sup>4</sup>Harold I. Saperstein, *Witness from the Pulpit: Topical Sermons, 1933–1980*, ed. Marc Saperstein (New York: Lexington Books, 2000), 2–3, 6. See also Marc Saperstein’s valuable new historical study based on sermonica, *Jewish Preaching in Times of War, 1800–2001* (Portland, OR: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2008).

<sup>5</sup>Gary Phillip Zola, ed., *The Dynamics of American Jewish History: Jacob Rader Marcus's Essays on American Jewry* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2005), xxv.

<sup>6</sup>Jacob Rader Marcus, “The Archives Story,” publicity pamphlet from 1959, a copy of which can be found in the collections of The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati.