

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: 'JEW AND AMERICAN IN THE MAKING':  
EDUCATION AND CHILDRearing IN THE  
AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY, 1945-1967

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My dissertation examines American Jewish ideas about childhood, parenting, and identity within the context of the aftermath of the Holocaust and the beginning of the Cold War, as a pervasive mood of anxiety about the future direction of American Jewry and its prospects for survival set in among communal leaders. I analyze a wide range of prescriptive literature on American Jewish parenting from psychologists, rabbis, and social workers, as well as Jewish children's magazines and educational materials from religious schools and summer camps. I argue that concerns about antisemitism, intermarriage, and the viability of Jewish life in suburbia drove the need for a philosophy of education and childrearing that prioritized positive experiences and attachments to Judaism and Jewish culture, without inhibiting the transition of Jews and Judaism into mainstream middle-class American life. Building on insights from Kurt Lewin and other Jewish psychologists, as well as Cold War-era notions

about the Judeo-Christian origins of American democratic values, rabbis and educators argued that Jewish education should produce not only happy, well-adjusted Jews, but well-informed and loyal American citizens as well.

As the first full-length study of American Jewish approaches to education and childrearing after World War II, this project sheds light on important and contested issues in several areas of scholarly interest. It demonstrates the central importance of Kurt Lewin's work to the formulation of the guiding motives and methods that directed Jewish education after 1940. It helps clarify what we know about the nature and extent of Holocaust education in the American Jewish community before the mid-1960s. It offers new perspectives into the process by which American Jews articulated a middle-class identity for themselves that was grounded in both customs and ideas from Jewish tradition as well as contemporary insights found in secular American culture. It also offers a case study for considering how minority groups in an open society such as the United States seek both to integrate themselves into American culture and to preserve their distinctiveness.

'JEW AND AMERICAN IN THE MAKING': EDUCATION AND CHILDREARING  
IN THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY, 1945-1967

by

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## Introduction: “A Study of Group Survival in the Open Society”

Sociologist Herbert Gans spent the fall of 1948 and nearly all of 1949 in Park Forest, Illinois, studying a topic he believed held the key to understanding the present and future of American Jewry: life in suburbia. Gans was interested in the genesis and development of this new Jewish community on the outskirts of Chicago, consisting primarily of middle-class families with young children, which arose in the summer of 1948 amid the postwar housing boom. While he acknowledged that the inchoate conditions of Jewish life in Park Forest differed in some respects from those of well-established Jewish communities elsewhere in the United States, he nevertheless insisted that his subjects in Park Forest were typical representatives of many emerging trends on the contemporary American Jewish scene. “[W]hen we think of the present composition of American Jewry – which is by and large second generation [immigrants], mostly business and professional in occupation, and overwhelmingly middle class,” he wrote, “perhaps Park Forest is not so atypical after all.”<sup>1</sup>

Gans noted the nearly complete resemblance between Jewish Park Foresters and their non-Jewish middle-class neighbors in matters of culture and taste, and their relative lack of religious observance. The aspect of Jewish life in

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert J. Gans, “Park Forest: Birth of an American Jewish Community,” *Commentary* 11.4 (April 1951): 330. Gans returned to Park Forest five years later and subsequently published his impressions from his follow-up investigation. See Herbert J. Gans, “Progress of a Suburban Jewish Community: Park Forest Revisited,” *Commentary* 23.2 (February 1957): 113-122. Gans estimated the number of actively engaged Jewish families in Park Forest at around one hundred, about five percent of the total number of families living in the development.

Park Forest that interested Gans the most, however, was its strong child-centered nature. In describing the efforts of Jewish parents to establish a Sunday school in Park Forest for their children at the expense of institutions for adults, he sensed an important shift in the orientation of this vanguard Jewish community. Traditionally, he argued, Jewish communities were primarily adult-oriented in nature, with the majority of their religious, social, and cultural institutions designed to serve the needs of adults and to train children for future adulthood and community leadership. In Park Forest, however, Jewish parents made the establishment of a community Sunday school the top priority, so that their children would have religious programming on Sunday mornings like their Gentile friends, and so that the children might learn something about Judaism and “become aware of their ethnic identity.” At the same time, the adults evinced far less interest in establishing a synagogue or other formal Jewish institutions for themselves, and many of them openly declared that while they wanted their children to identify as Jews, they did not want to be pressured by their children or their children’s teachers to adopt Jewish beliefs and practices in their own homes.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike their parents, Gans explained, Park Forest Jews were fully integrated into the mores and patterns of middle-class American culture. Nevertheless, like the previous generation of American Jews, they tended to remain socially apart from their Gentile neighbors, and they still wished to preserve their singularity as an ethnic group with a unique culture. This desire

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<sup>2</sup> Gans, “Park Forest,” 331-334.

for Jewish continuity, according to Gans, served as the primary motivation for the community's child-centeredness, even among American Jews with minimal ties to Jewishness: "Child-orientation is the mechanism that would seem to guarantee the existence of the ethnic group for another generation," Gans wrote, "even when the adult carriers of the group's culture are ambivalent about it, or have rejected it."<sup>3</sup>

Under these circumstances, he explained, the agent of identity transmission responsible for teaching Judaism and Jewish culture to the children of Park Forest is not the parent, as historically was usually the case, but rather the Jewish professional, who is "expert at being Jewish." Not only rabbis, but teachers, social workers, community organizers, and other individuals also served as the primary conduits through which Jewish heritage was passed from adult to child.

The efforts of these professionals to transmit American Jewish identity to children during the decades after World War II, to guide them into becoming both members of the Jewish community and the larger American society, and the ways in which that identity was framed and presented to children and their parents, are the subject of this dissertation. Influenced by insights from developmental psychology, informed by Cold War-era American beliefs about religion and domesticity, and inspired by trends in progressive parenting and education, American Jewish communal leaders worked to encourage children and their parents to embrace Judaism and Jewish culture as a means of finding

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 338.

personal happiness and emotional security. The majority of rabbis, psychologists, educators, and other self-styled experts in the American Jewish community hoped that their childrearing recommendations to parents and their educational initiatives would produce a generation of American Jews whose commitments to Judaism and Jewish living would not only provide psychological benefits, but would enhance their inclusion into the mainstream of middle-class American life as well.

Examining the methods, goals, and assumptions that directed American Jewish approaches to education and childrearing after World War II allows us to understand how communal leaders defined the nature and meaning of Jewish identity in an era of dramatic social, political, and cultural transformations that followed the Holocaust and the onset of the Cold War. It helps us to see both changes and continuities in American Jewish pedagogy in the postwar era, as well as in ideas about childhood and childrearing prevalent in the American Jewish community, and the influence of concepts from psychology and social science on those concepts and approaches. Paying attention to presentations of gender roles in depictions and representations of motherhood and childhood demonstrates how American Jews adapted Jewish concepts and images to accommodate Western middle-class understandings of femininity and masculinity. Finally, this study also offers an opportunity to consider how minority groups in an open society such as the United States seek, through education and parenting initiatives, both to integrate themselves into American culture and to preserve their distinctiveness.

As idealized objects, children carry considerable symbolic weight. Adults project their hopes and anxieties onto children and nurture and educate them according to a vision of the ideal personality that is shaped by social, cultural, political, and economic trends and concerns. Representations of childhood in prescriptive literature, as well as efforts to create ideal children undertaken by parents and teachers, can reveal much about the values and priorities of a given society or group, and can illuminate how identities and affiliations are formed.

Children offer a particularly valuable and important lens for studying American Jews' attitudes and behaviors from the late 1940s to the early 1960s, a pivotal era of socioeconomic and cultural change in American Jewish life. Child-centered trends and developments, including the baby boom, suburbanization, and the construction of synagogues for Jewish education and family socialization, reshaped the ways in which American Jews raised and educated their children after the war.<sup>4</sup> Jews, like other Americans, turned to psychology to understand how best to care for their sons and daughters, and Jewish childrearing authorities integrated insights from social science with concepts drawn from Jewish tradition in offering advice to parents. This study of American Jewish approaches to education and childrearing after World War II therefore illustrates how American Jews have attempted to balance a desire to ensure Jewish continuity with a desire to claim a lasting foothold in middle-class American life.

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<sup>4</sup> Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 285.

## Sociologists in the Suburbs

Gans was not alone in looking to Jewish life in suburbia for insights into the future direction of the American Jewish community in the late 1940s and 1950s. Over the course of the next twenty years, other sociologists and social commentators visited, researched, and wrote about this growing phenomenon. Rabbi Albert Gordon, also a sociologist by training, turned a series of questionnaires and interviews with Jewish suburbanites in almost ninety different communities into the 1959 volume *Jews in Suburbia*.<sup>5</sup> In 1967, sociologists Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenbaum published *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier*, their landmark case study of another post-World War II Jewish community on the outskirts of Chicago. Interviews of more than 400 Jewish men and women, conducted between 1957 and 1958, informed their conclusions. They polled the Jews of “Lakeville,” a euphemism for Highland Park, on their religious beliefs and behaviors, their attitudes toward the new state of Israel, their relationships with their non-Jewish neighbors, and their perspectives on childrearing and education.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Albert I. Gordon, *Jews in Suburbia* (1959; repr., Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973).

<sup>6</sup> Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenbaum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier: A Study of Group Survival in the Open Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1967), 20, 335. “Lakeville” is commonly understood to be a pseudonym for Highland Park, Illinois. See Michael H. Ebner, *Creating Chicago’s North Shore: A Suburban History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 223. Other important books and articles on suburban Jewish family life, some of which will be discussed below, include Natalie F. Joffe, *The American Jewish Family: A Study* (New York: National Council of Jewish Women, 1954); Harry Gersh, “The New Suburbanites of the 50’s: Jewish Division,” *Commentary* 17.3 (March 1954): 209-221; and Judith R. Kramer and Seymour Leventman, *Children of the*

Sklare and Greenbaum's choice of a suburban community for their test case site reflected their desire to investigate American Jewish life "in a place where the Jew who would increasingly be encountered in tomorrow's Jewish community was presently widely represented," they explained. Like Gans's Park Forest, "Lakeville" was home to a community primarily composed of well-educated middle-class Jewish families, who moved out to the suburbs with the goal of raising children in mind. Ninety-six percent of the researchers' respondents were married, and in half of the families studied, the median age of their children was ten years old or younger.<sup>7</sup>

Statistics validated the sociologists' interest in suburban Jewish life. American Jews stood at the forefront of the suburbanization phenomenon in the post-World War II decades, outpacing all other subgroups of American society in their rate of geographic mobility. During the 1950s, the number of Jewish suburbanites doubled, such that by 1960, two-thirds of America's 5.5 million Jews called suburban communities home. In this era, Jews took up residence in suburban neighborhoods at a rate four times greater than that of other Americans.<sup>8</sup>

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*Gilded Ghetto: Conflict Resolutions of Three Generations of American Jews* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1961), 17-18, 174-175.

<sup>7</sup> Sklare and Greenbaum did distinguish between "Lakeville," an older suburb with a more diverse population, and newer communities with only younger children. See Sklare and Greenbaum, 7-8, 21-44.

<sup>8</sup> Hasia R. Diner, *The Jews of the United States, 1654 to 2000* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 283-288; Riv-Ellen Prell, "Triumph, Accommodation, and Resistance: American Jewish Life from the End of World War II to the Six-Day War," in *The Columbia History of Jews and Judaism in America*, ed. Marc Lee Raphael (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008),

Gans, Sklare, and other scholars of suburban Jewish life devoted extensive attention to the nature of family life and Jewish education in these child-centered communities. They investigated, and often critiqued, the modes of Jewish living and methods of identity transmission at work in their subjects' lives. At stake, they suggested, was nothing less than the future survival of the Jewish community in the United States.

As Sklare and Greenbaum insisted, while Jews in the United States faced no serious external threat to their survival, nevertheless, "Jews do have their own Jewish problem: the problem of Jewish identity. They are confronted with the question of how to guarantee their survival in a society which is on the one hand pluralistic but on the other hand is so hospitable as to make group survival difficult."<sup>9</sup> Through their analysis of the Jewish residents and institutions of "Lakeville," Sklare and Greenbaum hoped not only to provide objective data on the nature of contemporary Jewish life in America, but also to offer assessments of the minority group's prospects for longevity in a postwar atmosphere of declining antisemitism and reduced barriers to social integration. The subtitle to their 1967 book, "A Study of Group Survival in an Open Society," attests to the

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119-120. See also "Two Thirds of America's Jews Now Live in Suburbs, Expert Estimates," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, October 16, 1959, <http://www.jta.org/1959/10/16/archive/two-thirds-of-americas-jews-now-live-in-suburbs-expert-estimates>, accessed January 6, 2014. For a broader overview of postwar suburbanization in the United States, see Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); and David M.P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> Sklare and Greenbaum, *ix*.

primacy of this concern to their agenda.

Herbert Gans and Albert Gordon also examined the extent and quality of Jewish education and family life in the suburban communities they studied, and explicitly linked the future success or failure of these ventures to American Jewry's ultimate fate. Gans wrote in 1957, after re-visiting Park Forest, that "in the long run, holding on to today's children – and, indirectly, to their parents – hinges to a considerable extent" on the efforts of the community's religious, educational, and social institutions to "influence the youngsters' feeling of Jewishness over the next few years."<sup>10</sup> Gordon, for his part, noted that "[n]o religious group in any community favors the loss of its identity through complete assimilation." He tempered his call for suburban Jews to mingle with their non-Jewish neighbors with a warning about the likelihood of a rising rate of intermarriage in the coming years, and urged an "[i]ntensification of efforts to counter this situation" through the strengthening of Jewish education.<sup>11</sup>

This dissertation examines how American Jewish communal leaders responded to these fears of communal decline and disintegration by focusing on securing the Jewish identity of parents and children. Increasingly anxious about the future prospects of Jewish survival, rabbis, educators, and communal leaders devoted unprecedented attention and resources to strengthening Jewish education and family life in schools, summer camps, and homes across the United States in the decades after World War II. They were guided in their

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<sup>10</sup> Gans, "Progress of a Suburban Jewish Community," 122.

<sup>11</sup> Gordon, *Jews in Suburbia*, 232-233, 244-245.

efforts by Kurt Lewin, a Jewish social psychologist, whose 1940 essay “Bringing Up the Jewish Child” emphasized the importance of early positive associations with Jewish group identity for nurturing a happy, emotionally secure, and well-adjusted American Jewish child. Jews adapted their views and traditions to conform to broader trends in American life, including beliefs about the therapeutic value of psychology and religion, but they did so to meet their particular needs – the concerns of a minority group interested in both accommodation to middle-class norms and self-preservation as Jews.

Building on insights from Lewin and other Jewish psychologists, as well as Cold War-era notions about the Judeo-Christian origins of American democratic values, most rabbis and educators argued that Jewish education and family life should produce not only happy, well-adjusted Jews, but well-informed and loyal American citizens as well. As will be discussed below, to achieve these goals, they advocated that parents should celebrate Jewish holidays at home with their children, on the grounds that religious practice created happiness by promoting family togetherness while also serving as a patriotic affirmation of American ideals. They recommended that parents choose biblical names for their children, because such names carried links both to Jewish tradition and to great American figures, such as Abraham Lincoln and Abigail Adams. Educators relied on engaging and interactive approaches to education, such as colorful magazines and the arts, to make Jewish learning and living fun. Despite ideological differences between various Jewish groups and movements, all of them promoted a sense of ethnic pride through Jewish education by highlighting

Jewish contributions to the development of American society and the bonds of culture and religion shared by Jews in communities all over the world.

These concepts informed more than two decades of parenting advice to Jewish mothers and fathers, in sermons, pamphlets, magazine articles, and how-to books. They also inspired and accentuated trends in American Jewish education, evident in juvenile periodicals, curricula, and institutional mission statements, toward an emphasis on inculcating Jewish identity through modern, entertaining, and interactive approaches to language, literature, and history. In the process, most American Jewish childrearing experts and teachers imagined and attempted to create a child whose Jewish identity, structured primarily around religious culture and an appreciation of ethnic ties, fit comfortably within a contemporary American middle-class milieu.<sup>12</sup>

### **Survival Anxiety in the Postwar American Jewish Community: Historical Background**

Apprehension about the state of the American Jewish community after 1945, focused most intently on the quality of family life in suburban places like Park Forest and the relationship of youth to their Jewish heritage, was not limited to sociologists by any means. Across the spectrum of Jewish organizational life, rabbis, psychologists, educators, and other leading communal figures attempted to diagnose and treat the perceived problems and weaknesses ailing the modern Jewish family. A pervasive mood of survival anxiety, evident in the sociological literature as well as in other genres of commentary on contemporary American

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<sup>12</sup> Sarna, *American Judaism*, 274-275.

Jewish life, played a significant role in shaping the ways American Jewish communal leaders conceived of, recommended, and implemented approaches to parenting and education in this period.

In 1946, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, affiliated with the liberal Reform movement, issued *The Jewish Family in the World Today*, a discussion guide for Sisterhood groups intended, in the words of co-author Margaret Mark, “to help in orienting the Jewish family to the milieu in which we live.” Mark, chair of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods’ National Committee on Child Study and Parent Education, explained to readers that she hoped the booklet would stimulate conversation among mothers and arm them with answers to common questions from children about Judaism and Jewish life. With a more sound foundation in these subjects, she hoped, parents and children would both arrive at “a sense of security, status and belonging as Jews and Americans.”<sup>13</sup>

An advertisement for the booklet asked rhetorically, “Your family ties – do you feel them slipping? Your family unit – is it threatened by many conflicting forces? Yes – family life today, both Jewish and Christian, is truly menaced by environmental forces of modern society.”<sup>14</sup> The National Federation of Temple

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<sup>13</sup> Margaret B. Mark, foreword to Margaret B. Mark and Bernard J. Starkoff, *The Jewish Family in the World Today* (Cincinnati, OH: National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, 1946), 2. Available online at <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89094364007;view=1up;seq=1> (accessed July 10, 2014).

<sup>14</sup> Advertisement for *The Jewish Family in the Modern World Today*, 1946, Box E-11, Folder 3, MS-73, Women of Reform Judaism Records, American Jewish Archives.

Sisterhoods anticipated that these sentiments of familial anxiety on the part of mothers, and the promised antidote of wisdom from Reform Judaism, would be most effective in selling copies of the book.

Other works intended for Jewish parents, such as the American Association for Jewish Education's pamphlet on "Your Child's Emotional Security," argued that Jewish home life and education could provide a sense of comfort and stability to children growing up in a world beset by conflict and oppression. Playing on similar anxieties, the pamphlet tried to convince readers that children who associate being Jewish with "happy experiences, warmth, and pride" will grow up sure of themselves and their place as Jews in society.<sup>15</sup>

This widespread tone of insecurity about the American Jewish future was a product of several factors: the transition from densely Jewish urban neighborhoods to suburban communities made by a growing number of American Jewish families in the decades after World War II; the aftershocks of the Holocaust and the impact of the Cold War on the American Jewish psyche; continued concerns about anti-Semitism and acceptance in mainstream American life into the 1950s; fears about a lagging Jewish birthrate in the midst

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<sup>15</sup> "Your Child's Emotional Security," (New York: American Association for Jewish Education, n.d.), Box 24, Folder 3, P-898, Samuel Geffen Papers, American Jewish Historical Society, New York. The Association was formed in 1939. While no date appears on the pamphlet, it was found in an archive near other documents dating from the mid-1950s. Additionally, the language of concern about "war and destruction, fear and want, [. . .] oppression and domination" echoes the rhetoric of other early Cold War-era material produced for American Jewish parents. See, for example, "The Synagogue and the Jewish Home of Tomorrow," Synagogue Council of America, November 1950, Box E-11, Folder 3, MS-73, Women of Reform Judaism Records, American Jewish Archives.

of the baby boom; and growing apprehension about intermarriage in the 1960s.

Many American Jews worried about what future lay in store for Jews and Judaism beyond the immigrant neighborhoods of first and second settlement, many of which were densely packed urban ethnic enclaves with a rich Jewish communal infrastructure that included synagogues, schools, mutual benefit societies, labor unions, and cultural organizations. Newer Jewish communities that formed or expanded after the war, even those with a relatively large Jewish population, lacked this established network of social, cultural, and economic institutions with Jewish ties, and they also tended to be home to families with young children. As a result, American Jews invested more energy and resources than ever before into determining how best to raise happy, well-adjusted, Jewishly-committed children, putting them at the center of organized Jewish life.<sup>16</sup> Historian Hasia Diner has argued that in postwar American Jewish life “[c]hildren occupied a place at the top of the Jewish communal agenda. Communal leaders and parents defined Jewish education as more important than they had in any previous era.”<sup>17</sup> They looked to education, both in terms of the institutional efforts of schools and summer camps and the work of mothers and fathers in the Jewish home, as the key to preserving the American Jewish

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<sup>16</sup> The significance of this transition from city to suburb for Jews and Jewish identity in America will be explored in greater detail below. On urban Jewish neighborhoods as incubators for Jewish identity in the pre-World War II period, see Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981); and Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 226. On the flourishing of Jewish women’s voluntary associations in suburbia, see *ibid.*, 302-303.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.

community in the decades ahead.

Concern for Jewish continuity was not a new issue in the decades following World War II. American Jews, like other minority groups in the United States and Jewish communities worldwide, have continually weighed the costs and benefits of assimilation while contemplating how to maintain an ethnic identity in a democratic, pluralistic society. The central narrative of modern Jewish history can be summarized as an ongoing series of individual and communal responses to the existential problem of negotiating between two competing desires—the aspiration to join the host society by adopting its language, culture, and values, and the inclination to assert a Jewish identity, through religious, cultural, political, and other means.<sup>18</sup>

While the quandary of dual loyalties in Jewish history is an old one, the context in which postwar American Jews encountered and sought to resolve this problem was decidedly new. Between 1945 and 1967, the years covered in this dissertation, many American Jews put down roots in middle-class suburban communities for the first time, in places that lacked the ethnic institutions and

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<sup>18</sup> On European Jews and the process of integration, see, for example, Marsha L. Rozenblit, *The Jews of Vienna, 1867-1914: Assimilation and Identity* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1983); Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002); and Marion A. Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). For an overview of assimilation theory and newer interpretations of its applicability, see Richard Alba and Victor Nee, “Rethinking Assimilation Theory for a New Era of Immigration,” in *The Handbook of International Migration: The American Experience*, eds. Charles Hirschman, Philip Kasinitz, and Josh De Wind (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1999), 137-160.

Jewish population density of the neighborhoods they themselves grew up in. They attempted to come to terms with the devastation of the Holocaust, as they felt that its consequences passed the torch of responsibility for global Jewish survival to them. They celebrated the establishment of Israel, an event some Jews hoped would stimulate Jewish pride and a cultural renaissance in postwar America.<sup>19</sup>

During these same years, Judaism gained increasing acceptance in American public life as one of the nation's three major faiths, alongside Protestantism and Catholicism. World War II played an integral role in this process, as it brought young Jewish men and women into the armed services together with non-Jews from all parts of the country, fighting together for a common cause. Though Jewish soldiers sometimes experienced episodes of isolation and hostility in the military, the experience ultimately helped integrate this generation of Jews into American society, and, as Deborah Dash Moore has argued, helped them to feel more secure in their dual identities as Americans and Jews. The powerful symbol of the Four Chaplains, who sacrificed their lives aboard the sinking USS *Dorchester* to save as many soldiers as they could, became a powerful postwar image in American culture of the concept of "interfaith in action," the slogan emblazoned on the 1948 U.S. postage stamp

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<sup>19</sup> Sarna, *American Judaism*, 273-274; Edward L. Shapiro, *A Time for Healing: American Jewry since World War II*, vol.5 of *The Jewish People in America* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 1-2.

commemorating their sacrifice.<sup>20</sup>

Additionally, the notion of America as a country rooted in a shared Judeo-Christian ethic, a concept that originated at the turn of the twentieth century but gained broad acceptance in the context of the struggles against fascism and communism in the 1930s and 1940s, was woven into the fabric of postwar civic life in the United States. The addition of the phrase “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954, and the designation of “In God We Trust” as a national motto to be printed on American currency, were manifestations of the country’s cultural turn toward Judeo-Christian symbolism and rhetoric in the years after World War II. Will Herberg’s bestselling 1955 book, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, contended that the United States was now a “triple melting pot,” consisting of Americans divided into three religious communities. While Herberg elided the existence of other religious groups and atheists in his observation, as Jonathan Sarna has noted, his argument nonetheless “captured the national imagination and shaped subsequent religious discourse.”<sup>21</sup>

Concerns about antisemitism remained prevalent for American Jews well into the 1950s. On the one hand, the legacy of virulent anti-Jewish rhetoric from the Great Depression era, propagated by Father Charles Coughlin and Henry

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<sup>20</sup> Deborah Dash Moore, *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap University Press/Harvard University Press, 2004), 118-122; Sarna, *American Judaism*, 267; Kevin M. Schultz, *Tri-Faith America: How Catholics and Jews Held Postwar America to Its Protestant Promise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3-5.

<sup>21</sup> Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955), 51-54; Sarna, *American Judaism*, 275; Schultz, *Tri-Faith America*, 57-67, 85-89.

Ford, remained fresh in the minds of American Jews after the war, and with reason. In a 1946 survey, 64 percent of Americans polled reported having recently heard disparaging remarks about Jews. During the 1920s and into the postwar years, organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and the American Jewish Committee lobbied Congress and produced media programs to counter antisemitic stereotypes and promote interfaith and interracial tolerance. On the other hand, the anti-Communist crusade that dominated American politics in the 1950s threatened to call Jews' loyalty to the United States into question. As a group, Jews held liberal positions on civil rights, labor relations, and international politics, and they had been over-represented in socialist and Communist organizations. The arrest, trial, and execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in the early 1950s punctuated these fears among many American Jews that their acceptance was not fully secure.<sup>22</sup>

While antisemitism remained a communal concern, anti-Jewish prejudice nevertheless declined steadily if not immediately in the years after the war, thanks in no small part to the efforts of the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League, as well as in cultural explorations of prejudice in films like *Gentleman's Agreement* and in legislative developments. As several historians have documented, as of the early 1960s, discriminatory practices against Jews such as restrictive housing policies and quotas in universities and professional schools waned significantly, though they did not disappear

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<sup>22</sup> Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 207-212, 276-278.

altogether.<sup>23</sup> As a result, Jews now faced fewer barriers to educational and professional advancement and to economic mobility. Thanks to the GI Bill and FHA loans, many Jewish families were able to purchase homes in desirable suburban neighborhoods on the East Coast and Midwest, while others participated in the exodus of middle-class and wealthy Americans to warmer destinations in the South and West, such as Miami and Los Angeles.<sup>24</sup>

All of these changes came amid the postwar baby boom, a period from 1946 to 1964 when more than seventy-five million children were born—a dramatic increase of 150% from the total births for the previous two decades. At the height of the baby boom, the average birthrate reached 3.6, almost twice what it had been during the Great Depression years. As Elaine Tyler May and other scholars have noted, this dramatic rise in American fertility was not the product of significantly larger families; rather, the population explosion resulted from the fact that “*everyone was doing it—and at the same time.*” While younger Americans married earlier and began having babies earlier, even during the war years, the largest increase in births between 1940 and 1950 took hold among women over the age of thirty-five, who delayed marriage and procreation during

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<sup>23</sup> On the marked decline of antisemitism in America following World War II, see Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 150-174; and Sarna, *American Judaism*, 275-277.

<sup>24</sup> Deborah Dash Moore, *To the Golden Cities: Pursuing the American Dream in Miami and LA* (New York: The Free Press, 1994); Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 283-284.

the Great Depression and the war that followed it. The baby boom transcended ethnicity, geography, and class, transforming American life from coast to coast.<sup>25</sup>

On the one hand, statistical evidence demonstrates that Jews participated to some degree in the fertility trend along with other American subgroups. Demographic surveys of American Jewish communities undertaken in the 1950s presented a clear, if not dramatic, indication of the rising number of births, represented by a noticeable bump in the percentage representation of infants and young children relative to older youths and adults in the population. According to one comparative study of the Jewish community of Passaic, New Jersey, the age group from birth to five years of age rose from 6.1 to 7.2 percent of the total population between 1937 and 1949. A 1953 study of the New Orleans community revealed that there were more than twice as many Jewish children aged 0-4 than there were teenagers aged 15-19. Statistics on Jewish populations in Lynn, Massachusetts, and Pittsburgh from the mid-1950s revealed similar evidence of an increased birthrate following World War II.<sup>26</sup>

For some American Jews, the act of bringing new life into the world took on special resonance in the years following World War II. Coming to terms with

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<sup>25</sup> May, *Homeward Bound*, 130-131; Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), 276. For a useful popular history of the baby boom phenomenon, see Landon Y. Jones, *Great Expectations: America and the Baby Boom Generation* (New York: Coward, McCann, and Geoghegan, 1980).

<sup>26</sup> Alvin Chenkin, "Jewish Population in the United States," *American Jewish Yearbook* 58 (1957): 66-68; Joshua Able, "American Jew: A Partial Profile," *The Jewish Criterion* (Pittsburgh), September 23, 1960. On the Jewish baby boom, see also Diner, *Jews of the United States*, 289-290.

the demographic and psychological devastation of the Holocaust, in which six million of their relatives and coreligionists were murdered by the Nazi regime, some Jews responded by starting families and deepening their commitment to providing their children with a Jewish education as an act of affirming Jewish survival. As Ruth Brin, an author and mother of four, recalled, "After the Holocaust, we felt obligated to have lots of babies. But it was easy because everyone was doing it—non-Jews too."<sup>27</sup> Other Jewish women related how the tragic events of World War II sharpened their resolve to instill in their children an affinity for Judaism and a sense of responsibility for "the plight of the Jews not only here in the United States but all over the world."<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, as sociologist Erich Rosenthal demonstrated in the *American Jewish Year Book* in 1961, Jewish fertility lagged well behind that of Catholics and Protestants during the baby boom era. Citing the results of a 1957 population survey by the U.S. Census Bureau, Rosenthal reported that children under 14 years of age represented 27.7 percent of the Catholic community and 26.7 percent of all white Protestants, compared to only 22.2 percent of American Jews. Put another way, Rosenthal concluded, Jewish fertility amounted to only about 80 percent of the reproductive activity of Catholics and Protestants. Other

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<sup>27</sup> Quoted in May, *Homeward Bound*, 26.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Joyce Antler, "‘They Raised Beautiful Families’: Jewish Mothers’ Child Rearing and Community Building," in *Imagining the American Jewish Community*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2007), 223-224. Antler examines interviews of Jewish immigrant women conducted in the 1980s, some of which were published in Rose Laub Coser, Laura S. Anker, and Andrew J. Perrin, *Women of Courage: Jewish and Italian Immigrant Women in New York* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999).

studies and articles repeated and reinforced these findings about Jewish family size, which offer yet another marker of Jewish adaptation to middle-class fertility norms – limiting family size in order to provide children with greater material resources and opportunities.<sup>29</sup>

In the years after the Holocaust, then, American Jews looked to children to ensure the community's future, but statistical evidence published in journals and newspapers suggested that not enough children were being born to guarantee long-term Jewish survival. Beyond this quantitative concern, voices in the American Jewish community also expressed ambivalence about the qualitative nature of postwar Jewish life, particularly in the suburban neighborhoods studied by Gans, Sklare, and others. As Jews increasingly abandoned the urban ethnic enclaves of first and second settlement – neighborhoods of dense Jewish population served by a wide variety of well-established cultural, political, religious, and educational institutions – for suburban communities lacking Jewish communal infrastructure, many American Jews voiced pessimism and skepticism

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<sup>29</sup> Erich Rosenthal, "Jewish Fertility in the United States," *American Jewish Year Book* 62 (1961): 3-5. For other reports of Jewish fertility during the baby boom as below that of other groups and the national average, see also "Intermarriage Among Jews in U.S. Reported as Being Low and Stable," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, May 23, 1960, <http://www.jta.org/1960/05/23/archive/intermarriage-among-jews-in-u-s-reported-as-being-low-and-stable> (accessed July 31, 2014); "88 Pct. of Detroit Jewry Will Live in Suburbs by 1975, Study Shows," *Detroit Jewish News*, April 8, 1966, 1, 8. Sklare and Greenbaum found that the average Lakeville Jewish family had 2.2 children, but, in a manner they deemed atypical for suburbia, they found that "there are no really large families." Less than thirty percent of the families in the study consisted of three or more children. See Sklare and Greenbaum, 22-23. On the link between middle-class status and smaller families, see Mintz, 76-78; and Diner, *Jews of the United States*, 245-246.

about the ability of these middle-class “gilded ghettos” to nurture the seeds of a meaningful, authentic Jewish life.<sup>30</sup>

In articles in Jewish communal publications such as *Commentary* and *Congress Weekly* in the 1950s and 1960s, many contemporary observers of suburban Jewish life expressed ambivalence, if not disdain, toward what they perceived to be an atmosphere of middle-class cultural conformity prevalent in these neighborhoods.<sup>31</sup> They claimed that suburban Jews joined synagogues not out of sincere religious conviction, but chiefly as a means of fitting in among their Protestant, churchgoing neighbors, and of transmitting some sense of Jewish identity, however vague and intangible, to their children. As one

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<sup>30</sup> Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, “The Gilded Ghettos,” *Congress Weekly*, November 28, 1957, 7-9. For a scholarly overview of the literature on suburban Jewish discontent, both primary and secondary, see Riv-Ellen Prell, “Community and the Discourse of Elegy: The Postwar Suburban Debate,” in *Imagining the American Jewish Community*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2007), 67-90. Prell observes how contemporary scholars of American Jewish life, such as Edward Shapiro and Eli Lederhendler, have uncritically repeated and embellished upon the notion of suburban Jewish life as empty and inauthentic, whereas she describes this moment in American Jewish history as a period of important transformations and redefinitions of identity and communal life. See Eli Lederhendler, *New York Jews and the Decline of Urban Ethnicity, 1950-1970* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001); and Shapiro, *A Time for Healing*, 147. On the larger issue of authenticity in postwar American Jewish communal life, filtered through the lens of class and affluence, see Rachel Kranson, “Grappling with the Good Life: Jewish Anxieties over Affluence in Postwar America, 1945-1976” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> *Commentary* magazine was founded in 1945 by the American Jewish Committee, a political advocacy group, as a forum for the discussion of diverse social and political issues. *Congress Weekly*, which began publication in 1935 as *The Congress Bulletin*, was produced by the American Jewish Congress, another Jewish communal advocacy organization. On the social and ideological divisions between the two organizations, see Diner, *Jews of the United States*, 194-199.

commentator, the executive director of a suburban synagogue just outside New York City, explained, despite higher rates of synagogue affiliation in his community than in the city, “Jewish suburban living seems diluted and pallid. In New York City one can feel Jewish and yet not belong to the Jewish Center; in the suburbs one belongs to the Jewish Center and yet is dogged by a sense of losing Jewish identity.”<sup>32</sup>

A growing perception that American Jewish life in suburbia had somehow lost touch with the vibrant, diverse, and genuine roots of Jewishness that were planted in the older urban neighborhoods further heightened the postwar mood of anxiety about the American Jewish future.<sup>33</sup> Toward the end of the period in

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<sup>32</sup> Milton Sterne, “Country Club Judaism,” *Congress Weekly*, May 4, 1953, 5, quoted in Prell, “Community and the Discourse of Elegy,” 69. For a response to Sterne, see David I. Golovensky, “In Defense of ‘Country Club Judaism,’” *Congress Weekly*, November 9, 1953, 9-11. For other critiques of Jewish life in suburbia, see Evelyn Rosman, “The Community and I: Belonging: Its Satisfactions and Dissatisfactions,” *Commentary* 18.5 (November 1954): 393-405; Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, “Jewish Suburbia: Pattern of Conformity,” *Congress Weekly*, November 18, 1957; Weiss-Rosmarin, “The Gilded Ghettos,” and Victor B. Geller, “How Jewish is Jewish Suburbia?,” *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought* 2.2 (Spring 1960): 318-330. Other, more sanguine appraisals of Jewish suburban life include Gordon, *Jews in Suburbia*; and Abraham Fleischman, “The Urban Jew Goes Suburban,” *The Reconstructionist* 19 (March 6, 1953): 22-24.

<sup>33</sup> The classic scholarly work on American Jewish urban ethnic culture, examining the development of Jewish neighborhoods, political and fraternal organizations, and social and cultural institutions from the 1920s to the 1950s, is Moore, *At Home in America*. Other important works in this genre include Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York’s Jews, 1870-1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962); Daniel Soyer, *Jewish Immigrant Associations and American Identity in New York, 1880-1939* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); and David Kaufman, *Shul with a Pool: The “Synagogue-Center” in American Jewish History* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 1999). For a comparative perspective beyond New York, see Irving Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to*

question, mounting fears about intermarriage exacerbated this sense of unease even more. Because the Jewish family had, in Hasia Diner's words, traditionally served as the "locus for imparting identity and socializing children into the tropes of Jewishness," community leaders were alarmed by a series of population studies and articles in the mid-1960s that brought the issue of intermarriage and Jewish survival to the fore.<sup>34</sup>

In 1960, the Reform-affiliated Central Conference of American Rabbis held a seminar on the subject of exogamy at their annual national conference, and in 1963, the *American Jewish Yearbook* published Erich Rosenthal's "Studies of Jewish Intermarriage in the United States" as its lead article. Analyzing studies of Jewish marriages in the District of Columbia and the state of Iowa, Rosenthal found evidence of increasing rates of exogamy in both the smaller Iowa Jewish communities, and in the Washington metropolitan area, where the rate of intermarriage among third-generation, native-born American Jews reached nearly 18 percent. He also noted that at least 70 percent of intermarried families living near the nation's capital were not raising their children as Jews. Among his conclusions, Rosenthal observed with concern that "the ethnic and religious bonds that welded the immigrant generation into a highly organized community are becoming progressively weaker." In light of the low American Jewish fertility rate and the implausibility of another large-scale Jewish migration to the United

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*Suburb* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996); and Jonathan D. Sarna, Ellen Smith, and Scott-Martin Kosofsky, eds., *The Jews of Boston* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).

<sup>34</sup> Diner, *Jews of the United States*, 306-307.

States after the Holocaust, Rosenthal expected intermarriage rates to continue to rise in the decades ahead.<sup>35</sup>

A year after Rosenthal's article appeared in a Jewish communal publication, the issue of Jewish intermarriage moved further into public consciousness with the appearance of the alarmist 1964 *Look* magazine article, "The Vanishing American Jew." In this mass-market publication, sociologist Thomas Morgan documented what he described as a "soaring rate of intermarriage," estimated as between 15 and 42 percent in different Jewish communities across the country. The author repeated a statistic from Rosenthal's findings, presented in italics for emphasis, which claimed that approximately 70 percent of the children in intermarried homes were not being raised to identify as Jews. Morgan quoted grim assessments from rabbis who bemoaned the present state of affairs among college-aged American Jews who, lacking a coherent and meaningful foundation in Judaism, had little compunction about dating and marrying outside the faith.<sup>36</sup>

In another sign of the growing concern over intermarriage in the Jewish community, Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenbaum devoted fourteen pages in

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<sup>35</sup> Erich Rosenthal, "Studies of Jewish Intermarriage in the United States," *American Jewish Year Book* 64 (1963): 3-54.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas B. Morgan, "The Vanishing American Jew," *Look*, May 5, 1964, 42-46. For other contemporary discussions of intermarriage in the American Jewish community, see Manheim Shapiro, "How Widespread is Intermarriage among Jews in the United States?", *Jewish Digest* 11 (April 1966), 14-16; Milton Himmelfarb, "The Vanishing Jew," *Commentary* 36 (September 1963): 249-251; and "Program to Check Intermarriage Offered by Rabbis, Social Workers," *Detroit Jewish News*, December 18, 1964, p.11. For a scholarly perspective, see Lila Corwin Berman, "Blame, Boundaries, and Birthrights: Jewish Intermarriage in Midcentury America," in *Boundaries of Jewish Identity*, eds. Susan A. Glenn and Naomi B. Sokoloff (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 91-109.

*Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier* to reporting on the topic as understood by “Lakeville” Jewish parents. In interviews, Jewish parents in “Lakeville” shared their misgivings and fears about their children and the possibility that they might marry non-Jews. Almost a third of respondents reported that they would be “very unhappy” if their children married outside the Jewish faith, with another 43 percent declaring that they would be “somewhat unhappy.” One parent, when asked about the prospect of his young son deciding to marry a Gentile, equated the act of intermarriage with “breaking the chain” of Jewish heritage: “We are a unique group. To survive is necessary. No one likes to become a fossil, extinct. It’s a matter of pride.”<sup>37</sup>

Rising fears about intermarriage in the 1960s added a sense of urgency to the insecurities prevalent among American Jewish communal leaders in the postwar period, fears which were nurtured by the demographic, socioeconomic, political, and cultural developments described above. American Jews’ approaches to education and childrearing during this period represented an ongoing effort to respond and adapt to these survival anxiety concerns.

### **Historiographical Overview**

This dissertation sheds light on important and contested issues in several areas of scholarly interest, including the emerging field of post-World War II American Jewish history; the history of Jewish education and family life, and the history of ethnicity and childhood in the United States. I present new

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<sup>37</sup> Sklare and Greenbaum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier*, 310-311. For the complete discussion of intermarriage, see 306-320. See also Marshall Sklare, “Intermarriage and the Jewish Future,” *Commentary* 37 (April 1964): 46-52.

evidence about the extent and impact of survival anxiety in the American Jewish community during the postwar era, which further complicates earlier assessments of this so-called “golden age” in American Jewish history. I demonstrate the widespread influence of social psychology and Cold War-era rhetoric about religion and democracy on the ways in which rabbis, educators, and other professionals sought to guide parents and children in the process of becoming American Jews at midcentury. I argue that Kurt Lewin’s theories about the formative importance for Jewish children of early positive experiences with Jewish culture played a vital role in the history of American Jewish education, one that historians have not sufficiently acknowledged. My work offers an ethnic dimension to the larger body of scholarly work that has been done on American childhood and family life, providing insight into how one particular minority group developed parenting and educational approaches to address the challenges of adapting to middle-class American norms while trying to preserve its distinctiveness. Finally, I demonstrate how, through their ideas and approaches to childrearing and education, American Jews articulated methods of cultivating a dual identity that were specifically tailored to address the needs and insecurities of an upwardly mobile ethnic group in pursuit of integration without disintegration.

The field of postwar American Jewish history has only begun to take shape over the last two decades. The earliest scholarly efforts to examine and define the era from 1945 through the 1960s, undertaken by Arthur Goren, Edward Shapiro, and Eli Lederhendler, tended to present it in either starkly positive or starkly negative terms, either as an age of blissful communal

unanimity and confidence, accompanied by unbridled prosperity and acceptance for Jews in American society, or as a period of dramatic cultural and intellectual decline, occurring amid rapid assimilation and increasing rates of intermarriage.<sup>38</sup>

More recently, scholars such as Riv-Ellen Prell, Hasia Diner, Pamela Nadell, Michael Staub, and Rachel Kranson have introduced a welcome degree of nuance and complexity into their assessments of the postwar American Jewish experience. They have issued a strong challenge to the notion that these years were marked by uncritical consensus and complacency, highlighting instead a legacy of both achievement and ambivalence. Indeed, this era is better understood as a time of transitions and transformations, in which many of the demographic, structural, and ideological features of the present-day American Jewish community either took shape or solidified. These developments include the rapid ascent of American Jews into the middle class; the rising importance of affiliation, with synagogues and other Jewish institutions, as a primary vehicle for the expression of Jewish identity; and the role of political activism, around issues ranging from civil rights to Soviet Jewry to Israel, in providing opportunities for

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<sup>38</sup> On the concept of a postwar “golden age” for American Jewry, see Arthur A. Goren, “The ‘Golden Decade,’ 1945-1955,” in *The Politics and Public Culture of American Jews* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 186-204. For Edward Shapiro, this golden age comes at the costly price of assimilation and communal decline, stoking contemporary fears about the survival prospects of the Jewish community in the twenty-first century. See Shapiro, *A Time for Healing: American Jewry since World War II*, 92-93, 146-147, 229-257. Eli Lederhendler’s critique of American Jewish postwar culture and political commitments, centered around New York City, offers a similarly pessimistic perspective on the nature and quality of Jewish communal life after World War II. See Lederhendler, *New York Jews and the Decline of Urban Ethnicity, 1950-1970*.

consensus-building among Jews of different ideological backgrounds.<sup>39</sup>

My dissertation fits within this newer trend in the historiography on postwar American Jewry. While this study identifies areas of broad consensus across denominational and ideological lines with respect to ideas about how American Jewish children should be raised and what they should learn in school, it is also sensitive to the presence of disagreement and diversity within the Jewish community. For example, as will become clear below, rabbis and teachers affiliated with the Orthodox day school organization Torah Umesorah often rejected accommodation to modernity and contemporary cultural trends, yet they sometimes relied on the same scientific lines of evidence for their arguments as their less-traditional counterparts in the Jewish community.

Furthermore, this narrative eschews both triumphalism and pessimism in favor of what I hope is a more dispassionate effort to understand how American Jewish ideas about parenting and education have been shaped by the historical context in which they emerged. I am less interested in evaluating the “success” or “failure” of the approaches discussed here, and more interested in examining how communal leaders refashioned and repackaged these ideas about childrearing and education using the tools of psychology and modern pedagogy, so as to ease the transition of Jews and Judaism into mainstream, middle-class

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<sup>39</sup> Diner, *Jews of the United States*, 259-304; Prell, “Triumph, Accommodation, and Resistance,” 114-141; Pamela S. Nadell, “A Bright New Constellation: Feminism and American Judaism,” in *The Columbia History of Jews and Judaism in America*, ed. Marc Lee Raphael (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 385-405; Michael E. Staub, *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Kranson, “Grappling with the Good Life: Jewish Anxieties over Affluence in Postwar America.”

American life, and to attempt to render Judaism and Jewish living meaningful and relevant to contemporary families in the late 1940s and beyond. Without judging the merits of Jewish educational curricula that tended to prioritize ethnic pride and religious culture in place of textual study and theology, I seek to understand the historical factors that shaped those decisions about what material to teach American Jewish children, and what to omit or de-emphasize.

In my thinking about the philosophical and political context in which American Jews formulated their ideas about childrearing and education in the postwar era, I am particularly indebted to scholars Susan Glenn and Andrew Heinze. Heinze's work on "the flow of Jewish values, attitudes, and arguments into the mainstream of American thought" on the self and the mind has provided a helpful context for understanding the ascendance of psychology in American culture in the twentieth century, as well as the ways in which Jewish psychologists such as Kurt Lewin were motivated by personal experiences of discrimination to use the tools of their trade to combat prejudice and feelings of self-doubt and self-loathing.<sup>40</sup>

Similarly, Susan Glenn's 2006 article on the communal debate over the issue of Jewish self-hatred in the postwar United States contains one of the best overviews to date of Kurt Lewin's influence on American Jewish thought and communal policy, a topic that remains vastly understudied. Glenn situates this discussion within the context of the Cold War and bitter internal debates within

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<sup>40</sup> Andrew R. Heinze, *Jews and the American Soul: Human Nature in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

the Jewish community about religion, Zionism, and questions of loyalty and conformity. In particular, Glenn's coinage of the phrase "positive Jewishness" to describe Kurt Lewin's program of education and childrearing, aimed at counteracting the potential harm to the psyche caused by experiences with antisemitism, has served me with a vital framing device for presenting my material.<sup>41</sup>

On the other hand, Glenn's assertion that the Jewish program of educational activities was "largely a secular affair dominated by community centers" minimizes and misjudges the extent to which rabbis and teachers in synagogues, religious schools and summer camps worked to encourage parents and children to form positive associations with Judaism, Israel, and Jewish culture. I also take issue with Glenn's claim that Lewin held little faith in the power of religion to create positive feelings of group association in young Jews. While he expressed this stance in print in 1940, his views evolved on the subject during and after World War II, and toward the end of his life Lewin openly expressed faith in the potential of Jewish holiday celebrations, among other cultural programs, to instill Jewish children with powerful feelings of attachment to other Jews.<sup>42</sup> This project thus provides a helpful corrective to our understanding of the reach of "positive Jewishness" as a guiding philosophy in

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<sup>41</sup> Susan A. Glenn, "The Vogue of Jewish Self-Hatred in Post-World War II America," *Jewish Social Studies* 12.3 (Spring-Summer 2006): 95-136.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 102-107. Lewin's writings, as well as his turn toward an embrace of Jewish religious culture as a formative part of an effective educational program for raising well-adjusted American Jewish children, will be discussed in extensive detail in Chapter 1.

many arenas of postwar American Jewish communal life.

My dissertation also engages with a body of literature on Jewish education and family life that is rich but fairly limited, and which to this point has left the post-World War II years largely unexamined. As many historians of the Jewish experience have argued, Jewish society and culture are everywhere and always shaped by an interplay between the internal and the external, between Jewish traditions and the trends and standards of the wider world. This axiom applies especially to Jewish education and childrearing practices, as Ivan Marcus and Elisheva Baumgarten have demonstrated with respect to the medieval period. Marcus's classic study of the initiation ritual for boys beginning their religious education and Baumgarten's book on Jewish childrearing practices in medieval France and Germany emphasized the extent to which Jews in Ashkenaz adapted beliefs and practices from their Christian neighbors into normative everyday behavior.<sup>43</sup>

Scholars of Jewish education and family life in modern Europe, such as Eliyana Adler, Iris Parush, and ChaeRan Freeze, have examined the ways in which education functioned as a powerful agent of modernization and acculturation in the Jewish community in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,

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<sup>43</sup> Ivan G. Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood: Jewish Acculturation in Medieval Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996); Elisheva Baumgarten, *Mothers and Children: Jewish Family Life in Medieval Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004). Ashkenazi Jews trace their ancestry to medieval France and Germany. For an explanation of the origins of the term and an extended discussion of Ashkenazi society in the High Middle Ages, see David Malkiel, *Reconstructing Ashkenaz: The Human Face of Franco-German Jewry, 1000-1250* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

particularly for girls and young women. Adler and Parush explored the content, context, and significance of women's education in Eastern Europe, while Freeze's work reveals the role of the state and secular courts in shaping Russian Jewish attitudes and practices in the area of marriage and divorce in the late imperial period.<sup>44</sup> This scholarship illustrates the benefits of women's history and the history of education for a fuller understanding of the acculturation and integration process for European Jews in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the same insights apply for the study of American Jewish history.

The literature on Jewish education and family life in the United States, particularly after World War II, is relatively small. Institutional histories and biographies, which provide useful but limited portraits, outnumber large-scale thematic studies and historical surveys of how American Jews have reared and educated their children over the course of more than three hundred and fifty years.<sup>45</sup> In the past decade, Jonathan Krasner and Melissa Klapper have

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<sup>44</sup> Eliyana R. Adler, *In Her Hands: The Education of Jewish Girls in Tsarist Russia* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011); Iris Parush, *Reading Jewish Women: Marginality and Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Eastern European Jewish Society*, 38-96; ChaeRan Y. Freeze, *Jewish Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 2002).

<sup>45</sup> Among the most important institutional and biographical works in this area are Jeffrey S. Gurock, "The Ramaz Version of American Orthodoxy," in *American Jewish Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishers, 1996), 313-350; David Kaufman, *Shul with a Pool: The "Synagogue-Center" in American Jewish History* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 1999); Carol K. Ingall, ed., *The Women Who Reconstructed American Jewish Education, 1910-1965* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2010); and Dianne Ashton, *Rebecca Gratz: Women and Judaism in Antebellum America* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997).

authored important historical surveys of American Jewish education that have helped to clarify key themes in the field and suggest directions for further research. Their work traces the professionalization and bureaucratization of American Jewish education over time, and tracks how the goals and priorities of American Jewish education have evolved since the early twentieth century, from the teaching of liturgical content and skills to an emphasis on personality development and identity construction.<sup>46</sup> Evaluating how curricular approaches have evolved in response to cultural and political trends, as well as to the agendas of different groups within the American Jewish community, is critical not only for the history of education, but has broader implications for our understanding of the shifting contours of American Jewish identity and self-presentation over time.

My dissertation intervenes in this field in two important directions. First, I argue that historians of American Jewish education have erred in underemphasizing the central importance of psychologist Kurt Lewin and the legacy of his work to the theories that shaped the guiding motives and methods of Jewish schools and summer camps after 1945. While Lewin is scarcely mentioned or entirely ignored in much of the relevant literature, this dissertation will demonstrate just how influential his theories about the benefits of a Jewish education grounded in positive, fun experiences were to the rabbis, teachers,

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<sup>46</sup> Jonathan B. Krasner, *The Benderly Boys and American Jewish Education* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 361-368; Melissa R. Klapper, "The History of Jewish Education in America," in *The Columbia History of Jews and Judaism*, ed. Marc Lee Raphael (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 189-216.

administrators, and other figures who dispensed parenting advice and directed educational efforts in the postwar Jewish community.<sup>47</sup>

This project also helps clarify what we know about Holocaust education in the Jewish community in the early postwar period. In the last decade, groundbreaking work by historians Michael Staub, Hasia Diner, and Rona Sheramy has shattered earlier perceptions that American Jews, subdued perhaps by fear and guilt, avoided public discussion and commemoration of the Holocaust until the 1960s, when the capture and trial of Adolf Eichmann opened the floodgates. To the contrary, scholars have definitively demonstrated that Jews wrote books and articles on the tragedy, composed new liturgy, performed plays, and taught about the Holocaust in schools and summer camps around the country.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Important studies of American Jewish education and American Jewish history, most notably Krasner's *Benderly Boys and American Jewish Education*, devote only a few paragraphs to Kurt Lewin. See Krasner, *Benderly Boys*, 353; Diner, *History of the Jews of the United States*, 254-255; Walter Ackerman, "Some Uses of Justification in Jewish Education," in Walter Ackerman, "Jewish Education – For What?" and Other Essays, eds. Ari Ackerman, Hanan Alexander, Brenda Bacon, and David Golinkin (1977, repr; Jerusalem: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, et al., 2008), 206-210; and Glenn, "The Vogue of Jewish Self-Hatred," 102-107. Rona Sheramy's article on the Holocaust in American Jewish education after World War II designates "the need to instill a positive identity in the next generation of American Jews" as a top priority, but does not connect this impulse to Lewin directly. See Rona Sheramy, "'Resistance and War': The Holocaust in American Jewish Education, 1945-1960," *American Jewish History* 91.2 (June 2003): 287-313.

<sup>48</sup> Staub, *Torn at the Roots*, 8-10; Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence After the Holocaust, 1945-1962* (New York: NYU Press, 2009); Sheramy, "'Resistance and War,'" 287-313. See Diner's introduction for a discussion of this older, widely-held view regarding American Jewish silence on the Holocaust before the 1960s.

Sheramy and Diner disagree, however, with respect to how they analyze and understand the content and tenor of Holocaust educational materials before the 1960s. Whereas Sheramy contends that these stories and textbooks often emphasized Jewish heroism and courage in the face of death, presenting events and personalities in an attempt to inspire Jewish pride, Diner argues that this perspective “does not stand up fully to the broad sweep of the evidence.” Rather, she contends, many publications, such as the Jewish Education Committee’s juvenile magazine *World Over*, did not refrain from reporting to children about the extent of the suffering, death, and destruction caused by the Nazis.<sup>49</sup>

My study of the content in postwar American Jewish children’s periodicals in the fourth chapter of this dissertation helps to nuance and clarify the positions in this debate. In short, I find that both the tone and regularity of Holocaust coverage varied widely between publications of different ideological positions, as well as over time. While the Yiddish-language magazine *Kinder Tsaytung*, published by the socialist organization Workmen’s Circle, regularly printed stark descriptions of the deportation and death of Eastern European Jews, other publications, such as *World Over* and the Orthodox magazine *Olomeinu* (“Our World”), discussed the Holocaust with less frequency and in less graphic terms. *World Over* also devoted more attention to the Holocaust in the years immediately following the war, but during the 1950s, its coverage focused more squarely on developments and current events in Israel, news that was easier to

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<sup>49</sup> Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love*, 417, 157n.

present in a positive and uplifting light, than on the tragedies of the recent past.

This dissertation also contributes to the scholarly literature on American Jewish childhood and family life, which has paid little attention to date to the child-centered era that followed World War II. Examining prescriptive sources from the period, such as rabbinical sermons on parenting, advice literature produced for Jewish mothers and fathers, and the literature on the psychology of the Jewish child helps us identify the influence of contemporary trends and developments on childrearing theories and visions of the ideal child. Most rabbis, psychologists, and other professionals engaged in offering parenting advice blended insights from Jewish tradition with ideas drawn from social science and the political culture of Cold War America, because they sought to reach a target audience of parents who desired to raise their children to become both Jews and Americans. We cannot fully understand the history of American Jewish childhood and childrearing without a careful study of the parenting literature from the baby boom era.

Previous studies of American Jewish childhood and family life provided important models for this work, while suggesting avenues for my own research and conclusions about how Jews have adapted to American parenting trends as part of the process of claiming and maintaining American Jewish identities for themselves and for their children. Melissa Klapper's work on Jewish girlhood in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century America broke significant ground in this field and served as a guiding inspiration for my dissertation research at an early stage. Jenna Weissman Joselit's study of American Jewish childrearing

practices and coming-of-age ceremonies from 1880 to 1950, as well as Joyce Antler's work on the American Jewish mother in history and culture, also shaped my thinking on these topics. Finally, Aleisa Fishman's doctoral work on postwar Jewish life in suburban Nassau County, New York, demonstrates the central role that the consumption of Jewish goods and the creation of Jewish public spaces for shopping and worship played in shaping Jewish identity and family life in the 1950s.<sup>50</sup>

Examining the parenting books and sermons on childrearing written for American Jewish mothers and fathers opens up new windows into the process by which American Jews articulated a middle-class identity for themselves that was grounded in both customs and ideas from Jewish tradition as well as contemporary insights found in secular American culture. My dissertation situates post-World War II Jewish approaches to childrearing and education within the context of the Cold War, suburbanization, embourgeoisement, and the influence of American thinkers such as John Dewey and Benjamin Spock.

As much as this work finds many areas of consensus among American Jews with respect to ideas about how children should be raised and what they

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<sup>50</sup> Melissa R. Klapper, *Jewish Girls Coming of Age in America, 1860-1920* (New York: NYU Press, 2005); Jenna Weissman Joselit, *The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture, 1880-1950* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994); Joyce Antler, *You Never Call! You Never Write! A History of the Jewish Mother* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Aleisa R. Fishman, "Keeping Up with the Goldbergs: Gender, Consumer Culture, and Jewish Identity in Suburban Nassau County, New York, 1946-1960" (Ph.D. diss., American University, 2004). On American Jewish family life and attitudes toward childrearing during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see also Susan A. Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl: Life and Labor in the Immigrant Generation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).

should learn and believe about Judaism and Jewish identity, I am also sensitive to the significant differences of opinion within the community on religious and other ideological matters, all of which had practical consequences. As will become clear, for example, adherents of a traditionalist Orthodox perspective produced their own childrearing and educational literature, in which they often advocated views that were less accommodating to a contemporary middle-class American lifestyle. While these publications imitated the style of similar secular publications, offering entertainment in the form of comics and serialized fiction for young readers and scientific parenting advice for adults, they did so in service of an agenda that cautioned against yielding to contemporary cultural trends. Teasing out these differences in ideology and approach between different sectors of the community is critical for arriving at a deeper understanding of how American Jews variously encountered and tried to solve the challenges of maintaining Jewish identity in an increasingly tolerant postwar society.

My dissertation also contributes to the larger history of childhood and the American family. Significant work has been done on American childhoods and families during the baby boom, yet little attention has been paid to the particularities of the Jewish experience. Examining how families and educational institutions navigated the challenges of parenting and teaching children to become American Jews enriches our understanding of how the ongoing

encounter between minority groups and American culture shapes identities and traditions.<sup>51</sup>

The study of childhood as a historical subject began with Philippe Ariès and his *Centuries of Childhood*, first published in English in 1962. Ariès broke new ground by asserting that the family was a subject worthy of historical investigation because ideas about marriage, parenthood, and childhood have not remained constant but evolved over time. Many of Ariès's central conclusions, including the notion that medieval parents did not express love toward their children or mourn their untimely death, have since been challenged and refuted. Nevertheless, *Centuries of Childhood* remains noteworthy for establishing a new field of historical research and providing an innovative model for studying children and parents as subjects.<sup>52</sup>

Any study of childhood and childrearing practices must address the determinative role historical context plays in shaping both the diverse lives of children and diverse views about them, as well as the influence of social structures. As the field has developed over the past five decades, subsequent

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<sup>51</sup> For scholarly analyses of American childhood and childrearing during the postwar decades, see, for example, Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 275-334; Howard P. Chudacoff, *Children at Play: An American History* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 154-213; Rima D. Apple, *Perfect Motherhood: Science and Childrearing in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 107-134; and Joseph E. Illick, *America's Childhoods* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 103-159.

<sup>52</sup> Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 9-10, 33-35, 46-49. For a summary of the arguments against Ariès's conclusions, see Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 11-15.

historians of childhood and family life have studied the ways in which considerations of race, religion, class, and gender have diversified both the concept of childhood and the lived experience of youth. As Steven Mintz and others have argued, neither the experience of childhood nor ideas about childrearing are static and unchanging; rather, both are constantly transformed by fluid historical circumstances. Divisions of race, class, gender, and geography also complicate the notion of a uniform childhood. Works by Marie Jenkins Schwartz on African American slave families, George Sanchez on Mexican American families in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Kriste Lindenmeyer on childhood during the Great Depression illustrate how social categories and socioeconomic conditions can shape children's opportunities for education, work, and leisure in varying ways, as well as parenting practices and rituals. Demonstrating the influence of religious beliefs and cultural traditions on childrearing practices, Joshua Zeitz's important comparative study of Jews and Catholics in post-World War II New York argued that Irish and Italian Catholic family cultures stressed obedience and patriarchy in family matters more than Jewish families, partly because Judaism lacked the notion of the infallible authority figure so central to the Catholic worldview.<sup>53</sup>

My own work adds to this body of scholarship by demonstrating how

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<sup>53</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 2; Marie Jenkins Schwartz, *Born in Bondage: Growing Up Enslaved in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); George J. Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Kriste Lindenmeyer, *The Greatest Generation Grows Up: American Childhood in the 1930s* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee Publisher, 2005); Joshua M. Zeitz, *White Ethnic New York: Jews, Catholics, and the Shaping of Postwar Politics* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 79-80.

suburbanization, embourgeoisement, the Cold War, and other trends and developments shaped approaches to education and childrearing in the American Jewish community during the post-World War II decades. As important as the American cultural and political context was, and as much as Jewish opinions and attitudes about parenting and education often mirrored those of the broader middle class, at the same time, Jews also sought to address their own unique concerns about their ethnic and cultural survival as they pondered questions of best practices in raising American Jewish children.

### **Methodological Considerations and Chapter Summaries**

This study covers the period from 1945, following the end of World War II, to 1967, the year of the Six-Day War between Israel and neighboring Arab countries. This choice of periodization reflects a widely-held contention in the scholarship that 1967 served as a watershed year in terms of strengthening American Jews' emotional and cultural attachments to Israel. The seemingly miraculous and dramatic victory of the fledgling Jewish state amid calls for its destruction by Egypt and other hostile surrounding countries evoked intense feelings of pride in American Jews, who until Israel's victory was assured feared that, only a generation after the Holocaust, another center of Jewish life now stood on the brink of annihilation. In the years that followed, American Jews donated money to Israel in unprecedented amounts, participated in rallies and other channels of political activism to urge support for Israel from the American government, and flew to Israel to volunteer or to settle.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Diner, *Jews of the United States*, 322-326.

The aftermath of the war also cemented Israel's place as a central issue in American Jewish education, as subjects such as Israeli geography, history, current events, and culture became centerpieces of the curricula and programming calendars in many schools and educational institutions.<sup>55</sup> The question of measuring the Six Day War's true impact on American Jewish educational priorities and initiatives merits a full and separate treatment, and so this investigation ends before the events and consequences of 1967 for Jewish education can be measured. At the same time, however, as other scholars such as Emily Katz and Jonathan Krasner have found, I demonstrate here that ample materials for teaching Israeli culture and current events were in circulation well before 1967, suggesting that the foundations for Israel's eventual centrality in American Jewish education were established well in advance of the Six-Day War.<sup>56</sup>

This study deals primarily with prescriptive literature on childrearing and educational literature for children, rather than the lived experiences of children and families. Prescriptive sources, such as childrearing guides, sermons, parenting magazines, and psychological literature, are necessarily limited in their

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 325; Barry Chazan, "Israel in American Jewish Schools in the Mid-70s," *Journal of Jewish Education* 52.4 (1984): 9-12; Walter Ackerman, "The 'Land of Our Fathers' in the 'Land of the Free': Textbooks on Israel in American Jewish Schools," in *"Jewish Education for What?" and Other Essays*, eds. Ari Ackerman, Hanan Alexander, Brenda Bacon, and David Golinkin (1986, repr; Jerusalem: Ben Gurion University, et al., 2008), 324.

<sup>56</sup> Emily Alice Katz, "Pen Pals, Pilgrims, and Pioneers: Reform Youth and Israel," *American Jewish History* 95.3 (September 2009): 249-276; Jonathan B. Krasner, "'New Jews' in an Old-New Land: Images in American Jewish Textbooks Prior to 1948," *Journal of Jewish Education* 69.2 (2003): 7-22.

ability to reveal the actual parenting choices of mothers and fathers.<sup>57</sup> Beyond tracking the publication numbers of a book or the subscription numbers of a magazine, which offer clues to the popularity and significance of a cultural artifact, it is usually very difficult to gauge the influence of a particular point of view on its intended audience. Nevertheless, if we read these sources not to find out how American Jews raised their children or what they learned in school, but instead to find out what their teachers, rabbis, and other counselors *wanted* them to learn, to know, and to do, we can reach some conclusions about the tensions, anxieties, and desires circulating at the heart of American Jewish communal life during this period. My focus, therefore, is on the communal leaders and their programs for influencing postwar American Jewry, not on how these initiatives and suggestions were received by children and their parents.

Ideas about how to raise children are not immune to influence from changing historical circumstances; on the contrary, they are products of their time and place, responses to the needs and fears of a particular generation at a particular moment. Because the enterprise of childrearing is tied to the larger, anxiety-laden projects of group survival and cultural transmission, an analysis of childrearing literature and educational practices allows us to tap into those hopes and insecurities that reflect the status, mood, and self-perception of the group

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<sup>57</sup> On the issue of prescriptive sources and descriptive sources in the history of youth, see Klapper, *Jewish Girls Coming of Age in America*, 4-5. On the issue of how the historian attempts to reconstruct lived experience out of cultural sources, see James B. Gilbert, *Whose Fair? Experience, Memory, and the History of the Great St. Louis Exposition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

itself.<sup>58</sup>

This study cannot cover the entire breadth of issues, events, and experiences that comprised American Jewish education and parenting in the postwar years. Notably, the dissertation does not address two important areas of Jewish childhood: the bar and bat mitzvah, and the extracurricular youth group. The topic of bar and bat mitzvah ceremonies has already received substantial attention from historians. Without question, the bar and bat mitzvah became centrally important rites-of-passage in American Jewish culture at midcentury, with the bat mitzvah becoming a more commonplace event in the lives of girls by the 1960s. Jenna Weissman Joselit and Rachel Kranson have examined these coming-of-age ceremonies primarily through the lens of consumption and material culture, as moments when Jews created public displays of their affluence and acculturation to celebrate their success and status in America.<sup>59</sup> More work needs to be done on the lived experience of the bar and bat mitzvah celebrants themselves, but that research is beyond the scope of this dissertation, which focuses primarily on prescriptive literature.

The topic of American Jewish youth groups has been omitted here because of a conscious decision to focus instead on summer camps, which provided similar opportunities for informal education for Jewish children in a more

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<sup>58</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 2-5; Julia Grant, *Raising Baby by the Book: The Education of American Mothers* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 1-5.

<sup>59</sup> Joselit, *Wonders of America*, 89-133; Rachel Kranson, "More Bar Than Mitzvah: Anxieties over Bar Mitzvah Celebrations in Postwar America," in *Rites of Passage: How Today's Jews Celebrate, Commemorate, and Commiserate*, ed. Leonard Greenspoon, Studies in Jewish Civilization, vol. 21 (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2010), 9-24.

intensive and immersive atmosphere. Youth groups, often affiliated with a particular religious denomination or ideological movement, offered their members year-round informal educational experiences along with opportunities for socializing and recreation. To a considerable extent, they mirrored summer camps in their emphasis on providing children with Jewish content outside a classroom setting, often in the form of immersion experiences such as sleepovers, camping trips, and other excursions that blended Jewish content and secular fun. Summer camps provided a richer educational environment, sustained over the course of several weeks, than youth groups could provide. Many youth groups, such as the liberal Reform movement's National Federation of Temple Youth and the Conservative movement's United Synagogue Youth, served as feeders into those organization's summer camps, including the Reform Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute and the Conservative-affiliated Camp Ramah, both of which are included in this study. Nevertheless, the subject of American Jewish youth groups deserves its own investigation.<sup>60</sup>

Finally, as much as sociologists, rabbis, and other communal leaders focused on the state of Jews and Judaism in suburbia in the postwar era in response to demographic and cultural trends, they did not forget about urban Jews. They wrote prescriptive literature on childrearing for a national audience of

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<sup>60</sup> On American Jewish youth groups, see Krasner, *Benderly Boys*, 194-204; Katz, "Pen Pals, Pilgrims, and Pioneers: Reform Youth and Israel," 258-262; Zev Eleff, *Living from Convention to Convention: A History of the NCSY, 1954-1980* (Jersey City, NY: Ktav Publishing House, 2009); and David Breslau, *Adventure in Pioneering: The Story of 25 Years of Habonim Camping* (New York: CHAY Commission of the Labor Zionist Movement/Shulsinger Bros., 1957).

American Jews who lived in cities, suburbs, and small towns.<sup>61</sup> Along with their suburban peers, Jewish children attending schools in Manhattan and Brooklyn in the 1950s and 1960s read *World Over*, *Olomeinu*, and other educational periodicals, and they attended summer camps as well. This study examines the Jewish community at large, not just the perspectives and experiences of Jews living in suburbs.

The first chapter of the dissertation establishes the theoretical background that shaped the ways in which many American Jews understood and envisioned approaches to education and childrearing during this period. Kurt Lewin, a Jewish psychologist from Germany who arrived in the United States shortly after Hitler's rise to power, argued in the 1940s that children needed positive Jewish experiences and associations early in life in order to overcome the feelings of inferiority and fear that accompanied being a member of a disadvantaged minority group. Lewin's views, along with similar insights from other social scientists, inspired and energized a generation of educators, rabbis, and other communal leaders, who cited his arguments to colleagues and parents in order to justify the emotional and therapeutic benefits of Jewish education and ritual. This message about the significance of "positive Jewishness" resonated deeply and widely in an era of intense survival anxiety among American Jews following World War II and the start of the Cold War. In the context of the epic struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union, in which America cast itself as the noble defender of religion and democracy, Jewish communal leaders argued

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<sup>61</sup> On Jewish life in American small towns, see Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

that a return to Judaism and Jewish culture in homes and schools would produce children equally committed to both a Jewish and an American way of life.

The second and third chapters of the dissertation explore the content, style, and spirit of American Jewish parenting advice in the decades after World War II. In the same era in which millions of parents turned to Dr. Spock for childrearing wisdom, Jewish psychologists, educators, rabbis, and other professionals dispensed advice to mothers and fathers on how to raise happy, well-integrated American Jewish children. In sermons, magazines, pamphlets, radio addresses, and other venues, they offered suggestions to parents on topics as varied as how to select a Hebrew name and celebrate Jewish rituals, whether Jewish children should participate in Christmas celebrations, and if parents should be strict or permissive. Echoing the insights of Kurt Lewin and others, they suggested to parents that making Jewish choices for their families would help their children develop into happier, more comfortable, and more confident American Jewish adults.

These authorities believed that parents played the most vital role in determining their children's future temperament, behavior, and commitments as Jews and as Americans. Combining insights from Judaism as well as child psychology, they crafted a philosophy of childrearing that, for the most part, presented contemporary scientific trends as consonant with the wisdom of Jewish tradition. In so doing, they suggested to parents that Judaism and Jewish living were both relevant for and fully compatible with their middle-class American lifestyle.

The second chapter explores parenting advice from a diverse group of Jewish parenting experts on issues of Jewish concern, such as the celebration of Jewish birth rituals and holidays, and the problem of how to prepare children to handle antisemitism. The third chapter examines the recommendations of rabbis from across the denominational spectrum on issues of general concern to all parents, such as discipline, family finances, and the role of the mother in the contemporary family. This study of American Jewish parenting advice complicates earlier historiographical perceptions of the postwar era as a period of optimism and progress; allows us to see how the American rabbi has functioned as a mediator for American Jews between Jewish and secular thought; and attests to the influence of psychology on evolving conceptions of Jewish identity in the decades after World War II. Childrearing professionals advocated a return to Judaism as the best way to ensure family happiness and the child's future emotional well-being.

Jewish education is the subject of the fourth and fifth chapters. As with the family, anxious Jewish communal leaders looked to the school and the summer camp to be the guarantors of Jewish continuity, to provide children with a sense of ethnic pride and belonging in both the Jewish community and American society. The fourth chapter, an analysis of Jewish children's educational magazines, finds a remarkable degree of thematic consensus in how these publications presented the meanings of American Jewish identity to their young readers from the 1940s to the 1960s. Fulfilling Kurt Lewin's edict that Jewish education must create positive associations with Jewishness for young

children, these educational magazines used stories, games, and comic strips to teach children about how to be Jewish and American. Blurring ideological differences, Jewish children's periodicals celebrated the contributions of Jews to American life and drew regular attention to the notion of a harmonious compatibility between Jewish and American values. They stressed the notion of *k'lal yisrael*, of a worldwide Jewish community with a shared history, culture, and faith. They also modeled gender roles for children according to a blend of Western middle-class values and Jewish tradition, providing readers with strong messages about what was expected of them as boys and girls. The consensus on these educational priorities reflected the particular concerns of the postwar American Jewish community about the tenuousness of their standing in American life as members of the middle-class, and about the future of the world Jewish community after the Holocaust.

The fifth and final chapter examines the curricula, mission statements, and programming of Jewish religious schools and summer camps across the religious and ideological spectrum during the postwar years, in order to evaluate the pedagogical means by which these institutions sought to inculcate positive Jewish identity in children. In promotional materials to parents and mission statements designed to influence teachers and camp counselors, educators placed heavy emphasis on personality development and emotional attachments as central, if not the most important, goals of Jewish education. They also often tried to demonstrate to Jewish children – and their parents, by extension – how Jewish values and practices fit comfortably within the matrix of contemporary

American life.

To foster feelings of pride, security, and confidence in young American Jews, teachers relied on the tools of theater, music, and dance. With the aid of progressive and interactive forms of learning, such as school assemblies, Israeli dances, and theater productions about Jewish life around the world, educators hoped to cultivate positive attachments in children to Judaism, Jewish culture, and Israel. At the same time, they also used many of these same lessons as an opportunity to rehearse Jewish contributions to American life and to reinforce the notion that American values such as democracy and freedom found expression in Jewish customs and beliefs. Schools and summer camps thus joined the home as arenas where rabbis, educators, psychologists, and other Jewish communal leaders hoped to combat anxiety about the future through applying and implementing the ideas championed by Kurt Lewin.

## **Chapter 1: Accentuate the Positive: Kurt Lewin, Psychology, and the American Jewish Child in the Age of Anxiety**

On February 12, 1947, social psychologist Kurt Lewin was scheduled to address a meeting of Jewish educators in New York City on his research in the field of group dynamics, and on the implications of his work for understanding the emotional needs of the American Jewish child. The night before, after preparing his remarks in consultation with his wife, Lewin suffered a heart attack and died at age 57. The following day, the conference of the Jewish Education Committee of New York (JEC) “was tragically turned into a memorial meeting for this great [. . .] Jew who served America and humanity so well, and who was eager also to serve his own troubled Jewish people,” remembered Alexander Dushkin, executive director of the JEC.<sup>1</sup>

Dushkin’s moving tribute acknowledged the significance of the loss of Kurt Lewin for all those engaged in the profession of Jewish education. Indeed, though Lewin himself did not live to witness it, the implications and implementation of his ideas continued to guide Jewish educational priorities and practices for several decades to come. The rabbis, educators, and other self-appointed experts who offered parenting advice to Jewish mothers and fathers in the postwar decades grounded their recommendations in the scientific language of psychological principles, often citing Kurt Lewin and his theories explicitly in their sermons and essays.

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Dushkin, “Kurt Lewin,” *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* 23.3 (March 1947): 227-229; “Dr. Kurt Lewin Dies of Heart Attack; Funeral Today in Boston,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, February 14, 1947, available online at <http://www.jta.org/1947/02/14/archive/dr-kurt-lewin-dies-of-heart-attack-funeral-today-in-boston> (Accessed November 21, 2013).

Lewin's central argument, that the most effective Jewish education and socialization takes place in the form of positive childhood experiences, became the cornerstone of Jewish educational thought in post-World War II America. What originated under the shadow of Nazism as an approach to helping Jewish children overcome prejudice and unwelcome feelings of inferiority became, as the fundamental characteristics of American Jewish life changed dramatically in the 1950s and 1960s, the foundation of an approach to encouraging Jewish children and families to choose to identify as Jewish in an increasingly open and tolerant postwar society.

### **Progress and Pessimism**

For American Jews, the two decades that followed World War II engendered both progress and pessimism with respect to their place and sense of security in American life. On the one hand, as antisemitism declined in the 1950s, as the notion of a Judeo-Christian civic ethos became enshrined in American public culture, and as Jews experienced an unprecedented level of economic advancement, they expressed satisfaction and gratitude for the blessings bestowed upon them by a democratic nation. At the same time, however, several sources of fear and concern lingered in the minds of American Jews throughout this period.

In the wake of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, all Americans — including Jews — remained fearful of all-out nuclear war for the next several decades, as weapons testing, McCarthyism, and the space race punctuated tense relations with the Soviet Union and stoked fears of Communist subversion at home. “Duck

and cover” drills in schools, in which students practiced taking shelter from atomic bomb attacks by hiding under desks, became a hallmark of American childhood in the first decade of the Cold War, while the launching of Sputnik in 1957 triggered a cultural panic about the state of American education and the fate of the country. Rabbis addressed and sought to assuage these fears among their Jewish congregants in articles and sermons titled “Helping Our Children Face the Unpredictable Nuclear Age,” “What Makes Men Communists?,” and “The Moral Lessons of Sputnik.” Like many other Americans, Jews worried about their safety and well-being at a time when the world seemed to teeter perpetually on the brink of total annihilation.<sup>2</sup>

Even as they shared this sense of impending nuclear doom with other Americans, Jews harbored their own additional concerns about their security and survival as Jews in the changing postwar world. The anti-Communist fervor of the postwar years was of particular concern to American Jewish communal leaders and organizations, because of the overrepresentation of Jews in Socialist and Communist political organizations during the previous several decades. The arrest, trial, and execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg on espionage charges in the early 1950s punctuated fears about possible further accusations and legal

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<sup>2</sup> Akiva Egozi, “Helping Our Children Face the Unpredictable Nuclear Age,” *The Jewish Parent*, January 1963, 10-11, 28; Roland Gittelsohn, “What Makes Men Communists?,” May 8, 1955, Box 58, Folder 5, MS-704, Roland B. Gittelsohn Papers, American Jewish Archives; “Synagogue Services,” *Detroit Jewish News*, November 1, 1957, 15. Relevant social and cultural histories of Cold War America include May, *Homeward Bound*; Alan Petigny, *The Permissive Society: America, 1941-1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and Peter J. Kutznick and James Gilbert, eds., *Rethinking Cold War Culture* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).

repercussions. In response, Jewish defense organizations such as the American Jewish Committee sponsored research and published studies demonstrating the ideological incompatibility of Communist and Jewish values, as well as the inhumane treatment of Jews living under Stalinist rule.<sup>3</sup>

As they sought to deflect intimations of Communist sympathies in the 1940s and beyond, American Jewish leaders also began to address the staggering consequences of Nazism for the world Jewish community. In the aftermath of World War II and the near-total decimation of European Jewry in the Holocaust, American Jews came to view themselves, as members of the largest, most prosperous, and most secure Jewish community in the world, as the torchbearers charged with ensuring Jewish survival in the decades ahead. Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, editor of *The Jewish Spectator* and a prolific writer on issues facing the American Jewish community, expressed these sentiments in “A Letter to Jewish Parents,” published in 1946, shortly after the war’s conclusion.

As a result of the war, she wrote, six million Jews have perished and many more have been rendered destitute and homeless. “By the grace of G-d, we American Jews have been saved from the world-wide holocaust. [. . .] [W]e represent almost one half of world Jewry. Obviously, this imposes upon us the inescapable duty of assuming the responsibility for Jewish survival. We are the generation that must secure and entrench the Jewish eternity.” If American Jews

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<sup>3</sup> Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 276-280. See also Deborah Dash Moore, “Reconsidering the Rosenbergs: Symbol and Substance in Second Generation American Jewish Consciousness,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 8.1 (Fall 1988): 21-37.

are to succeed in this task, Weiss-Rosmarin wrote, they must rededicate themselves to education, “the best Jewish defense.”<sup>4</sup> While Weiss-Rosmarin wrote in support of all-day private Jewish religious schools, numerous other authors joined her in describing Jewish education to parents as the linchpin of Jewish survival. In “The Fruits of Modern Jewish Education,” a *Commentary* article in 1951, a twenty-four-year-old Midge Decter, then a Hebrew school teacher, concluded her critique of new, progressive trends in the Jewish classroom with the warning that educational decisions by parents and teachers will determine “whether the Jewish child is really to possess his Jewish heritage and whether the Jews are to continue, in fact as well as in mere name, to be Jews.”<sup>5</sup>

Striking a more optimistic tone, Conservative Rabbi Samuel Geffen, spiritual leader of the Jewish Center of Forest Hills West in Queens, New York, exhorted his congregants to enroll their children in the synagogue’s religious school in 1954. As children become acquainted with the language, liturgy, rituals, and history of their ancestors, Geffen argued, “[t]he hopes for the future

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<sup>4</sup> Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, “A Letter to Jewish Parents,” (New York: Torah Umesorah, 1946), 8-9. On American Jews’ efforts to memorialize the victims of the Holocaust in the early postwar decades, see Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945-1962* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Midge Decter, “The Fruits of Modern Jewish Education: Where Techniques Reign and Heritage Suffers Neglect,” *Commentary*, October 1951, 329. In the late 1960s, *Commentary* began to take on its now-recognizable neoconservative bent, with Norman Podhoretz, husband of Midge Decter, as its editor-in-chief.

thus become filled with brightness and optimism for the continued survival of Judaism and the Jewish People.”<sup>6</sup>

In the years following the Holocaust, Weiss-Rosmarin, Decter, and Geffen linked the need for effective Jewish education with the ability of Jews to survive as a group. Their comments reflect a palpable anxiety among American Jewish communal leaders about the tenuousness and vulnerability of Jewish life in the postwar world, as well as an abiding sense that it was the responsibility of the American Jewish community to lead the way forward for world Jewry after 1945. Certainly, the tragic consequences of World War II for Jewish demography weighed heavily on the minds of many who were concerned about the Jewish future.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, however, American Jews also worried openly about the possible implications of other trends affecting their community in the postwar years, such as suburbanization and economic mobility.

After World War II, American Jews took advantage of the GI Bill and federal housing loans, leaving urban ethnic enclaves for the comforts of suburbia in ever-larger numbers in the 1940s and beyond. This process represented the continuation and intensification of a longer trend in American history, wherein economically mobile groups migrated away from areas of first settlement to more

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<sup>6</sup> Samuel Geffen, “Our Children Need Jewish Religious Education,” *Jewish Center of Forest Hills West Bulletin*, January 1, 1954, 1, Box 6, Folder 3, P-898, Samuel Geffen Papers, American Jewish Historical Society Archives, New York.

<sup>7</sup> On the theme of American Jewish communal leaders harboring a sense of global responsibility for Jewish survival after the Holocaust, see Shapiro, *A Time for Healing*, 60-61; Wenger, *History Lessons*, 211-212; and Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love*, 12-14, 23.

desirable neighborhoods when such a move was financially and legally feasible. In this last respect, American Jews benefited from new legal developments in housing laws after the war, as in 1948 the Supreme Court struck down the restrictive covenants that had enabled residential discrimination. The number of American Jews living in suburban neighborhoods doubled during the 1950s, with Jews migrating out of cities in numbers four times greater than their non-Jewish American counterparts. By 1960, an estimated two-thirds of American Jews resided in suburbia, compared to only one-third of the general population. Substantial Jewish communities took root in such places as Newton, Massachusetts; Skokie, Illinois; and Silver Spring, Maryland.<sup>8</sup>

Economic mobility, as much as legal developments and state policy, made Jewish suburbanization possible. Following the Great Depression and World War II, American Jews enjoyed a period of unprecedented prosperity and continued advancement up the socioeconomic ladder. In 1900, 60 percent of the American Jewish labor force worked in blue-collar manufacturing jobs. Statistical surveys from the 1950s measuring the educational and occupational profile of postwar American Jewry, by contrast, revealed that between 75 and 96 percent

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<sup>8</sup> Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 206-207, 283-288; Riv-Ellen Prell, "Triumph, Accommodation, and Resistance," 119; "Two Thirds of America's Jews Now Live in Suburbs, Expert Estimates," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, October 16, 1959, <http://www.jta.org/1959/10/16/archive/two-thirds-of-americas-jews-now-live-in-suburbs-expert-estimates>, accessed January 6, 2014. Important works in the history of American suburbanization include Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); and David M.P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

of Jews earned their livelihood from non-manual labor, compared to less than 40 percent of the rest of the population.<sup>9</sup>

Additionally, while one in six American Jews above eighteen years old had earned a college degree as of 1953, the same held true for only one in twenty among all other Americans. The origins of American Jewish mobility preceded the war, as Jews benefited from the protections of labor unions and investments made in educating their children in the 1920s and 1930s. As sociologist Nathan Glazer remarked in assessing the socioeconomic profile of American Jewry in the 1950s, “[T]he Jewish economic advantage, already perfectly obvious in the thirties, in the form of superior education, and a higher proportion of self-employed persons, has borne fruit in the fifteen years of prosperity since 1940.”<sup>10</sup>

Jews and other Americans were drawn to the suburbs, with the allure of spacious houses and backyards, as places best suited to raise children. The baby boom that followed World War II further contributed to the rapid growth of suburban development, as white middle-class families took advantage of beneficial government policies, improved transportation infrastructure, and affordable mass-produced housing beyond the city limits of major metropolises.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Diner, 285-286.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.; Nathan Glazer, “The American Jew and the Attainment of Middle-Class Rank: Some Trends and Explanations,” in *The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group*, ed. Marshall Sklare (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1957), 138-146. On the economic profile of American Jews leading up to and during the Depression, see Beth S. Wenger, *New York Jews and the Great Depression: Uncertain Promise* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 10-32.

<sup>11</sup> Non-white ethnic Americans continued to face discriminatory housing policies well after World War II. For some of the recent work on this issue, see Freund,

According to two-thirds of male homeowners surveyed in Levittown, New York, a desire to spend more quality time with their children motivated their family's move to the suburbs. Rabbi Albert Gordon recorded similar findings in his 1959 study, *Jews in Suburbia*, a sociological overview of American Jewish life in suburbia based largely on questionnaire responses. As one anonymous suburbanite explained to Gordon, "I moved out here for the sake of the kids. I want them to have the best that I can afford."<sup>12</sup>

Despite the clear gains made by Jews in terms of social acceptance and economic progress, these otherwise positive developments triggered a sense of unease about the quality and potential of Jewish life in the burgeoning Levittowns springing up across the country. Harry Gersh, a former union activist now resettled in suburbia himself, reflected on some of the issues that his journey and those of his contemporaries raised, especially with respect to the challenges of raising Jewish children in suburban surroundings. "Somehow we don't worry so much in the city about the problem of children's identifying themselves with the Jewish community," Gersh wrote in *Commentary* in 1954. "On the street, in the school, among their friends -- and even at home -- they find

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*Colored Property*; and Beryl Satter, *Family Properties: How the Struggle Over Race and Real Estate Transformed Chicago and Urban America* (New York: Metropolitan, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 277; Gordon, *Jews in Suburbia*, 65. For an important comparative analysis of Jewish and Catholic residential patterns in the Boston neighborhoods of Roxbury and Dorchester in the 1950s and 1960s, see Gerald Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholics Stayed* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

out what they are and what it means [to be Jewish].”<sup>13</sup> In the high-density Jewish neighborhoods of prewar New York City, Boston, Chicago, and other metropolises, Gersh suggested, Jewish identity was acquired through a kind of osmosis. Immersed in a Yiddish-speaking environment of Jewish families, schools, stores, and a variety of social and political organizations, the Jewish child of the previous generation grew up secure in his ethnic and cultural attachments.

In suburbia, however, Gersh argued, Jewish parents could no longer count on the city neighborhood network as an engine of identity transmission. Instead, they place Jewish ritual objects in the home and send their children to religious schools in an attempt to manufacture a Jewish world for themselves and their children. Reflecting on these efforts, and on the quality of Jewish life in his suburban community in general, where non-observant parents “hurriedly read a chapter ahead of the child” to acquire a working knowledge of Judaism, while “nose-counters and dues-collectors” eagerly track synagogue memberships and Sunday school enrollments, Gersh expressed palpable regret and a “consciousness of loss” about the vibrancy and authenticity of suburban Jewish life.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Harry Gersh, “The New Suburbanites of the 50’s: Jewish Division,” *Commentary*, March 1954, 220.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* Historians of American Jewish life have written and argued extensively about the link between ethnic identity and urban neighborhoods that Gersh described, as well as the ensuing redefinitions of Jewishness that suburbanization set in motion. See Moore, *At Home in America*; Hasia R. Diner, Jeffrey Shandler, and Beth S. Wenger, eds., *Remembering the Lower East Side: American Jewish Reflections* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000);

Many of Gersh's contemporaries, such as Trude Weiss-Rosmarin and Harold Saperstein, a Reform rabbi in suburban New York, offered similar critiques of the authenticity of suburban Jewish life, as well as similar views about the difficulties that suburbia presented for raising children with some form of meaningful attachment to and understanding of their Jewish identity.<sup>15</sup> As described in the introduction, the suburban Jewish community also became a locus of study for Jewish sociologists, many of whom worried openly about the effects of economic and geographic mobility on the prospects for Jewish communal survival.<sup>16</sup>

### **Better Living Through Psychology**

To resolve their anxieties, Jews and other Americans in the postwar decades turned in large numbers to answers from scientific experts. While Americans' interest in and reliance upon medical and psychological expertise

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Eli Lederhendler, *New York Jews and the Decline of Urban Ethnicity, 1950-1970* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001); and Riv-Ellen Prell, "Community and the Discourse of Elegy: The Postwar Suburban Debate," in *Imagining the American Jewish Community*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2007), 67-90. For a larger discussion of authenticity and Jewish suburban communal life, see Kranson, "Grappling with the Good Life."

<sup>15</sup> Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, "Jewish Suburbia: Pattern of Conformity," *Congress Weekly*, November 18, 1957, 5-7; and "The Gilded Ghettoes," *Congress Weekly*, November 25, 1957, 7-9; Harold Saperstein, "The Jewish Family in Transition," sermon delivered March 25, 1960, Box 3, Folder 3, MS-718, Harold I. Saperstein Papers, American Jewish Archives.

<sup>16</sup> See Gans, "Birth of a Jewish Community -- Park Forest," *Commentary*, April 1951, 330-339; and "Progress of a Suburban Jewish Community," *Commentary*, February 1957, 113-122; Gordon, *Jews in Suburbia*; Kramer and Leventman, *Children of the Gilded Ghetto*; and Sklare and Greenbaum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier*.

certainly predated World War II, as numerous scholars have shown, after the war the social sciences acquired an even greater level of prestige and acceptance. For people wearied by decades of deprivation and war, lessons from psychology as explained through the words of experts and popularizers helped them understand the evils of totalitarianism and prejudice and provided prescriptions for happiness and self-fulfillment.<sup>17</sup>

As Ellen Herman, Alan Petigny, and others have described, Freudian understandings of the unconscious mind, personality development, and the lasting impact of childhood experiences on the adult psyche reached their apex in American popular culture in the 1940s and 1950s. Thanks in large part to extensive press coverage of the successful psychiatric counseling of soldiers suffering from mental illness during the war, the notion of therapy and psychoanalysis as a useful tool for all Americans gained considerable momentum.

Accordingly, the membership ranks of the American Psychological Association increased from about 3,000 in 1940 to 18,000 by 1960, while the number of psychologists engaged in clinical work increased nearly tenfold from 1940 to 1950. Dr. Spock's user-friendly approach to Freudian ideas about childrearing sold four million copies in its first six years of publication. Bestselling self-help books such as Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman's *Peace of Mind* (1946) and

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<sup>17</sup> On the place of psychological thought in American culture both before and after World War II, see Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995); and Christopher G. White, *Unsettled Minds: Psychology and the American Search for Spiritual Assurance, 1830-1940* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009).

Norman Vincent Peale's *Power of Positive Thinking* (1952) disseminated a therapeutic theology of self-acceptance to millions of readers; and Dr. Joyce Brothers began a long and successful career of offering advice and counseling to Americans with her television show, which debuted in 1958.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, both before and after the war, Hitler's rise to power and Nazi anti-Jewish persecution in Germany brought Kurt Lewin and many other leading European Jewish social scientists to American universities and institutions, where they undertook a wide range of studies about the psychological dimensions of submission to authoritarian rule and the development of prejudicial attitudes and hatred for minority groups in societies. Besides Lewin, Erich Fromm, Bruno Bettelheim, and Marie Jahoda, among others, contributed to the notion that psychological insights could explain human emotions and actions and provide the antidote to society's most pressing difficulties.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Nathan G. Hale, Jr., *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in the United States: Freud and the Americans, 1917-1985* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 277-281; Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology*, 2-3, 9-10, 82-152; Andrew R. Heinze, *Jews and the American Soul: Human Nature in the 20th Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 195-239, 295-296, 308-320; Petigny, *The Permissive Society*, 11-13, 16-19, 37-41. See also Benjamin Spock, *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946); Joshua Loth Liebman, *Peace of Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946); and Norman Vincent Peale, *The Power of Positive Thinking* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1952).

<sup>19</sup> Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1941); Bruno Bettelheim, "The Dynamism of Anti-Semitism in Gentile and Jew," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 42 (April 1947): 153-168; Nathan Ackerman and Marie Jahoda, *Anti-Semitism and Emotional Disorder: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950); Theodor W. Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950). For a discussion of these works in the context of postwar debates about antisemitism,

Like their contemporaries, then, American Jews concerned with survival anxiety in the 1940s and 1950s turned to scientific expertise and the study of human personality and motivation for answers. Based on the writings of Kurt Lewin and other Jewish psychologists who addressed the needs and sensibilities of the American Jewish child, rabbis and educators across the ideological spectrum developed and espoused a program of “positive Jewishness” in their efforts to secure Jewish continuity. Framing their recommendations and arguments in the language of psychology as much as in the language of Jewish tradition, these self-styled authorities on Jewish childrearing and education hoped to convince their predominantly middle-class and acculturated audience, already receptive to psychology as an infallible source of wisdom, of the objective truth and value of their claims. Their views were also strongly influenced by the intellectual and cultural climate of the Cold War, in which public expressions of religious faith took on political significance as displays of American patriotism in the fight against the atheist empire of the Soviet Union. In essence, they argued that a return to Judaism and Jewish culture, both at home and in school, would help children to identify with American values as well as Jewish ones.

The collective effort to imagine and create the ideal American Jewish child in the post-World War II decades also found expression in parenting advice literature, educational juvenile periodicals, and the programs and promotional materials of Jewish schools and summer camps. By focusing on how American Jews conceived of and sought to transmit Jewish identity to children in the

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self-hatred, and American Jewish identity, see Glenn, “The Vogue of Jewish Self-Hatred,” 110-112.

postwar era in response to survival anxieties, we can gain further insight into the ways in which ideology, class, gender, and geography shape notions of group identity. In an effort to balance a desire to fit in as Americans with a desire to preserve ethnic and cultural distinctiveness among themselves and their intended Jewish audience, many midcentury American Jewish communal leaders anchored their visions of the ideal Jewish child in contemporary psychological insights. They crafted an ideology and an educational program that emphasized emotional attachments to Jewish culture and history and stressed the harmonious compatibility of Jewish and American beliefs and values, with the goal in mind of producing well-adjusted and well-integrated American Jewish children and families. For years after his death, Kurt Lewin continued to serve as the leading voice of authority that guided and gave scientific legitimacy to these efforts.

### **From Posen to Boston: Kurt Lewin's Biography**

Born in 1890 in Mogilno, a rural East Prussian village in the province of Posen, Germany, Kurt Lewin obtained his doctorate in psychology from the University of Berlin in 1916. He trained in the Gestalt school of psychology, an approach grounded in an attempt to examine the human mind and emotions as a functioning and cohesive whole, rather than as a series of disconnected parts. Lewin conducted research and taught at the Psychological Institute in Berlin

throughout the 1920s, offering courses in psychology and philosophy while studying the dynamics of human motivation.<sup>20</sup>

Throughout his childhood and his early professional career, Lewin experienced the stings of antisemitic prejudice. In Mogilno, the Lewin family was one of only approximately thirty-five Jewish families. Lewin's father, Leopold, served as a leader in the local synagogue, and the children attended Jewish religious school classes and celebrated Jewish holidays. Living in a part of German territory that had formerly belonged to Poland before 1815, Jews found themselves caught in a web of nationalist politics, fully accepted neither as Poles nor as Germans. Lewin later remembered that in Mogilno, "100% anti-Semitism of the coarsest sort was taken for granted" by aristocrat and peasant alike. His father, a storekeeper, earned additional money for the family from working farmland in Mogilno, but claimed that as a Jew he could not legally own the farm, so it was registered in a Christian's name.<sup>21</sup>

The Lewin family moved to Berlin in 1905, so that Kurt and the other children could secure a better education in an atmosphere more hospitable to Jews. Nevertheless, while attending *Gymnasium*, or secondary school, in Berlin

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<sup>20</sup> Alfred J. Marrow, *The Practical Theorist: The Life and Work of Kurt Lewin* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 3-39.

<sup>21</sup> This claim about Jews' inability to own farms in Mogilno is made by Miriam Lewin, Kurt Lewin's daughter, in an academic essay recalling her father's upbringing. These circumstances are questionable, however, since the Jews of Posen were emancipated by 1869. For a description of Kurt Lewin's upbringing and this claim, and for Lewin's quote about antisemitism in Mogilno, see Miriam Lewin, "The Impact of Kurt Lewin's Life on the Place of Social Issues in His Work," *Journal of Social Issues* 48.2 (1992): 15-16. See also Marrow, 3-5.

as a teenager, antisemitism prevented Lewin from participating in German youth movement groups. In the German army during World War I, Lewin witnessed the savage beating of a fellow Jewish recruit in his unit by another soldier, and his brother was rejected by the Air Force on account of being Jewish, despite passing the pilot's test. Lewin also experienced antisemitism in his professional life, as before the Weimar years, *de facto* discrimination hindered the ability of Jewish academics to secure professorships. After completing his doctorate, Lewin labored for many years as a *Privatdozent*, or lecturer, with virtually no hope of ever being approved for a tenured professorship as a Jew.<sup>22</sup>

With Hitler's rise to power in 1933, Lewin resolved to leave Berlin with his family, as the first signs of worsening social and economic conditions for Jews in Germany began to develop. He resigned his position at the University of Berlin and the family left for the United States in August 1933. Following a brief appointment at Cornell, Lewin conducted research at the University of Iowa until 1944, when he came to MIT and directed the Research Center for Group Dynamics until his death. Lewin's life experiences and numerous encounters with antisemitism and discrimination, culminating in the threat of Nazi persecution that spurred him to leave his native country, shaped the research interests that defined his professional career: marginality, emotional security, and the

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<sup>22</sup> Marrow, 4, 17, 54; Martin Gold, "The Making of a Compleat Social Scientist: A Brief Intellectual Biography," in *The Complete Social Scientist: A Kurt Lewin Reader*, ed. Martin Gold (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1999), 12-13. Lewin was promoted to the rank of untenured associate professor in 1927, "as high as most Jews could go in the Prussian academic hierarchy," according to Marrow.

psychological roots of prejudice and self-hatred. These experiences also shaped his strong Zionist views. Lewin believed passionately in the importance of a Jewish homeland, and only a lack of funding prevented his acceptance of a position at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.<sup>23</sup>

Lewin originally published his essay on “Bringing Up the Jewish Child” in 1940 in the *Menorah Journal*, a periodical of Jewish thought engaged in tackling questions of identity and cultural pluralism, often from social-scientific perspectives.<sup>24</sup> The essay was then reprinted in 1948 in *Resolving Social Conflicts*, a posthumous collection of Lewin’s essays on group dynamics and prejudice edited by his wife and issued by mainstream publisher Harper and Row. A few years later, the Conservative-affiliated United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education published “Bringing Up the Jewish Child” as

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<sup>23</sup> Marrow, 64-69, 103; Miriam Lewin, “The Impact of Kurt Lewin’s Life,” 5-29. The Research Center at MIT was sponsored by the American Jewish Congress, in an effort to support and promote scientific study of the origins of prejudice. See Marrow, 161-164; “Anti-Semitism First Study of New Institute,” *Christian Science Monitor*, January 22, 1945, p.4. On the pressures facing Jewish university faculty in Germany to resign in 1933, following the passage of the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, see Saul Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: Volume 1, The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 49-56.

<sup>24</sup> Kurt Lewin, “Bringing Up the Jewish Child,” *Menorah Journal* 28 (1940): 28-45. On the *Menorah Journal*, see Daniel Greene, *The Jewish Origins of Cultural Pluralism: The Menorah Association and American Diversity* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011); and Matthew Kaufman, “The Menorah Journal and Shaping American Jewish Identity: Culture and Evolutionary Sociology,” *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 30.4 (Summer 2012): 61-79.

the first issue in *Your Child and You*, its pamphlet series on topics of interest for Jewish parents.<sup>25</sup>

Before his death, Lewin lectured widely throughout the United States, sharing his ideas about group identity and education with audiences of both Jewish and non-Jewish community leaders, educators, and parents.<sup>26</sup> After his death, invocations and critiques of Lewin's work brought his theories to an even wider audience throughout the 1950s and 1960s, in Jewish communal publications such as *Judaism*, *Jewish Education*, *The Jewish Parent*, and *Commentary*. Additionally, lecturers and educators shared and expanded on Lewin's views in presentations to Jewish groups in various synagogues and other organized Jewish communal settings in New York City, Pittsburgh, and Detroit.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Citations of "Bringing Up the Jewish Child" below are from the 1948 collection, *Resolving Social Conflicts*. For the USCJ edition, see Kurt Lewin, "Bringing Up the Jewish Child," *Your Child and You*, vol. 1 (New York: United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education, n.d.).

<sup>26</sup> "Jewish Unit Plans Aid to Minorities," *New York Times*, January 27, 1946, p. 30; "Prof. Kurt Lewin to Speak Here," *American Jewish Outlook* (Pittsburgh), February 4, 1944; Betty Driscoll, "Jewish Child Welfare Unit Meets in Brookline Dec.12," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 24, 1945, p.4; "Dr. Lewin to Talk on Inter-Group Work Today," *Hartford Courant*, March 27, 1946, p.12.

<sup>27</sup> Irving Sarnoff, "The Jewish Child in Search of Identity," *Judaism* 5.1 (Winter 1956): 60-69; Samuel Dinin, "The Contribution of Jewish Education to the Development of the American Jewish Personality," *Jewish Education* 22.3 (Summer 1951): 19-23; Boris M. Levinson, "The Jewish Child and His School," *The Jewish Parent*, June 1955, 12-13, 19; Bruno Bettelheim, "How Arm Our Children Against Anti-Semitism," *Commentary*, September 1951, 209-211. "'Y' Activities," *Jewish Criterion* (Pittsburgh), March 12, 1954, p.27; "Bernard Isaacs to Speak to Kvutzah on Saturday; Katz Elected President," *Detroit Jewish News*, December 3, 1948, p. 6; "Slawson Outlines Community Program for Stronger Jewish Identity," *Jewish Telegraph Agency*, April 17, 1967 (<http://www.jta.org/1967/04/17/archive/slawson-outlines-community-program-for-stronger-jewish-identity>, accessed December 10, 2013).

### **“Bringing Up the Jewish Child”: First Formulations of Positive Jewishness and “Group Belongingness”**

At its core, Lewin’s “Bringing Up the Jewish Child” addressed the issue of how parents could successfully raise children to identify proudly with their fellow Jews, to withstand antisemitic discrimination, and to avoid the kinds of emotional and behavioral problems, or “maladjustments,” that he associated with group identity confusion and discomfort. Writing in 1940 as a refugee from Hitler’s Germany, Lewin had geopolitical concerns very much on his mind. With the rise of Nazi Germany, he wrote, the fate of Jews around the world would rest heavily on the attitudes and actions of the next generation of American Jewry. Their actions, he claimed, “will be determined by the attitudes which the growing children acquire.” Therefore, Jewish parents and teachers who seek to shape those attitudes must possess a “realistic” and incisive understanding of the social, psychological, and educational factors that determine how Jewish children relate to themselves, their fellow Jews, and the world around them.<sup>28</sup>

Lewin expressed surprise at the extent to which he detected “such typical signs of Jewish maladjustment as over-tension, loudness, over-aggressiveness, [and] excessively hard work” among American Jewish students. While some are able to cope with unwelcome bouts of prejudice in everyday life—epithets such as “dirty Jew,” quotas in universities and professional schools, and employment discrimination—many are not, he argued. In a surprising statement of the gravity

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<sup>28</sup> Kurt Lewin, “Bringing Up the Jewish Child,” in *Resolving Social Conflicts: Selected Papers on Group Dynamics*, ed. Gertrud Weiss Lewin (New York: Harper & Row, 1948), 169.

of the problem, Lewin claimed that the ensuing symptoms of behavior stemming from maladjustment were occasionally more severe among American Jews than among the German Jews he encountered before leaving Berlin.<sup>29</sup>

Antisemitism is a fact of life, Lewin argued, and it has observable harmful effects on the psyche and physical health of an American Jew. Understandably, therefore, he acknowledged that parents might be tempted to avoid the subjects of antisemitism and Jewish identity altogether, shielding their children from the circumstances that marked them as different and disadvantaged for as long as possible. Lewin warned, however, that such a strategy would later cause great harm to the child raised in blissful ignorance. The boy or girl improperly attuned to his or her status as a member of a disadvantaged minority group was bound to experience prejudice eventually. If left unprepared for this unfortunate inevitability, the child would suffer far worse emotional consequences as a result of being sheltered.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, Lewin argued, to avoid this situation, it was best to inculcate a sense of group loyalty in children from the beginning. After all, “[t]he group to which an individual belongs is the ground on which he stands, which gives or denies him social status, gives or denies him security and help.” Anchoring identity in terms of “group belongingness,” he contended that from an early age,

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 169-170.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 170-175.

children view through the world in terms of their social relationships, which determine their sense of right and wrong, safety and danger, desires and fears.<sup>31</sup>

Accordingly, Lewin insisted, a child firmly grounded in his attachment to his social group, whether the Jews or African Americans or any other disadvantaged group, developed a stable sense of self that could endure the pain of prejudice. A child raised with an irrational or unrealistic sense of self, however, who lacks an understanding and appreciation of his group identity and his relationship with other groups, would suffer potentially debilitating repercussions when illusions about his or her status were rudely overturned. Once the “social structure in [the child’s] psychological world, which had been slowly built up for years,” suddenly disintegrates, Lewin claimed, the child will become disoriented and disillusioned. Bereft of a viable conception of his or her social world and its working assumptions, the adolescent or adult will develop an emotional and behavioral paralysis, lacking a sound ideological and psychological basis for goal-directed action.<sup>32</sup>

According to Lewin, Jewish parents must realize that what influences the likelihood that their children would be able to confront antisemitism successfully was not the frequency or severity of such encounters, so much as the

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 170-175. Along these lines, Lewin explored the concept of the self-loathing Jew in his 1941 essay, “Self-Hatred Among Jews,” in *Resolving Social Conflicts: Selected Papers on Group Dynamics*, ed. Gertrud Weiss Lewin (New York: Harper & Row, 1948), 186-200. There, as in “Bringing Up the Jewish Child,” Lewin argued for the critical importance of cultivating a positive sense of loyalty to the Jewish group as the cure for Jewish self-hatred. See also Glenn, 102-105.

preparation to deal with them, as well as the child's level of comfort in his group and recognition of his niche in the social structure. The "stable social ground" that a child needs to persevere through adolescence into a well-adjusted adulthood should be established as early as possible, Lewin stressed.<sup>33</sup>

Arguing that group attachment is critical for the individual's sense of security, Lewin contended that loyalty to multiple groups need not be a problem or a source of tension. In the case of the American Jew, as with other ethnic minority groups, there was no inherent tension between being both Jewish (or Irish, or Italian) and American. Rather, Lewin argued, difficulties arise for the individual when there is "an *uncertainty* of belongingness"—a lack of clarity about the meaning, relevance, or purpose of Jewish identity. Unsure whether the Jews constitute a religious, cultural, racial, or national group, and unsure of his or her own relationship to the Jewish group as a result, the modern Jew often exists as a "marginal man," not fully at home either as a Jew or as an American.<sup>34</sup>

This tension, according to Lewin, leads some Jews to break away and disaffiliate from the Jewish group, in an attempt to find some certainty and clarity in their social standing and psychological well-being. However, despite these efforts to blend in among the majority and renounce all former ties, these

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<sup>33</sup> Lewin, "Bringing Up the Jewish Child," 175-176.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 179-180. Lewin borrowed this concept of the "marginal man" from Robert Park and the "Chicago School" of sociologists, who studied the process of assimilation among immigrant groups. See Robert E. Park, "Human Migration and the Marginal Man," *The American Journal of Sociology* 33.6 (May 1928): 881-893; and Chad Alan Goldberg, "Robert Park's Marginal Man: The Career of a Concept in American Sociology," *Laboratorium: Russian Review of Social Research* 4.2 (2012): 199-217.

individuals now find themselves on the periphery of two groups, fully at home in neither. The resulting uncertainty of belongingness leads to a series of psychological maladies—restlessness, aggression, and self-loathing.<sup>35</sup>

Taking all this into account, Lewin concluded, Jewish parents should approach “the Jewish problem” with their children in the same “true, open, and realistic” manner that they would address sex or any other sensitive and important topic. However, he implied, they should not present the matter of Jewish identity as nothing more than an unwelcome disadvantage. Rather, he encouraged them to emphasize the positive aspects of being Jewish with their children as early as possible:

Such an early build-up of a clear and positive feeling of belongingness to the Jewish group is one of the few effective things that Jewish parents can do for the later happiness of their children. In this way parents can minimize the ambiguity and the tension inherent in the situation of the Jewish minority group, and thus counteract various forms of maladjustment resulting therefrom.<sup>36</sup>

By encouraging their children to affirm and embrace their identity as members of the Jewish community from an early age, Lewin argued, parents could protect their sons and daughters from later emotional and physiological problems.

This concise statement of the philosophy of positive Jewishness and the importance of group belongingness constituted Lewin’s single most important contribution to the fields of Jewish education and childrearing. Over the next two decades, rabbis and educators often referred to it explicitly in sermons,

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<sup>35</sup> Lewin, “Bringing Up the Jewish Child,” 179-181.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 183.

pamphlets, and other messages to parents as they sought to convince them of the critical significance of positive Jewish educational experiences for their children's well-being. Lewin provided Jewish communal leaders and childrearing authorities with scientific evidence of the emotional health benefits of Jewish education and cultural engagement, as well as reassurance that such engagement would help, not hinder, their children's development into loyal and productive American citizens. As the rising tide of anti-Communist invective and investigations fueled continued concerns about Jewish acceptance in American life, rabbis and educators used this message to try to address the misgivings and insecurities of baby boom parents.<sup>37</sup>

#### **Later Reformulations: Expanding the Dimensions of Positive Jewishness**

In 1940, Lewin's conception of positive Jewishness lacked a clear program of implementation, and his concrete recommendations for parents, aimed primarily at engaging Jewish teenagers, were grounded primarily in sociological terms. As he explained in "Bringing Up the Jewish Child," parents should frame Jewish identity to their older children in terms of social relationships and the concept of "interdependence of fate," rather than in any particular religious, cultural, biological, or political approach. Jewish adolescents might not be interested in religion or Zionism, and they might readily observe that they are in many respects more similar to their non-Jewish fellow Americans than to Jews in other parts of the world. Lewin advised, however, that they could surely be

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<sup>37</sup> Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 276-280; Prell, "Triumph, Accommodation, and Resistance," 129-131.

made to understand that “regardless of whether the Jewish group is a racial, religious, national, or cultural one, the fact that it is classified by the majority as a distinct group is what counts.”<sup>38</sup>

As Hitler’s armies advanced across Europe, Lewin urged American Jewish parents to instill in their older children this notion of shared fate and responsibility with other Jews in the United States and all over the world. Such an approach, he believed, would create a “proper balance” in the mind of Jewish adolescents, sufficiently eliminating the feelings of confusion, guilt, and self-hatred that cause various crippling difficulties, while supplying a viable motive for continued affiliation with the Jewish group.<sup>39</sup>

In his later work, Lewin went further, providing concrete recommendations as to how parents and teachers could inculcate positive associations with Jewish group life in their children. In “Psychological Problems in Jewish Education,” an address before the National Conference of Jewish Social Welfare that was published in *The Jewish Social Service Quarterly* in March 1947, a month after his death, Lewin emphasized the importance of fun and free will for effective Jewish education, and spoke openly about the kinds of activities and approaches that he believed could foster Jewish loyalty in a child.

“Jewish education is the cornerstone not only of Jewish survival,” he claimed, “but also of Jewish social health and social adjustment.” Jewish education must not merely transmit knowledge of values and practices, but must

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<sup>38</sup> Lewin, “Bringing Up the Jewish Child,” 184.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

train students in living comfortably and contentedly as Jews in the United States.<sup>40</sup> Repeating his contention that the Jewish child must be treated as a member of a disadvantaged minority group, Lewin stressed that these disadvantages had been recently exacerbated by the agonies and dislocations of World War II and its impact on Jews and Jewish communities around the world. “The Jewish child grows up as a member of a social body that shows all the marks of being terribly hurt,” Lewin remarked. Parents and teachers must therefore be especially sensitive to the child’s fears, insecurities, and desires.<sup>41</sup>

According to Lewin, the American Jewish child needs to feel that he is accepted and well-integrated into both his Jewish group and American society in general, and Jewish education must help the child achieve that goal. Without a stable perception of his or her Jewish identity and relationship to other Jews, Lewin claimed, the child would struggle to feel secure in relation to other Americans. Therefore, in order to achieve future social and psychological success, he reasoned, the child must acquire a “positive” and “productive” form of Jewish group loyalty.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Kurt Lewin, “Psychological Problems in Jewish Education,” *Jewish Social Service Quarterly* 23.3 (March 1947): 291.

<sup>41</sup> Lewin was not alone in his concern for how the Holocaust might negatively affect the emotional state of American Jewish children. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, educators often framed discussions of the Holocaust in Jewish classrooms around presentations of Jewish bravery and defiance in the face of evil. See Sheramy, “‘Resistance and War’: The Holocaust in American Jewish Education, 1945-1960,” *American Jewish History* 91.2 (June 2003): 287-313.

<sup>42</sup> Lewin, “Psychological Problems in Jewish Education,” 292. Lewin’s argument about the symbiotic relationship between an individual’s Jewish and American commitments resembles that of Louis Brandeis, who argued this position as early

Lewin then returned to his central argument about how Jewish group loyalty is best ingrained in the impressionable child. Citing recent social scientific studies on the child's likelihood of accepting or rejecting a given culture or group, Lewin offered the conclusion that

Jewish education at home, in the Jewish school, in the Jewish Community Center, will be able to build positive, strong, and well-adjusted Jews only if [parents and teachers] learn to make Jewish education something warm and joyous, something that the child is glad to accept rather than is compelled to go through with, and against which he inwardly rebels.<sup>43</sup>

Returning to a theme he articulated in "Bringing Up the Jewish Child," Lewin stressed the formative importance of early positive Jewish experiences in shaping a child's sense of group attachment. Whereas in 1940, he was reluctant to encourage parents to push any particular religious or cultural agenda with their children, now Lewin ventured into more specifics about the kinds of activities and ideologies that he believed could foster ethnic attachments in a Jewish child.

Lewin pointed to Zionism, Hebrew, and holiday celebrations as examples of cultural and ethnic expression that could inspire group belongingness in young American Jews. He cited an MIT study, commissioned by the American Jewish

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as 1915. See Louis D. Brandeis, "Zionism Is Consistent with American Patriotism," in *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, eds. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 496-497.

<sup>43</sup> Lewin, "Psychological Problems in Jewish Education," 294. His wife and editor, Gertrude Weiss Lewin, offered similar remarks about the importance of "intangible emotional impressions and associations" that children can form through engagement with Jewish culture in an article published in *Jewish Education* shortly following her husband's death. See Gertrude Weiss Lewin, "Group Belongingness and Jewish Education," *Jewish Education* 18.2 (February-March 1947): 14-17.

Congress, that found that members of a Zionist youth group were more likely to answer the question “What do you like about being Jewish?” with affirmative responses that “referred to specific cultural or religious values,” than non-Zionist university students. The students with a Zionist background also reported, on average, more years of Hebrew school education and more satisfaction with their learning experience. The non-Zionist group reported more negative than positive associations with being Jewish, betraying what Lewin termed a kind of “empty nationalism” -- a frail sense of group belongingness which, devoid of any pleasant or meaningful content, would not prove psychologically useful. Lewin thus implied that engagement with Jewish nationalism and culture through Zionism could convey the sort of positive, enjoyable ethnic associations with Jewishness that facilitated lasting bonds of group identity.

In the same vein, Lewin described a visit he paid to a Jewish school in Worcester, Massachusetts, during which he saw a Passover play performed by a group of first-graders. Lewin commented on the lasting impression the students made on him with their spirited performance and rapidly-acquired aptitude in Hebrew, “in contrast to the many children who waste years of their precious afternoons being exposed to poor teaching methods.” Freed from the drudgery of uninspiring pedagogical tactics and encouraged to express themselves in Hebrew in the form of a play, these students exemplified Lewin’s concept of effective “warm and joyous” Jewish education.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Lewin, “Psychological Problems in Jewish Education,” 293-294.

From 1940 to 1947, then, Lewin's public stance on the foundations of a lasting, positive Jewish identity evolved significantly. In "Bringing Up the Jewish Child," Lewin restricted himself to advocating for "interdependence of fate," or ethnic awareness, as the most tenable basis for inculcating Jewish group loyalty, at least among adolescents. Seven years later, Lewin openly advocated such religious and cultural modes of Jewish expression as Zionism, Hebrew, and holiday celebrations for children of all ages. For his own part, Lewin had long subscribed to the notion of the necessity of a Jewish homeland; he may have felt, in the aftermath of the Nazi destruction of the European Jewish world of his own childhood, both more comfortable and more compelled to openly advocate for Zionism and various modes of Jewish cultural expression.<sup>45</sup>

Composed in the shadow of World War II and the first years of the Cold War, Lewin's message adopted a strongly anti-authoritarian tone, shaped no doubt by his personal experiences and the political climate in which he wrote. A victim of fascism himself, Lewin warned parents about the dangers of compulsion, arguing that using coercion to engage children with Jewish culture would certainly backfire, leading to rebellion and resentment. Rather, he counseled, Jewish teachings and practices must be presented in such an entertaining and appealing way as to motivate children to choose them freely. In the spirit of the times and in light of his own experiences, Lewin embraced a

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<sup>45</sup> Marrow, 103; Heinze, *Jews and the American Soul*, 160-161.

democratic approach as the best and most effective method for instilling Jewish group identity.<sup>46</sup>

In these two articles, Lewin established the foundations of concepts and trends that would continue to guide educators, rabbis, psychologists, parents, and others engaged in Jewish education and childrearing throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In the decades following his death, other Jewish psychologists continued to apply the tools of their trade in efforts to assuage communal anxieties about Jewish continuity, and rabbis and educators outside the psychological profession often turned to psychology and social science as objective proof of the validity of their arguments. Lewin's central thesis about the importance of positive Jewish experiences for children would bolster and accelerate trends to modernize Jewish education, many of which had already begun to take shape before World War II, and bestow greater importance on the role of parents in Jewish childrearing.<sup>47</sup> Finally, the context of Cold War-era political rhetoric and ideology would continue to serve as an important framing device for Jewish childrearing experts, who frequently borrowed the language of democracy and choice as they imagined how the Jewish child and family should think and act.

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<sup>46</sup> Lewin, "Psychological Problems in Jewish Education," 294-295.

<sup>47</sup> See Jonathan Krasner's work on Samson Benderly, his acolytes, and American Jewish pedagogy both before and after World War II in Krasner, *Benderly Boys and American Jewish Education*.

## Psychology and the Jewish Child After Lewin: Confirmations and Challenges

Following Lewin's death, other Jewish psychologists and child development experts continued to think and write about the problems and needs of American Jewish children, arguing for the critical importance of group belongingness and Jewish education. Supporters and critics of Lewin's theories served both to refine them and to keep them at the center of American Jewish pedagogical theory and parenting advice over the next decade. Paralleling a general American cultural trend in the same period, these authors also worked to solidify the trope of the childrearing expert who relied primarily on scientific research and observation, not personal parenting experience, to offer recommendations to Jewish mothers and fathers.<sup>48</sup>

Eugene Revitch, a French-trained psychiatrist affiliated with the New Jersey Diagnostic Center, compiled his thoughts in a paper titled "The Mental Hygiene Value of Jewish Education," which he delivered at a Jewish Education Committee of New York conference in 1946. His remarks were then reprinted in 1949 in *The Synagogue School*, the Conservative movement's pedagogical journal, and as a pamphlet for parents in 1954. Originally composed for a nonspecialist audience of Jewish teachers, Revitch's remarks were later

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<sup>48</sup> On American motherhood in the postwar era and the increasing popularity and ubiquity of childrearing experts and their scientific advice, see Rima D. Apple, *Perfect Motherhood: Science and Childrearing in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 107-134; Julia Grant, *Raising Baby by the Book: The Education of American Mothers* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 182-244; and Ann Hulbert, *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice About Children* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 191-290.

reprinted as part of an effort to convince parents of the critical psychological benefits that Jewish education could bestow upon the American Jewish child.

Mental hygiene, Revitch explained, is a psychiatric sub-specialty interested in the prevention of “mental diseases and emotional maladjustments.” Toward this end, Revitch affirmed the link between the kind of intensive Jewish education that immerses the child in the world of Jewish culture, including history, literature, and language, and the child’s ability to avoid future psychological difficulties. He warned, however, that the “smattering of Jewish religion as taught in Sunday schools,” devoid of emotional affect, could not hope to produce the same desired result.<sup>49</sup>

Citing both Kurt Lewin and Sigmund Freud, Revitch repeated many of the assertions found in Lewin’s work. Placing similar emphasis on the staying power of childhood impressions and experiences, he insisted that “Jewish culture absorbed early in life will be more effectively integrated with the individual’s personality than education acquired at a later age, when the personality is already formed.” While these experiences affirm the individual’s Jewish group attachment and enable him or her to cope with prejudice, those who do not grow up in such a manner were bound to experience feelings of inferiority and

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<sup>49</sup> Eugene Revitch, “The Mental Hygiene Value of Jewish Education,” *The Synagogue School* 7.4 (April 1949): 3. The article was then reprinted as part of the *Your Child and You* pamphlet series by the Conservative-affiliated United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education in 1954.

confusion later in life, since they lack the emotional security that “the clear consciousness of an inner identity,” in Freud’s words, can convey.<sup>50</sup>

American Jewish education at its best, Revitch claimed, helps the child formulate multiple bonds of attachment: to family, to fellow Jews, to other Americans, and to the wider world. Jewish education helps the American-born child relate to his foreign-born parents and grandparents, reducing family tensions and feelings of isolation and embarrassment, and it prepares the child to cope with prejudice. Since, according to studies by the psychologist Arnold Gesell, the four-year old child is capable of establishing social cliques and the six-year old may repeat racial slurs, Jewish children need the emotional security of group identity as soon as possible. To help their young children acquire a sense of group belongingness, Revitch advised that Jewish parents celebrate holidays together as a family. Turning again to Gesell’s research, Revitch stated that a child as young as three years old “likes the party aspect of family holidays.” Lighting candles at Hanukkah, observing a Passover Seder, and dressing in costume for a Purim party are activities that pique the child’s interest, render Judaism fun and engaging, and establish the foundations of proper mental hygiene and therapeutic group identity.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 3. Revitch quotes from a letter Freud wrote to the Vienna B’nai B’rith lodge, a Jewish cultural organization, in 1926, in which he discussed his own Jewish identity. On Freud’s relationship with the Vienna B’nai B’rith, see Dennis B. Klein, *Jewish Origins of the Psychoanalytic Movement* (New York: Praeger, 1981); and Deborah Dash Moore, *B’nai B’rith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1981), 40-42.

<sup>51</sup> Revitch, 3-7.

Like Revitch, Alfred Kahn also turned to insights from Lewin and Freud as he explored the needs of the American Jewish child and the role of parents and educators in the child's healthy psychological development. Kahn, a pioneering professor of social work at Columbia University, authored a paper on "Jewish Elements in the Development of the Child," which was published in the journal *Jewish Education* in the summer of 1947. Summarizing Freudian concepts about the parent-child relationship, Kahn argued that the child very early latches on to the parent as a role model and a source of identification and security. During the child's latency period, from about age five until puberty, parents, teachers, and fictional heroes serve as examples of adults whose values and actions the child admires and desires to emulate. "The child copies people he loves, wants to be like them, and solves new problems by acting as they do or as he thinks they would," Kahn wrote.<sup>52</sup>

Because children are naturally inclined to mimic their parents' behaviors and attitudes, Kahn concluded, parents who inculcate in their children a love for Judaism and Jewish culture will lead them to a healthy, positive association with being Jewish. "Where cultural symbolism and traditional observance enrich family life, contribute to family harmony and make for happy experiences, there an atmosphere exists in which the child can grow normally," he claimed. Conversely, if parents are not themselves comfortable and connected in some positive way to their Jewish heritage, they will not be able to transmit a positive

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<sup>52</sup> Alfred J. Kahn, "Jewish Elements in the Development of the Child," *Jewish Education* 18.3 (Summer 1947): 12-13.

orientation to Jewishness to their children. This shortcoming constitutes a serious case of parental failure and negligence, Kahn insisted: “Where the parent has not oriented [children] emotionally through positive Jewish experiences [. . .] we have the beginnings of maladjustment and blocking in the development of positive identifications.”<sup>53</sup>

Following Lewin, Kahn and Revitch both emphasized the duty of Jewish parents to play a primary role in their children’s process of learning to identify happily as a member of the Jewish group. Like Revitch and Lewin, Kahn also stressed the importance of creating “happy and meaningful” experiences with Jewish culture, as opposed to rituals and information conveyed to children through coercion and repression, for the successful development of the healthy and well-adjusted Jewish child.<sup>54</sup>

The most prominent critic of Lewin’s theories of group dynamics and Jewish identity development in children was Bruno Bettelheim. Born in Vienna in 1903 and raised in a secular Jewish family, Bettelheim was interned with other Austrian Jews in a Nazi concentration camp following the German annexation of Austria in 1938. After his release in 1939, Bettelheim emigrated to the United States and became a professor of psychology at the University of Chicago,

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>54</sup> On a similar theme, addressed to readers of an Orthodox parenting magazine, see Samuel A. Weiss, “Emotional Security in Jewish Children,” *The Jewish Parent*, December 1957, 9-12.

where he spent several decades working in the field of child psychology and directing a school for children with emotional difficulties.<sup>55</sup>

In the context of a 1951 *Commentary* article about how to help children cope with antisemitism, Bettelheim issued a stinging critique of Lewin's arguments and assumptions about how Jewish children could best be protected from psychological problems and prepared for encounters with prejudice.

"Jewish institutional life in this country is fair on its way to becoming a vast system of psychological fortifications behind which it is hoped that Jews will live out their lives without incurring psychological scars," he noted with sarcasm.<sup>56</sup>

Bettelheim criticized this approach, founded on Lewin's theory of group belongingness, on two counts. First, according to Bettelheim, it is the child's parents, not Jewish institutions, who play the earliest and most important role in preparing children to withstand antisemitic prejudice successfully. Second, he argued, while the Jewish child growing up in a family environment and community suffused with Jewish cultural traditions may acquire a positive Jewish identity in this manner, that scenario did not apply to most American Jews in 1951. Rather, he claimed, more and more Jews today lived in predominantly non-Jewish communities, were fully acculturated into the cultural patterns of

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<sup>55</sup> Nina Sutton, *Bruno Bettelheim: A Life and a Legacy* (New York: Basic Books, 1996).

<sup>56</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, "How Arm Our Children Against Anti-Semitism? A Psychologist's Advice to Jewish Parents," *Commentary*, September 1951, 209-211, 217-218. In 1962, the American Jewish Committee published Lewin's and Bettelheim's ideas together in a volume. See Bruno Bettelheim and Kurt Lewin, *Securing Our Children Against Prejudice: Two Views* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1962).

mainstream American life, and were disengaged from and uninterested in Jewish ritual practices. “It would seem, then, that for these children of unsegregated and culturally integrated Jews, it is impossible to contrive the kind of ‘belongingness’ that Lewin advocates,” Bettelheim wrote. “Certainly it is hard to see how the celebration of a few Jewish holidays will do it [ . . .].” He urged parents not to feign an affinity for religion with their children, but instead to focus on providing their children with a loving home and a firm sense of self-confidence, and to be able to explain antisemitism as a social problem, not the result of individual flaws or shortcomings in their children.<sup>57</sup> Bettelheim’s lack of interest in inculcating Jewish identity in children, compared to Lewin’s stated agenda, influenced their philosophical disagreement.

Following Bettelheim’s dim assessment of Lewin’s theories on positive Jewishness and childrearing, Irving Sarnoff, a Yale University psychology professor, published in 1956 an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of both approaches in *Judaism*, a journal of Jewish thought and competitor to *Commentary*. The exploration of how psychological insights can best aid the Jewish child in establishing a positive sense of self-worth is of critical importance,

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 210-211. See also the letters to the editor in response to Bettelheim’s analysis of Lewin in *Commentary*, January 1952, 85-86. For a longer sustained examination and critique of Lewin’s theory, see Jack Rothman, *Minority Group Identification and Intergroup Relations: An Examination of Kurt Lewin’s Theory of Jewish Group Identity* (Ann Arbor, MI: Research Institute for Group Work in Jewish Agencies, 1965). Based on statistical survey research, Rothman challenged the assumption of Lewin and others that the cultivation of group belongingness in the minority individual would also help him or her develop “positive outgroup relationships” -- i.e., feel more secure and accepted as an American -- as a result.

Sarnoff claimed, because of the continuing prevalence of antisemitism in the workplace, university, and other areas of American society.<sup>58</sup>

Sarnoff distinguished between the “Psychoanalytic Approach,” which, echoing Bettelheim, emphasized the child-parent relationship as the most critical factors for the development of a positive attachment to Jewish identity, and the “Group Dynamics Approach,” identified with Lewin, which prioritized the establishment of early positive associations with Jewishness and the concept of a shared group destiny. Ultimately, he concluded, “the most appropriate techniques for fostering a positive self-image in the Jewish child seem to require an integration of both approaches.” Toward that end, Sarnoff advised readers that the Jewish child needs both love and acceptance from parents, as well as a firm grounding in Jewish identity through a variety of cultural approaches designed to foster ethnic attachments: religion, language, Zionism, the arts, and even such distinctly Jewish foods as “bagel and lox.” Nevertheless, Sarnoff acknowledged, as members of a disadvantaged minority group, Jewish parents could not hope to shield their children forever from the “harsh realities” of prejudice in American society, but following the recommendations informed by

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<sup>58</sup> Irving Sarnoff, “The Jewish Child in Search of an Identity,” *Judaism* 5.1 (Winter 1956): 60-62. On the origins and ideological persuasions of *Commentary* and *Judaism*, respectively, see Steven J. Zipperstein, *Commentary* and American Jewish Culture in the 1940s and 1950s, *Jewish Social Studies* 3.2 (Winter 1997): 18-28; and Robert Gordis, “The Genesis of *Judaism*: A Chapter in Jewish Cultural History,” *Judaism* 30.4 (Fall 1981): 390-395.

psychological wisdom might serve to make a parent's job in this regard less difficult.<sup>59</sup>

In the decade after Kurt Lewin's untimely death, other Jewish psychologists addressing questions of childrearing and education thus continued to engage with his theories in the pages of Jewish cultural and pedagogical journals, keeping the concepts of positive Jewishness and group belongingness at the center of the conversation about the Jewish child as a result.

Concurrently, rabbis and educators interested in improving Jewish education and strengthening Jewish family life also seized on Lewin's theories, bringing them to an even wider audience of parents and teachers.

### **Educators and Rabbis on Lewin - The Psychology and Politics of Postwar Jewish Education**

Interest in Lewinian understandings of the links between group belongingness and emotional security and the implications of these concepts for Jewish education was not limited to a small circle of psychologists. Rather, across denominational boundaries, teachers and rabbis eagerly seized on Lewin's theories in the postwar era, using them as justifications to argue for certain priorities in school curricula and to persuade parents to invest in their children's futures by giving them a religious education and nurturing Jewish home environment. As they relayed Lewinian ideas about happiness and adjustment to teachers and parents, rabbis and educators also frequently brought political considerations into the discussion. Within the context of the

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 62-69. Sarnoff went so far as to suggest that "we are obliged to conclude that a completely self-respecting life as a Jew is now possible only in Israel."

Cold War and the specter of public uncertainties about Jewish loyalties to America, rabbis and educators argued that Jewish education should and could produce not only happy, well-adjusted Jews, but well-informed and loyal American citizens as well. In the process, they articulated an agenda for Jewish education that would simultaneously build on Kurt Lewin and insights from Jewish child psychology while responding to the political situation and cultural trends of the late 1940s and 1950s.

In 1951, Samuel Dinin, then the executive director of the Los Angeles Bureau of Jewish Education, contributed an article to *Jewish Education* in which he affirmed the needs of minority group children to “acquire a sense of belongingness to and security within their own groups.” With Lewin’s thesis in mind, Dinin argued, Jewish educational curricula must use texts, rituals, and beliefs as tools to help the child orient himself both as a Jew and as an American, giving special emphasis to those aspects of Jewish religion and culture that validate and strengthen such core American values as “the sacredness of the individual,” the “equality of all men under law,” and “justice and mercy and lovingkindness.” Bringing the child to an appreciation and understanding of the Judeo-Christian roots of American democratic values, Dinin reasoned, would strengthen his or her group loyalties, and would produce both a loyal American citizen and a dedicated Jew.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Samuel Dinin, “The Contribution of Jewish Education to the Development of the American Jewish Personality,” *Jewish Education* 22.3 (Summer 1951): 19-23. See also Harry Elkin, “Jewish Education and Individual Security,” *Jewish Education* 21.3 (Summer 1950): 32-36. For a historical analysis of how American Jews have cultivated and promoted the notion of the seamless

Azriel Eisenberg, the executive vice-president of the Jewish Education Committee of New York, echoed these sentiments in “Talks With Parents,” another installment in the United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education’s pamphlet series for parents, published in 1954. Eisenberg urged Jewish parents to send their children to Jewish schools and summer camps, for three familiar reasons.

First, quoting Kurt Lewin directly, Eisenberg stressed the importance of a sound Jewish education for bestowing children with the psychological benefits of “happiness and healthy adjustment,” and the self-acceptance that would equip them with the strength to prevail against discrimination. Then, as Trude Weiss-Rosmarin and others had done, he invoked a sense of duty to the future survival of the Jewish people that only education could fulfill: “Your parents [. . .] expect you to continue the golden chain of Jewish life. Your children are the newest link in this age-old chain. Would you have them be the last? Would it not be a moral crime to bring 4,000 years of Jewish life and hope to an end through your indifference or negligence?” Eisenberg called on parents to give their children a Jewish education as a response, implicitly, to the tragedy of the Holocaust and the responsibility of American Jews to “ensure the future of our people” and “the immortality of your ancestors.”<sup>61</sup> He invoked both the emotional advantages of

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compatibility of Jewish and American values, see Beth S. Wenger, *History Lessons: The Creation of American Jewish Heritage* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>61</sup> Azriel Eisenberg, “Talks With Parents,” *Your Child and You*, vol. 31 (New York: United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education, 1954), 3-5. See also

religion and the duty of ethnic preservation as compelling reasons for parents to give their children a Jewish education.

A third compelling justification for Jewish education, according to Eisenberg, rested in its capability to instill American civic values in the Jewish child. Concurring with Samuel Dinin's view, Eisenberg embraced the notion of what historian Kevin Schultz has labeled a "tri-faith America," a perception that shared values from Christian and Jewish traditions provided the foundation for American ideals such as democracy, equality, and freedom. This vision of America gained significant traction during the Cold War as a rhetorical weapon against the atheistic, Communist Soviet Union, and found expression in theological additions to American currency and the Pledge of Allegiance, as well as the establishment of a National Day of Prayer.<sup>62</sup>

In this context, Eisenberg advised American Jewish parents that providing their children with religious education was "a fundamental duty of American citizenship," since "America expects religion and religious values to play an important role in the lives of all its citizens. No American wants to see a generation bereft of its religious tradition, devoid of loyalty and faith in its heritage, adrift and lost. Such a generation would be a liability to our people and a menace to America."<sup>63</sup> Eisenberg's message to parents, published and promoted by the primary educational organization of the Conservative

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Hyman Chanover and Zalmen Slesinger, "The Jewish School: Your Child and You" (New York: American Association for Jewish Education, 1956).

<sup>62</sup> Schultz, *Tri-Faith America*, 3-12, 73-75.

<sup>63</sup> Eisenberg, "Talks With Parents," 6.

movement, thus positioned Jewish education as a psychological, political, and moral necessity in the post-Holocaust, Cold War era. Jewish education, he claimed, would secure the continuity of the Jewish people and guide children into becoming better, happier Americans.

Dinin and Eisenberg, educational administrators on opposite sides of the country, concurred on the centrality of Lewinian concepts to informing a Jewish school curriculum and home environment that could produce emotionally secure American Jewish children. They argued that Jewish children benefited from regular exposure to Jewish texts, beliefs, and rituals both at school and at home, not primarily because of their intrinsic religious value, but because those tools could instill proper American civic values and beneficial psychic qualities in students. Dinin and Eisenberg proposed the means of religion and culture as pathways to accomplish political and psychological ends.

Versions of this argument also appealed to Orthodox educators, who used it to encourage parents to enroll their children in all-day religious Jewish schools. In June 1954, Rabbi Ephraim Wolf published “A Decalogue for Jewish Education” in *The Jewish Parent*, a magazine for the mothers and fathers of children in Orthodox all-day schools. According to Wolf, the Jewish values and traditions taught in day schools would help children become better Jews and better citizens of the United States, as these pupils learned to cherish and develop such character traits as respect, self-reliance, and faith.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ephraim R. Wolf, “A Decalogue for Jewish Education,” *The Jewish Parent* 6.1 (June 1954): 4-5, 15. For a historical perspective on this issue and American

Similarly, Rabbi Joseph Lookstein, the founder of the modern Orthodox day school Ramaz Academy in New York, shared his views on “The Goals of Jewish Education” in a 1960 article in the Orthodox magazine *Tradition*. He argued that the ultimate goal of Jewish education is the development of “good Jews.” Unsurprisingly, Lookstein defined a good Jew, in part, as someone who has faith in God and observes Jewish law, but he also listed pride in Jewish identity and commitment to democracy as essential Jewish qualities. Taking a somewhat skewed view of history, Lookstein went so far as to suggest that Jewish education was always democratic in nature, open to all regardless of “economic station or social position” to “enjoy the inalienable right and opportunity of education.”<sup>65</sup>

In this statement, Lookstein acknowledged the importance of emotional attachments to the Jewish group and celebrated the intrinsic propensities of Judaism and Jewish education to inculcate an appreciation for democracy and equality. Thus, while Lookstein and other Orthodox educators insisted on the value of Jewish education for its own sake, they also frequently nodded to familiar arguments about the psychological benefits of Jewish education, as well

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Jewish Orthodox day school education, see Klapper, “The History of Jewish Education in America,” 208-209.

<sup>65</sup> Joseph H. Lookstein, “The Goals of Jewish Education,” *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought* 3.1 (Fall 1960): 35, 42. On Lookstein and the modern Orthodox Ramaz Academy he founded along these ideological lines, see Jeffrey S. Gurock, “The Ramaz Version of American Orthodoxy,” in *American Jewish Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishers, 1996), 313-350.

as its potential contributions for molding better American citizens through training in Jewish values.<sup>66</sup>

Reform rabbis and educators also appealed to parents and colleagues along these same lines. In December 1954, Emanuel Gamoran, national Director of Education for the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, addressed a conference of Reform religious school principals in New York City on the subjects of strengths and weaknesses in Reform Jewish education. According to Gamoran, Jewish educators must work to encourage parents to overcome their indifference and ignorance with respect to religious practices, because these holiday celebrations are vital to the Jewish child's healthy emotional development. Parents who do not make use of the Sabbath and other Jewish holidays as opportunities to build positive associations with Jewishness through festive family celebrations, Gamoran contended, "contribute to the undermining of the psychological security of their own children" by this omission.<sup>67</sup>

Gamoran also emphasized that Reform school teachers have an important role to play in the development of ideals and attitudes in their students, particularly with respect to "[t]he democratic ideal." Values such as justice, righteousness, and equality before the law are central to Judaism, Gamoran

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<sup>66</sup> See also Samuel Rosenblatt, "The Jewish Day School -- An American Birthright," *Beth Tfiloh News* (Baltimore), September 12, 1947, 12-13; and Joseph Kaminetsky, "The Program and Effectiveness of the All-Day School," *Jewish Education* 27 (Winter 1956-1957): 39-49.

<sup>67</sup> Emanuel Gamoran, "Reform Jewish Education: Its Strengths and Its Weaknesses," *The Jewish Teacher* 23.3 (March 1955): 4.

argued, and to the “great democracy” in which we live. Therefore, teachers who neglect instructing their students in these values “are neglecting the very heart of Jewish education and failing to achieve its major purpose.” Gamoran recommended that teachers use a variety of sources and methods to teach these values, including Bible stories, activity units on American Jewish history, and interpersonal relationships in the classroom.<sup>68</sup>

While Gamoran lectured the educators under his purview about the psychological benefits of Jewish education for children and the links between Judaism and American civic values, Reform rabbis made similar appeals to parents. In October 1953, Rabbi Roland Gittelsohn of Temple Israel in Boston addressed a meeting of his congregation’s parent-teacher association. In a presentation entitled, “Today’s Children — Tomorrow’s Parents,” Gittelsohn listed the objectives of the temple’s religious school curriculum: facilitating the survival of Judaism and Jewish culture, helping children to “become better, more decent human beings,” and equipping them to “live happier, richer lives as Jews.” Quoting from Lewin directly, he presented the concept of ethnic attachment as a key component of the healthy Jewish child’s ability to “adjust to the Gentile world” and to embrace the idea of Judaism as a valuable tool for coping with life’s challenges.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>69</sup> Roland Gittelsohn, “Today’s Children — Tomorrow’s Parents,” October 28, 1953, Box 46, Folder 10, MS-704, Roland B. Gittelsohn Papers, American Jewish Archives. In his lecture notes, Gittelsohn referenced but did not expand upon the idea of Judaism’s contributions to civilization, which likely implied a discussion of the democratic values referred to by many of Gittelsohn’s

These educational priorities, shaped by Lewinian psychology and Cold War politics, guided not only the curricula of denominational religious schools, but secular schools as well. The Sholem Aleichem Schools, a network of secular Jewish educational institutions emphasizing Yiddish and Jewish culture, adopted as part of its philosophical platform in 1953 the notion that students under their auspices should gain an appreciation for “the universal aspects of Jewishness [. . .] such as peace and democracy,” and that they should develop “a feeling of security [. . .] to safeguard against inner conflicts that may arise among members of a minority group.”<sup>70</sup> Toward those goals, among others, the organization distributed an advertisement in the 1950s to parents that encouraged them to enroll their children in Sholom Aleichem Folk Schools so that their sons and daughters would acquire “a sense of belonging both to America and to the Jewish people.”<sup>71</sup>

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contemporaries. For a similar presentation from a Reform rabbi stressing Lewinian concepts, see Richard Hertz’s presentation to the North Shore Congregation Israel PTA in Glencoe, IL, “The Future of Our Religious School,” October 14, 1946, Box 2, Folder 2, MS-675, Richard C. Hertz Papers, American Jewish Archives.

<sup>70</sup> “Basic Principles of Education in the Sholem Aleichem Schools, Adapted at the 30th School-Conference, May 1953,” in *Our First Fifty Years: The Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute, A Historical Survey*, ed. Saul Goodman (New York: Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute, 1972), 138-139. See other essays in the volume for more on the history and philosophy of the Sholem Aleichem Schools and other affiliated organizations.

<sup>71</sup> “Reproduction of a Circular in the 1950’s,” *Our First Fifty Years*, ed. Saul Goodman, 140.

## **Conclusion**

Across denominational and ideological boundaries, Kurt Lewin's ideas about group belongingness and emotional security captivated rabbis and Jewish educators between the 1940s and 1960s. Indeed, they were well-suited to the particular needs of the postwar American Jewish community. In an era of survival anxiety and continued insecurity about Jewish acceptance in mainstream American society among many communal leaders, Lewinian insights offered a potential solution to both problems. Lewin invested Jewish ethnic pride, inculcated through positive educational and family experiences with Jewish culture, with the power to transcend concerns about antisemitism and assimilation.

For more than a decade after his death, psychologists, rabbis, and educators built upon his theoretical foundations. Following his concepts and his example, they applied the tools of psychology and social science to problems of Jewish identity and continuity. They sought, in various ways, to render Jewish education more fun and engaging in hopes of nurturing positive associations with Jews and Jewish culture, and to encourage students to see parallels and intersections between Jewish and American values and loyalties. They worked to encourage parents to play a more active role in helping their children learn to embrace Jewish ritual and culture, cope with prejudice, and develop healthy and well-adjusted personalities. In so doing, these childrearing experts articulated a philosophy and pedagogy designed to assist American Jews in balancing a

desire to preserve Jewish distinctiveness with a desire to claim a lasting foothold in middle-class American life.

## Chapter 2: “Jewish Education Begins at Home”: Training Parents to Raise American Jewish Children

In 1954, the United Synagogue’s Commission on Jewish Education published the first installments of *Your Child and You*, a pamphlet series on childrearing issues facing the American Jewish parent. Azriel Eisenberg, the executive vice-president of the Jewish Education Committee of New York, contributed a volume to the series entitled “Talks to Parents,” in which he advised mothers and fathers on the importance of Jewish education and the critical role that parents play in their children’s development. While he called on them to enroll their children in religious schools and summer camps, he explained to his readers that “[y]our children become what they are largely because of you, their parents. You are the most essential part of their world, for you are the first to create their world for them. As parents you give them not only your physical characteristics but also your outlook on life, your manners, your temperament.” Even as he encouraged parents to enlist the help of trained educators in ensuring their children’s Jewish education, Eisenberg stressed the central role that parents must play as “active partners” in their children’s moral and spiritual growth.<sup>1</sup>

Echoing Eisenberg’s call, numerous childrearing authorities exhorted Jewish parents to take responsibility for their children’s Jewish upbringing and to seek appropriate counsel toward this end, since, they argued, the act of raising

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<sup>1</sup> Azriel Eisenberg, “Talks With Parents,” *Your Child and You: A Pamphlet Series for Jewish Parents*, vol. 31 (New York: United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education, 1954), 1, 39.

children to identify as Jewish in a predominantly non-Jewish environment was no easy task. As described earlier, this view, held by many in the postwar Jewish community, reflected a widespread sense of anxiety about the quality and authenticity of Jewish life in suburban environments. As the primary setting of Jewish family life transitioned in the 1940s and 1950s from urban immigrant neighborhoods of first and second settlement, rich with Jewish institutions and cultural life, to suburban neighborhoods that lacked an established Jewish infrastructure, communal leaders worried openly about the ability of Jewish parents to transmit Jewishness to their children in these environments. For their part, many parents counted on rabbis and teachers to play the part of Jewish role models in their children's lives.<sup>2</sup>

Anna Bear Brevis, another author in the *Your Child and You* series, concurred with Eisenberg's view that parents could not rely on communal institutions alone to mold their children into knowledgeable, committed Jews. In her pamphlet "Jewish Education Begins at Home," Brevis, a public school principal, noted that the vast majority of American Jewish children only spent a few hours a week engaged in formal Jewish schooling, as compared to thirty hours a week in public school, and they lived in communities largely devoid of Jewish cultural and religious activity. Therefore, to ensure the successful transmission of Jewish heritage, she claimed, mothers and fathers must give their children a home environment that inculcates a love and appreciation for

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<sup>2</sup> Diner, *Jews of the United States*, 288-293; Prell, "Community and the Discourse of Elegy: The Postwar Suburban Debate," 67-90.

Judaism. To train women toward this goal, Brevis called for and later helped create an Institute for Jewish Mothers in her native town of Buffalo, New York.<sup>3</sup>

Six years earlier, writing in the Conservative movement's publication *Women's League Outlook* in 1948, parent education specialist Rose Cahan issued a similar appeal. She argued that American Jewish parents face an additional set of challenges beyond those faced by all mothers and fathers:

In a dual culture it is not easy to live a Jewish life. The Jewish way of life must be learned; it is not acquired at birth and parents have the primary responsibility of helping their children develop positive Jewish attitudes. Our children must learn to like being Jewish. This demands careful planning and a scientific knowledge of teaching and guidance techniques.<sup>4</sup>

Cahan sought to persuade her readers that an affinity for Judaism is learned, not inherited or absorbed via osmosis, and that teacher and school cannot substitute for a home environment in which positive attitudes and experiences with Jewish living are part of everyday life. Furthermore, she suggested, the ability to raise a Jewish child to identify as Jewish in adulthood is also a learned skill, not an instinctual talent. She therefore urged that parents engage in guided group discussions with other parents to familiarize themselves with the stages of child growth, the psychological underpinnings of child behavior, and the how-to of Jewish ritual practice. If American Jewish parents could be trained to master the

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<sup>3</sup> Anna Bear Brevis, "Jewish Education Begins at Home," *Your Child and You: A Pamphlet Series for Jewish Parents*, vol. 3 (New York: United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education, 1954), 4. For more on a related project of Brevis's, "Judaism-in-the-Home," see Mrs. David A. Goldstein, "Looking Ahead with the Judaism-in-the-Home Project," *Women's League Outlook*, September 1951, 29.

<sup>4</sup> Rose A. Cahan, "Your Child and You," *Women's League Outlook*, September 1948, 8.

science of successful childrearing and to create a vibrant Jewish home environment, Cahan promised, their child “will spontaneously and without coercion develop positive Jewish attitudes and become a well balanced personality.”<sup>5</sup>

Believers in the supreme power of nurture over nature, educators, rabbis, and psychologists looked to American Jewish parents to play a leading role in shaping the ethnic identity, religious practice, and moral compass of their children. Throughout the postwar period, they dispensed childrearing advice to Jewish parents on a number of topics. In journals, magazines, pamphlets, sermons, and speeches, these childrearing mentors urged Jewish parents to create the kind of home environment and instill the values that they believed would ensure a child’s future happiness, loyalty to the Jewish people, and fitness for citizenship in a democratic, faith-centered United States.

This chapter will examine Jewish parenting advice from the post-World War II era on topics specific to the needs and interests of Jewish parents, including information on how to celebrate Jewish birth rituals and festivals as a family, suggestions on how Jewish parents and their children should navigate the December holiday season, and advice on how to prepare children to understand and cope with antisemitism. The succeeding chapter will explore parenting advice from rabbis on matters of general interest to all parents, such as discipline, family economy, juvenile delinquency, and parental gender roles.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 23.

This generation of Jewish parents' interest in and need for such childrearing advice is the result of several factors unique to this era, in which a confluence of events and developments at midcentury drove American Jews to prioritize the education and socialization of their children as never before. To a significant extent, this child-centered communal agenda reflected wider trends in American society at large. The postwar baby boom accelerated the pace of suburbanization, as growing families sought greener pastures on the outskirts of cities in which to raise their children. Following fifteen years of economic deprivation and war, Jews, like their fellow Americans, eagerly looked forward to taking advantage of new opportunities afforded them by the GI Bill and federal housing loans.<sup>6</sup>

As they took up residence in new neighborhoods away from the urban core, Jews and other Americans created greater physical and emotional distance between themselves and their own parents. In many cases, grandparents no longer lived in the same neighborhood or city as their children and grandchildren. In their absence, new parents turned to another source of comfort and counsel: the childrearing expert, whose recommendations stemmed not from Old World traditions or customs, but from scientific research and psychological principles.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 276; May, *Homeward Bound*, 130-131; Diner, *Jews of the United States*, 282-291.

<sup>7</sup> Peter N. Stearns, *Anxious Parents: A History of Modern Childrearing in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 44-45; Grant, 201-205, 221; Mintz, 276-277. Stearns mentions, but does not cite, a survey from the 1940s in which a majority of American parents declared a desire to raise their children differently than their parents had raised them, suggesting a preference for expert childrearing advice over the recommendations of family members.

Furthermore, at a time when American public culture embraced the notion of a Judeo-Christian heritage as a moral and political weapon in the nation's struggle against communism and the Soviet Union, Jews could prove their patriotic *bona fides* by embracing their religious traditions. Following World War II, in which Judaism earned newfound recognition and respect as one of America's three "fighting faiths," public performances of religiosity became a manner of demonstrating trust in both God and the United States. In this newly ascendant "tri-faith America," as historian Kevin Schultz has described it, Jews joined synagogues and sent their children to Jewish schools in record numbers. They increasingly came to understand and define Jewish identity in terms of religion, although this shift in conception of Jewishness was not generally accompanied by an increase in ritual observance or synagogue attendance. Sociologist Marshall Sklare, analyzing the rise of the Conservative movement in the suburbs, argued that their synagogues functioned primarily as ethnic churches, facilitating opportunities around the premise of religion for Jews to meet and be around other Jews.<sup>8</sup> While contemporary observers and later scholars have critiqued the authenticity of this religious turn in American life, this historical context helps explain the motivation behind the plethora of books and articles aimed at introducing Jewish birth and holiday rituals to parents.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Marshall Sklare, *Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement* (1955, repr.; New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 32-40, 132-145.

<sup>9</sup> On the postwar religious revival and the rise of a Judeo-Christian American ethic, see Schultz, *Tri-Faith America*, 13-96; Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 274-282; and Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*

As much as the recommendations from this cadre of experts drew upon insights and practices from the realm of Jewish tradition, external influences and historical circumstances also shaped the worldviews of Jewish parenting pundits in numerous ways. Their prescriptions for raising the perfect American Jewish child borrowed heavily from the fields of psychology and pediatric medicine, and responded to the concerns and insecurities of an ethnic community adjusting to affluence, suburbanization, and fears of impending nuclear war.

Historian Julia Grant, author of a study of parenting advice literature and its reception by American mothers, has argued that while on the surface these works appear to offer objective, timeless recommendations grounded in scientific evidence and empirical observation, the genre in fact reflects a host of contemporary social and political tensions. Childrearing advice, as a social and cultural construct, does not remain static over time but evolves and adapts in response to the needs and concerns of parents and society at a particular moment in history. Given that the task of parenting is intricately linked to the survival of a community and its cultural traditions, a critical reading of childrearing literature reveals the tensions and insecurities at work within that particular social group.<sup>10</sup>

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(1955, repr; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). For a postwar articulation of the notion that Jews are a religious group, not a race or nationality, see Mark and Starkoff, *The Jewish Family in the World Today*, 10-12.

<sup>10</sup> Grant, *Raising Baby by the Book*, 1-5. See also Apple, *Perfect Motherhood*, 1-10; and Hulbert, *Raising America*, 3-10. Hulbert argues that while parenting advice evolves in response to new scientific developments and social concerns, in every period since the late nineteenth century childrearing experts have fallen into the same opposing “nature” and “nurture” philosophical camps.

Yoel Finkelman's 2007 study of the tensions between science and religion and between accommodationism and isolationism in contemporary parenting advice literature in the American ultra-Orthodox community illustrates Grant's point. Finkelman argues that, while on a rhetorical level this group maintains a fervently rejectionist attitude toward Western cultural influences, in reality, members of the community are thoroughly integrated into the patterns and institutions of modern American life. Accordingly, he demonstrates, childrearing literature produced for a Haredi audience, even when written with the explicit intent to prove the timeless superiority of Torah-based approaches to those of secular authorities, is suffused with references to scientific studies and psychological principles.<sup>11</sup>

Childrearing literature reveals the views and values of a social group. Analyzing American Jewish parenting advice in the post-World War II decades helps us understand how American Jews have navigated between adherence to religious and cultural traditions and interest in new medical and psychological insights; how they have articulated and encouraged particular notions of gender roles in the American Jewish family; and how they have responded to changing socioeconomic realities since 1945, including suburbanization and embourgeoisement.

In this chapter and the one that follows, I analyze roughly two decades of American Jewish prescriptive literature on childrearing from the mid-1940s to the

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<sup>11</sup> Yoel Finkelman, "Tradition and Innovation in American Haredi Parenting Literature," in *Innovation and Change in Jewish Education*, ed. David Zisenwine (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2007), 37-61.

mid-1960s. While their perspectives and motives varied, as did their definitions of Jewishness, all of the individuals studied here specifically addressed Jewish audiences with recommendations for raising children who would mature into proud, loyal, and moral Americans and Jews. My analysis of American Jewish parenting advice during the baby boom years demonstrates that, even as American Jews enjoyed a period of unprecedented economic and social mobility, long-standing communal fears about antisemitism, acceptance, and Jewish continuity intensified and developed in new directions in the suburbs. To assuage these anxieties, authors of childrearing literature sought to train parents in the art of raising sons and daughters who would embrace a Jewish identity in an American setting. They filled books for mothers and fathers with information about Jewish birth rituals and holidays, so that parents could observe and preserve these traditions and pass them on to their children. They adapted the form and content of mass-market American baby books to produce similar volumes for Jewish audiences. They armed parents with guidance rooted in both traditional Jewish sources and modern psychology, arguing often that these two reservoirs of wisdom flowed together harmoniously. They argued that Jewish living was happy living, and that nothing could be so American as to live Jewishly.

Psychological parenting advice written by and addressed to American Jews served two critical and opposing functions in this era. As a means for American Jews to demonstrate to themselves the compatibility of their religious traditions with contemporary scientific findings, psychological advice functioned

as an instrument of inclusivity. By framing the cutting-edge teachings of child development as consonant with Judaism, American Jews could reassure themselves that loyalty to the traditions of their faith would not conflict with a desire to conform to contemporary beliefs and standards, nor would it mark them as unsophisticated outsiders. At the same time, however, American Jewish communal leaders looked to answers from psychology to combat the phenomenon of Jewish self-hatred and to render Jewish education more effective in instilling ethnic pride and commitment in youth. They hoped that the universal lessons of psychology held the key to ensuring Jewish continuity and particularism.<sup>12</sup>

### **Background: The Birth of the Modern Baby Book**

The trend toward scientific parenting and the modern “baby book” began in the late nineteenth century, when middle-class American mothers first turned for advice to medical authorities such as L. Emmett Holt and G. Stanley Hall and established the Society for the Study of Child Nature in 1888. These developments, and the idea of motherhood as a full-time vocation that required specialized training, accompanied larger social and cultural shifts of the time. In line with the wider Progressive Era trend toward professionalization and the belief in the power of scientific, statistical research to alleviate social problems,

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<sup>12</sup> On the issue of Jewish self-hatred as a perceived epidemic among American Jews in the 1940s and 1950s, see Glenn, “The Vogue of Jewish Self-Hatred in Post-World War II America,” 95-136. On the most popular and widely read attempt to synthesize the teachings of psychology and Judaism in the postwar era, see Andrew R. Heinze, “*Peace of Mind* (1946): Judaism and the Therapeutic Polemics of Postwar America,” *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 12.1 (Winter 2002): 31-58.

the American Medical Association designated pediatrics as a special field of medicine in 1880. The child was now marked as a unique biological specimen whose proper care and development required the keen eye and trained hand of a specialist.<sup>13</sup>

Explicitly or implicitly, most parenting experts directed their suggestions and critiques at mothers. The notion of mother as primary caregiver in a nuclear family developed in response to the major transformations in American life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Industrialization and urbanization drove a wedge between the home and workplace and fostered a dramatic shift in the division of labor between men and women. According to a set of social and cultural expectations that came to define the growing middle class, women were no longer expected to contribute to the family unit as wage earners, but instead were charged with sole responsibility for childrearing and domestic labor. While fathers earned the money in the workplace to secure the family's financial footing, mothers assumed the task of preserving the household as a safe haven of moral and spiritual comfort.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, a new understanding of the "protected child" emerged. Prior to this shift, in a pre-urban and pre-industrial society, children's primary role in the family was that of wage earners or producers. With the emergence of the urban middle-class beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, however, parents

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<sup>13</sup> Hulbert, 26-29; and Apple, 1-7, 11-33. On the Progressive Era and the rise of the professional expert in twentieth-century American social and cultural life, see Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Macmillan, 1967). On the child study movement, see Mintz, 189-190; and Grant, 39-54.

<sup>14</sup> Hulbert, 24-25; Grant, 2-3, 10.

who could afford to do so gave their children the opportunity to grow up shielded from adult responsibilities, while concentrating on their intellectual and moral development.<sup>15</sup> These shifts, which left children at home and in school longer than ever before, transformed the concept of idealized motherhood into a full-time vocation, a profession that required specialized training in order to produce the desired results.

By the 1950s, this construct of the nuclear middle-class family, with a breadwinning husband, nurturing wife and mother, and adoring children, gained wide purchase as a social and cultural ideal with political implications. The American home and happy family, argued Elaine Tyler May, functioned as symbols of capitalism's superiority, Cold War weapons in the ideological struggle against communism. While Stephanie Coontz and other historians have exposed the extent to which this idealized portrait was both an anomaly in terms of the history of the American family and a stark contrast to how most Americans actually lived, the ideology of domestic bliss remained pervasive as a powerful, if illusory, paradigm.<sup>16</sup> As historian Steven Mintz wrote, "For parents whose own

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<sup>15</sup> Mintz, 75-77; Viviana A. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 3-21. Jenna Weissman Joselit argues that the notion of a "nonproductive" childhood was central to Jewish culture long before American Jews attained middle-class status. While, in reality, family economy circumstances may have dictated otherwise, on an ideal level, Jewish families valued children not for their economic contributions but for their role in continuing the chain of tradition, and emphasized nurture and education over labor. See Joselit, *The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 55-56.

<sup>16</sup> Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 23-41; Petigny, *The Permissive Society*, 134-144; May, *Homeward Bound*, 1-21.

childhoods were scarred by war and insecurity, the impulse to marry, bear children, and provide them with a protected childhood was intense.”<sup>17</sup> Popular literature, television shows, and even government policies encouraged Americans to find contentment and self-worth in their families and in a domestic utopia in which Father worked and Mother stayed home with the children.

In contrast to childrearing advice from the first third of the twentieth century, which typically advocated strict regimentation and restrained affection, the experts who rose to fame in the 1940s and 1950s recommended that children be encouraged in self-expression, and they discouraged parents from punishing and repressing their children’s natural instincts. Dr. Benjamin Spock, the most famous and widely read of this generation of childrearing advice experts, reassured anxious parents that they should trust their instincts, embrace and play with their children, and accept “age-appropriate” childish behavior as part of the natural maturation process. In this manner, Spock translated insights from Freudian psychology into an accessible guidebook for new mothers.<sup>18</sup>

While Spock’s message may have been intended to assuage parents’ fears, the real work of raising children remained an anxiety-producing process for many. As Steven Mintz and others have pointed out, childrearing experts of this era frequently suggested that maternal missteps, such as too much or too little affection shown to a child, or a stressful toilet training process and withheld

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<sup>17</sup> Mintz, 276.

<sup>18</sup> Mintz, 279-282; Spock, *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*.

feedings, could scar a child for life and produce all sorts of perceived maladies in the adult: homosexuality, communist inclinations, and homicidal tendencies.<sup>19</sup>

### **American Jewish Perspectives on Childrearing**

While Cold War American culture embraced the family and the home as cornerstones of the nation's moral and material superiority, Jewish parents had even deeper reasons to bear and raise children. One Jewish woman, who gave birth to four children, later recalled how she and others felt obligated to have babies as a response to the Holocaust and the destruction of so many Jewish lives in Europe.<sup>20</sup> By 1967, this impulse found articulation in philosopher Emil Fackenheim's addition of a 614th commandment; namely, that Jews carry a moral imperative to perpetuate themselves and their cultural heritage, so that Hitler could not claim a posthumous victory over the Jewish people he had sought to annihilate.<sup>21</sup> Beneath the shadow of the Holocaust and amid the ever-present possibility of impending atomic warfare, childbirth and childrearing took on political as well as personal ramifications.

Advice literature for Jewish mothers predated the post-World War II era, as did paeans to the Jewish mother's acumen for child nurture and home economics. According to Jenna Weissman Joselit, immigrant Jewish mothers of

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<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Marynia Farnham and Ferdinand Lundberg, *Modern Women: The Lost Sex* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1947); and Philip Wylie's chapter, "Common Women," on the phenomenon of overbearing, oppressive mothers in *Generation of Vipers*, 20th ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1955), 194-217.

<sup>20</sup> May, 26.

<sup>21</sup> Emil L. Fackenheim, "The 614th Commandment," *Judaism* 16 (1967): 269-273.

the early 20<sup>th</sup> century eagerly absorbed the latest trends and insights from physicians and childrearing authorities, quickly adopting contemporary wisdom and convention with respect to birth control, family size, and hospital births. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the Yiddish-language publication *Mutter und Kind* (“Mother and Child”) delivered facts and figures to immigrant mothers on feedings, hygiene, and common childhood illnesses, while women’s magazines such as *Di Froyen Velt* (“The Women’s World”) and *Der Idisher Froyen Zhurnal* (“The Jewish Women’s Journal”) devoted regular attention to issues related to modern childrearing, translating contemporary American views into an accessible and familiar format for immigrant mothers. At the Educational Alliance in New York and other settlement houses for Eastern European Jews, mothers took courses on modern parenthood, health, and family economy.<sup>22</sup>

Jewish childrearing advice in the first two decades of the twentieth century focused most heavily on the science of raising healthy children, and on acclimating immigrant parents to aspects of American culture that would ease the family’s transition into a new environment. In this spirit, Abraham Cahan, editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, recommended to Jewish parents in 1903 that they allow their children to play baseball and that they take an interest in the game

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<sup>22</sup> Joselit, *Wonders of America*, 62-64; Riv-Ellen Prell, *Fighting to Become Americans: Assimilation and the Trouble Between Jewish Women and Jewish Men* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 251.

themselves, so that young American Jews would not grow up as “foreigners in their own birthplace.”<sup>23</sup>

By the 1930s, in line with a larger shift in American parenting education that emphasized children’s psychological and emotional development, American Jewish childrearing advice authors turned their attention to the development of a well-adjusted personality in the child, both in terms of overall emotional stability as well as Jewish identity. A 1935 book, *Jewish Child Guidance*, instructed readers on techniques for helping Jewish children achieve feelings of security and belonging, blending recommendations from psychology, science, and Jewish ritual observance. In his 1932 publication *Modern Problems of Jewish Parents*, Rabbi Jacob Kohn declared that Jewish parents should strive, through patience, affection, and understanding of psychological principles, to rear children to “become men and women who are Jews of their own right and volition, living as worthy men and loyal Jews in the expression of their own personalities.”<sup>24</sup> These publications stressed the important role of the parent in shaping the child’s affinity for Judaism and ability to cope with life’s various challenges, from experiences with prejudice to the development of sexual urges in adolescence.

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<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Gerald Sorin, *A Time for Building: The Third Migration, 1880-1920*, vol. 3 of *The Jewish People in America* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 103.

<sup>24</sup> Samuel M. Cohen, *Jewish Child Guidance: Leader’s Guide* (New York: National Federation of Jewish Men’s Clubs, 1935); Jacob Kohn, *Modern Problems of Jewish Parents: A Study in Parental Attitudes* (New York: Women’s League of the United Synagogue of America, 1932).

In the post-World War II years, these tendencies and trends intensified. As Dr. Spock popularized Freudian approaches to parenting, American Jews increasingly sought counsel from psychology as well as Jewish tradition as they formulated their thoughts on how best to raise happy, healthy, well-adjusted Jewish children. The idea that religion and psychology could reinforce one another in providing wearied Americans with solace and support was perhaps best exemplified by the monumental success of Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman's *Peace of Mind* in 1946.

Liebman's historic bestseller, which sold over a million copies in just two years, captivated Jews and non-Jews alike with its therapeutic message of self-acceptance and self-liberation, grounded in the author's interpretation and interweaving of teachings from Judaism and Freudian psychology.<sup>25</sup> This approach, popularized by Liebman, of reconciling religion and science to arrive at a higher truth characterized most American Jewish parenting advice literature during this period. With few exceptions, those engaged in sharing tips on how to raise American Jewish children catered to the twin desires of an audience of mothers and fathers who wished simultaneously to fit in among their non-Jewish peers while maintaining some degree of adherence to Jewish customs.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Liebman, *Peace of Mind*. For an analysis of the significance of Liebman's work in postwar American religious culture, see Heinze, "Peace of Mind," 31-58; Sarna, *American Judaism*, 272-273.

<sup>26</sup> Marshall Sklare described this phenomenon in conjunction with the rising popularity of Conservative Judaism in the postwar American suburb, which offered Jews a middle path between assimilation and isolation. See Marshall Sklare, *Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement* (1955, repr.; New York: Schocken Books, 1972), 25-34.

Explicitly or implicitly, most books and articles on circumcision, naming, and Jewish holidays aimed to help Jewish parents meet both goals at once.

### **“Ushering the Child into the World of Judaism”: Ritual Education for Parents**

In 1950, the Women’s League of the United Synagogue of America, a group aligned with the centrist Conservative movement, published Sadie Rose Weilerstein’s *Our Baby*, a scrapbook for parents to commemorate the milestones in a newborn’s first years of life. Part record book and part explanatory volume, *Our Baby* included pages on Jewish rituals such as *brit milah* (circumcision) and *pidyon haben* (redemption of the firstborn), as well as pages on which parents could document the place and time of the child’s birth, the dates of various physical development milestones, the baby’s feeding regimen and first words, and its medical and dental history.

Presented in soft pastel colors, Weilerstein’s book closely resembled other keepsake volumes of the era produced for new American parents. Some suggestions to parents on what to record, however, pertained specifically to the baby’s earliest encounters with Judaism, such as “First Visit to the Synagogue” and “Days for Gladness, Seasons for Joy” pages, which prompted the parent to describe the child’s first experiences with each of the Jewish holidays in addition to Thanksgiving. On the page titled “A Tree for Baby,” parents could attach a

certificate in recognition of the planting of a tree in Israel by the Jewish National Fund in the baby's honor.<sup>27</sup>

The inclusion of these explicitly Jewish sections, alongside the generic sections about the baby's health and maturation found in similar publications for a general audience, signifies an effort on the part of the Conservative movement to encourage American Jewish parents to value their child's spiritual as well as physical growth. With the inclusion of a page for a Jewish National Fund certificate, Weilerstein and the United Synagogue also sought to persuade parents to instill an attachment to the land of Israel in their children. Through this and other forms of Jewish parenting literature, authors and speakers endeavored to teach mothers and fathers the knowledge and skills they would need to create a vibrant Jewish home environment, both for themselves and for their children.

At the same time, the aesthetic and substantive resemblance of *Our Baby* to other books of its kind authored for a broad American audience suggests a desire, on the part of both publisher and purchaser, to render and receive information about Jewish childrearing in a thoroughly contemporary format.<sup>28</sup> This choice reflected a broader desire on the part of most American Jews to

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<sup>27</sup> Sadie Rose Weilerstein, *Our Baby: A Record Book for the Jewish Child Covering the First Five Years* (New York: National Women's League of the United Synagogue of America, 1950). For an ad promoting the book as the perfect gift for the "mothers-to-be among your friends," see *Women's League Outlook*, March 1953, 31.

<sup>28</sup> For parallels to Weilerstein's book for a general audience from this era, see May Farini, *Baby's Days and Baby's Ways* (Norwalk, CT: C.R. Gibson and Co., 1943); Estelle McInnes Upson, *Story of Our Baby: Year By Year* (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing Co., 1947); and Phyllis Fraser and Phoebe Erickson, *Baby's First Five Years: Little Majesty Baby Record Book* (New York: Random House, 1948).

blend seamlessly into American life and culture while simultaneously making some effort to retain Jewish distinctiveness. This effort to reconcile modernity and tradition, to strike a balance between acculturation and ethnic continuity, lies at the heart of American Jewish childrearing literature.

Alongside *Our Baby*, a plethora of books and articles on Jewish birth rituals appeared beginning in the late 1940s, offering information and advice to parents on how to navigate a baby's induction into Judaism and Jewish peoplehood. Authors and producers of this literature operated on two assumptions: first, that American Jewish parents in fact desired to welcome their new son or daughter according to the principles and practices of Jewish tradition; and second, that they were at least partly, if not entirely, unfamiliar with what these traditions entailed. As such, consulting a concise and comforting reference guide could relieve parents of the guilt or embarrassment of having to ask a rabbi or relative for assistance.

Rabbi Reuben M. Katz, in the foreword to Conservative rabbi Hyman Chanover's 1956 book *Blessed Event*, noted that the arrival of a newborn baby is a time of intense mixed emotions, simultaneous excitement and apprehension. "American-Jewish parents are no different from other parents in sharing these rather universal emotions, the qualms, confusions and moments of ecstasy," he wrote. "And yet American-Jewish couples do have a tradition which provides for them a unique and socially desirable way of expressing their sense of awe,

splendor, and dependence upon God during these sacred and memorable moments.”<sup>29</sup>

Chanover’s slim volume and others like it introduced Jewish parents to this array of birth rituals and advised them on the process of choosing a meaningful Hebrew and English name for their newborn child.<sup>30</sup> Parents could consult a number of books, including Chanover’s *Blessed Event*, Nathan Gottlieb’s *A Jewish Child is Born* (1960), and Shonie Levi and Sylvia Kaplan’s *Across the Threshold* (1959) for a carefully choreographed description of the *brit milah* ceremony for boys and the baby naming synagogue ceremony for girls, along with other rituals such as the *pidyon haben* (redemption of the firstborn son). These works commonly included an English transliteration of the traditional Hebrew prayers, sometimes written entirely in capital letters with hyphens to signal syllable breaks, so that nervous fathers could practice their pronunciation of the lines they would be called upon to recite in public.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Reuben M. Katz, foreword to Hyman Chanover, *Blessed Event* (New York: Jonathan David Publishing Co., 1956), v.

<sup>30</sup> The practice of adopting a secular name in addition to a Hebrew name, used primarily for ritual purposes, dates back to at least the Middle Ages, if not earlier. See Aaron Demsky, “Double Names in the Babylonian Exile and the Identity of Sheshbazzar,” in *These Are the Names: Studies in Jewish Onomastics*, vol.2, ed. Aaron Demsky (Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1999), 23-40; and Rita Bredefeldt, “Naming Customs as an Indication of Assimilation: A Study of First Names in the Jewish Congregations of Stockholm and Malmö, 1895-1921,” in *These Are the Names: Studies in Jewish Onomastics*, vol.4, ed. Aaron Demsky (Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2003), 77-89.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, the use of transliteration in Nathan Gottlieb, *A Jewish Child is Born: The History and Ritual of Circumcision, Redemption of Firstborn Son, Adoption, Conversion and Choosing and Giving Names* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1960), 41-46, 55-60, and 112-114; and the inclusion of English

Chanover also included newly composed English prayers for mother and father to recite in anticipation of the birth of their child, entreating God that the child should be born “sound in mind and body and with a happy nature,” that mother should be blessed with safety and strength during the delivery, and that both parents should “be privileged to raise this child to be a blessing to its loved ones, to Israel and all mankind.”<sup>32</sup> These inclusions reflect a perception on the part of authors and publishers that many American Jewish parents of this era lacked fluency in Hebrew and would therefore appreciate, and likely require, alternatives and additions to the traditional Hebrew prayers recited at childbirth rituals. Furthermore, with the addition of English prayers, producers of childrearing literature once again made an effort to contextualize Jewish birth rituals in a comfortable modern format for their target audience of acculturated Jewish parents.

### ***Brit Milah* and the Thoroughly Modern Mohel**

The circumcision ritual, or *brit milah*, signifies the entrance of the Jewish male into the covenant between God and Abraham described in the Book of Genesis. Circumcision functions in Judaism as an important marker of both

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prayers for the circumcision ceremony, 103-106; and Chanover, 20-21. Descriptions of the circumcision ceremony and naming ceremony, without the accompanying blessings, can be found in Shonie B. Levi and Sylvia R. Kaplan, *Across the Threshold: A Guide for the Jewish Homemaker* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1959), 33-34. On the pidyon ha-ben ceremony, see Gottlieb, 51-60; and Levi and Kaplan, 34-35.

<sup>32</sup> Chanover, 7. These innovative prayers were originally composed by Rabbi Max Klein, who served the Conservative-affiliated Congregation Adath Jeshurun of Philadelphia and was the author and translator of two prayerbooks. His papers are available in the Special Collections Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

ethnic and religious identity.<sup>33</sup> Discussions of the circumcision ceremony in these guidebooks and related sources, in addition to the step-by-step explanations of the ritual itself, frequently engaged in polemical discourse about the crucial religious importance of the act itself and the centrality of the *mohel*, or circumciser, to an authentic and valid execution of the ceremony. Commentators sought to alleviate the concerns of modern parents by presenting circumcision as a normal and medically safe procedure that would inaugurate the baby boy into Jewish peoplehood without risking his health or his status in middle-class American society. At the same time, authors differed according to their ideological roots as to how modern Jewish parents should navigate potential conflicts between Jewish customs and contemporary concerns.

Nathan Gottlieb, an Orthodox rabbi and *mohel* himself, devoted two separate chapters in his *A Jewish Child is Born* to discussions of the ritual's religious meaning and the qualities of the modern *mohel*. "With circumcision," he wrote, "the child is made a Jew forever. [. . .] Through circumcision the newly born are dedicated to God, to His Torah, and to the highest moral and ethical code."<sup>34</sup>

Gottlieb proceeded to explain why circumcision is a practice completely in harmony with modern scientific principles, but one that only a trained, pious *mohel* could perform. On the one hand, he claimed, "[t]he technique of the

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<sup>33</sup> Typically, the ceremony is performed when the Jewish boy is eight days old. For more on the religious significance of circumcision in Judaism, see Gottlieb, 87-91.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

modern mohel combines spiritual and surgical skill. The expert mohel is a specialist who has advanced this procedure to the most modern medical standards.” Those who perform ritual circumcisions are capable of rendering the *brit milah* a painless procedure, thanks to a familiarity with and use of modern instruments and techniques. The circumcision ceremony itself reflects an intimate knowledge of biology and the human anatomy, Gottlieb argued, since by the eighth day—the day on which the commandment should be performed, according to Jewish law—the baby’s blood clotting factors are more developed and the potential health risks are greatly reduced.<sup>35</sup>

While *brit milah* might accord with the latest in medical principles, however, Gottlieb warned his readers that a physician—even a Jewish one—could not perform a *halakhic* (valid according to Jewish law) circumcision, unless he were also a religiously observant Jew trained in the laws and practices of this ritual, capable of performing the act accordingly. “Only the physical act of an expert mohel inspired by zeal for the Jewish religion renders a *brit milah* proper,” Gottlieb cautioned. “If an ordinary physician not trained as a mohel performs circumcision, even if a rabbi is present and reads the prayers, what results is not *milah*, but only an act of surgery.” He reassured parents that even Jewish

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 95-96. Other authors marveled at the harmony between the timing of the circumcision ceremony and the human body’s development, and cited studies claiming that circumcised men carried a far lesser risk of developing penile cancer. See Morris Shoulson, “Circumcision -- A Covenant for the Preservation of the Jewish Family,” in *Marriage and Family Life: A Jewish View*, ed. Abraham B. Shoulson (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1959), 113-114.

doctors themselves prefer the services of a trained and devoted mohel to those of a surgeon.<sup>36</sup>

Other authorities, seeking to alleviate parental fears that circumcision might mark their sons as strange or harm them in some way, sought to remind parents that circumcision was a common practice around the world. Rabbi Morris Shoulson of Philadelphia, also a *mohel*, wrote in an essay for a volume on the Jewish family that between 200 and 300 million people around the world lived in cultures that currently practice circumcision, and that ninety-two percent of American males are circumcised. Even Prince Charles was circumcised at birth, Shoulson noted, when “the leading *mohel* of London” paid a visit to Buckingham Palace.<sup>37</sup>

Like Gottlieb, Shoulson also marveled at the harmony between the timing of the circumcision ceremony and the human body’s development. Emphasizing the health benefits of Jewish ritual as an additional justification for its performance, he cited studies claiming that circumcised men carried a far lesser

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 96-97. Gottlieb wrote in an era when many circumcisions were performed in the hospital as opposed to in a synagogue or at home, where the choice of a mohel as opposed to a doctor might be more likely. As a result, he advised readers to consult with the hospital about regulations and requirements for conducting the brit milah there, while adding, “It is optional and just as effective to perform the brit at home, as in the hospital.” See *ibid.*, 21, and Chanover, 16-17. On the shift toward American Jewish circumcisions taking place in the hospital, see Leonard B. Glick, *Marked in Your Flesh: Circumcision from Ancient Judea to Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 215-216.

<sup>37</sup> Morris Shoulson, “Circumcision—A Covenant for the Preservation of the Jewish Family,” in *Marriage and Family Life: A Jewish View*, ed. Abraham B. Shoulson (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1959), 110, 113.

risk of developing penile cancer, and that their wives would be less prone to cervical cancer as a result of never coming into contact with the foreskin.<sup>38</sup>

Several other authors from Conservative and Orthodox backgrounds echoed Gottlieb's insistence upon the indispensability of the mohel to an authentic and valid ceremony.<sup>39</sup> Authorities aligned with the more liberal Reform movement, however, such as Rabbis Levi Olan and Floyd Fierman, regularly assured their audiences that if a mohel could not be found or is not preferred by the parents, a doctor could perform a ritual circumcision so long as a rabbi or the father recited the appropriate Hebrew blessings and the baby's Hebrew name.<sup>40</sup> This scenario played out in dramatic form in *Covenants with the Lord*, a booklet of theatrical scripts written by members of the Temple Beth-El Sisterhood in Great Neck, New York and published by the Reform-affiliated National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods in 1951 for broader use.

A collection of plays about Jewish lifecycle ceremonies from a Reform perspective, *Covenants with the Lord* followed three generations of the fictional Cohen and Gold families, marking the passage of time through various rituals. In the first play, a newborn boy is circumcised in the hospital by a doctor, despite the objections of one of the boy's grandfathers who insists that a mohel perform

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 113-114.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Levi and Kaplan, 33-34; Chanover, 15-17; and Shoulson, 109-116.

<sup>40</sup> See Rabbi Levi Olan's sermon, "Ceremonies Surrounding the Birth of a Child," dated January 23, 1947, Box 23, Folder 3, MS-181, Levi A. Olan Papers, American Jewish Archives; and Rabbi Floyd Fierman's sermon, "What Should Reform Jews Believe? Birth, Marriage, Death," n.d., in *Sermons, 1949-1958*, Box 3, Folder 1, MS-649, Floyd S. Fierman Papers, American Jewish Archives.

the procedure in the *sukkah*, as the boy is born during the holiday of *Sukkot*, when traditional Jews eat and sleep outside in temporary huts. The grandmothers politely but firmly explain to their husbands that the ceremony will be conducted indoors by a doctor, according to the new parents' wishes, so that the baby not catch cold outdoors or risk infection. "Our Jewish religion, thank God, is not a rigid one," the first grandmother explains, while the second adds, "True, a mohel today is just as sanitary as a doctor, but if the children insist—what could we do? That does not mean that we can't have a mohel or a rabbi to recite the [ritual blessings]. That our grandson starts his life as a Jew I took care of."<sup>41</sup> In the play, the grandmothers thus mediate between their husbands' desires to maintain tradition and their children's desire to conform to modern standards of health care and propriety, suggesting a model of ritual compromise for Reform Jews.

Whereas discussions of the circumcision ceremony revealed a deep current of anxiety about authenticity and ethnic status among the commentators, their overviews of the welcoming ceremony for girls, which centered on the announcement of the girl's Hebrew name during synagogue services, were much

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<sup>41</sup> Norma Levitt and Esther Kaufman, *Covenants with the Lord* (New York, National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, 1951), 1-8, in Box K-5, Folder 1, MS-73, Women of Reform Judaism Records, American Jewish Archives. The portrayal of the grandmothers in this play as arbiters between religious tradition and contemporary sensibilities echoes arguments made elsewhere about the role of women in both modernizing and maintaining Jewishness. See Marion A. Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); and Melissa R. Klapper, *Jewish Girls Coming of Age in America, 1860-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

shorter and significantly less fraught. Naming ceremonies for girls in the synagogue, like the *brit milah* ceremony, reinforced traditional gender roles in the Jewish family, privileging the father's public presence as representative of the family and relegating the mother to the background.

"In the event your baby is a girl," Hyman Chanover wrote, "the welcoming rites will be quite simple. They will center about naming her." His chapter titled "If It's a Girl" described the mechanics of naming ceremonies for girls in Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox services. Regardless of the denominational setting, fathers played the public role of relating the baby's name to the rabbi and offering blessings in these ceremonies, while mothers remained largely invisible. Only in the Reform ceremony, according to Chanover, were mothers granted the opportunity to participate in offering prayers of thanks. Even in this case, however, it was the father who announced the child's Hebrew and English names and "publicly accepts the responsibilities of Jewish fatherhood."<sup>42</sup>

Across the denominational spectrum, these texts on circumcision emphasized the importance of the ritual as a symbol of the covenant between God and the Jewish people. Authors also highlighted the consonance between Jewish practice and scientific principles as a means of convincing wary Jewish parents of circumcision's many benefits, and of framing *brit milah* as both an ancient religious tradition and a prudent medical intervention.<sup>43</sup> Whereas

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<sup>42</sup> Chanover, 11-14. For other brief explanations of the naming ceremony for girls, see Levi and Kaplan, 33; and Gottlieb, 112-115.

<sup>43</sup> A number of scholars have also noted how defenses of the *mikvah*, or ritual bath, in interwar American Jewish culture, similarly appealed to its health benefits

authorities from Conservative and Orthodox backgrounds emphasized the wisdom inherent in Jewish tradition insofar as it echoed and reinforced scientific findings, however, those writing from a Reform perspective praised Judaism's pragmatic flexibility and adaptability in response to situational considerations.

### **Choosing a Name**

The act of choosing English and Hebrew names for an American Jewish baby provided another opportunity for parents, and those offering advice to them, to weigh contemporary American tastes alongside Jewish practices. At the conclusion of the *brit milah* ceremony for boys, or in a separate synagogue ceremony for girls, most American Jewish parents bestow upon the baby a Hebrew name, important for use in Jewish ritual, in addition to an English name. According to Ashkenazi Jewish practice (roughly speaking, Jews originally from Central and Eastern Europe), the custom is to give a newborn the name of a deceased relative, thereby carrying on that relative's memory and expressing a desire that the baby inherit the qualities and character traits of his or her namesake. Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews, who trace their ancestry to the Iberian

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as claimed by scientific research. See Beth S. Wenger, "Mitzvah and Medicine: Gender, Assimilation, and the Scientific Defense of 'Family Purity,'" in *Women and American Judaism: Historical Perspectives*, eds. Pamela S. Nadell and Jonathan D. Sarna (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England/Brandeis University Press, 2001), 201-222; and Jenna Weissman Joselit, *New York's Jewish Jews: The Orthodox Community in the Interwar Years* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 115-122.

Peninsula, Italy, North Africa, and the Middle East, name children after living relatives, usually grandparents, for similar reasons.<sup>44</sup>

Accordingly, the practice of naming a Jewish child is tightly connected to the transmission of ethnic and cultural identity, as well as expressions of acculturation. In a 1955 article in *Commentary* magazine, Rabbi Benzion Kaganoff declared, “For Jews, first names are inevitably something more than convenient labels for identification [. . .]. Among us they take on a highly charged symbolic value.”<sup>45</sup> Kaganoff and others writing on the subject of Jewish names suggested that a given name served multiple potential functions: a marker of either assimilation or fealty to Jewish tradition; an indication of the personal qualities parents hoped their children would develop; and an opportunity to link past and future generations of Jews by virtue of carrying on the memory of a beloved family member.<sup>46</sup>

Rabbi Alfred Kolatch’s 1948 *These Are the Names*, one of only a few books published on the subject of Jewish names before the 1970s, explored the history of Jewish naming practices from biblical times, weighed the merits and demerits of various approaches to selecting a Hebrew name for a newborn, and

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<sup>44</sup> Alfred J. Kolatch, *These Are the Names* (New York: The Jonathan David Co., 1948), 20-24; Gottlieb, 109-111. For a brief overview of the distinctions between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews, see Raymond P. Scheindlin, *A Short History of the Jewish People* (New York: Macmillan, 1998), 121-147. On Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews, see *Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry: From the Golden Age of Spain to Modern Times*, ed. Zion Zohar (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

<sup>45</sup> Benzion C. Kaganoff, “Jewish First Names Through the Ages,” *Commentary*, November 1955, 447.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 447-452. See also Chanover, 9-10.

provided statistics on the most popular English and Hebrew names for children in addition to listing masculine and feminine names.<sup>47</sup> Kolatch criticized the conventional assonance method of name selection, whereby Jewish parents commonly selected an English name with the same initial letter as the intended Hebrew name, such as Hyman for “Hayim” or Morris for “Moshe.” Instead, Kolatch advocated an approach he termed the translation method, in which English names corresponded to the meaning, not the first syllable of, a desired Hebrew name. Such a choice would perpetuate and strengthen the symbolic meaning of the name, as opposed to a name chosen simply for alliterative purposes.<sup>48</sup>

Kolatch and other authors encouraged Jewish parents to select English biblical names for their children, as opposed to those derived from French, German, and other sources. Simon Chasen, a Hebrew language instructor at Weequahic High School and Rutgers University in New Jersey, noted in 1954 in the Conservative publication *Women’s League Outlook* that many a great American political and literary figure dating back to colonial times carried a biblical name.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, Chasen argued, “[i]f the American Jew really believes

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<sup>47</sup> Very few other works for American Jewish audiences prior to Kolatch’s volume dealt with Hebrew names and their origin and meaning. See David Bernard Swiren, *What’s in Our Names? A Study* (Wilmington, DE: The Star Publishing Co., 1920); and Lee M. Friedman, *American Jewish Names*, private reprint from *Historia Judaica* 4.2 (October 1944): 147-162.

<sup>48</sup> Kolatch, v, 31-35.

<sup>49</sup> Weequahic High School, a public school in Newark, New Jersey, has several famous Jewish alumni, including author Philip Roth. On this Jewish

in his rightful place on the American scene, in his inalienable rights as an American, he will not fear to bear proudly names like Amiel, Boaz, Caleb [. . .] and others.”<sup>50</sup>

Shonie Levi and Sylvia Kaplan echoed this view in their 1959 book for Jewish homemakers. Discouraging parents from selecting “so-called modern ‘equivalents,’ such as Stanley for Samuel, or Rhoda for Rebecca,” the authors cheered the “revival today of the strong, colorful biblical names that are part of America’s Puritan tradition.”<sup>51</sup> That same year, in his landmark study *Jews in Suburbia*, Rabbi Albert Gordon noted with pleasure that the current generation of American Jewish parents were selecting such Old Testament names for their children with increasing frequency.<sup>52</sup>

While Gordon interpreted this development as a sign of growing ethnic pride among American Jews, Levi and Kaplan promoted the adoption of biblical names by arguing that traditional Jewish names were intrinsically American in both form and spirit. Returning to a theme prevalent in American Jewish thought since at least the nineteenth century, the notion that Jewish values from the Bible served as the inspiration for the American democratic system, these authors extended the argument to encompass the choice of a name. If names of Hebrew

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neighborhood in Newark, see Linda B. Forgosh, *Images of America: Jews of Weequahic*, Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2008).

<sup>50</sup> Simon Chasen, “Now These Were the Names,” *Women’s League Outlook*, March 1954, 15, 30.

<sup>51</sup> Levi and Kaplan, 32. See also Kolatch, 25-26.

<sup>52</sup> Gordon, *Jews in Suburbia*, 141-142.

origin suited quintessential American figures such as Abraham Lincoln and Abigail Adams, they and others suggested, then parents should not fear that the choice of such a name will subject their child to discrimination.<sup>53</sup> This argument, linking adherence to Judaism with American patriotism, carried additional weight in a Cold War era characterized by increasing national acceptance of Judaism as an authentic American faith alongside Protestantism and Catholicism.<sup>54</sup>

### **Holidays for the Home**

In addition to informing Jewish parents about birth rituals, rabbis and other authors of childrearing advice also engaged in a concerted effort to educate their audience about how to celebrate Jewish holidays at home as a family. In May 1950, the Synagogue Council of America, which united all the main denominations of American Judaism, together with Catholic and Protestant organizations, sponsored National Family Week, an initiative to promote family cohesiveness through religious education and worship. In a pamphlet announcing the program, the Council endeavored to convince American Jews that religion was the best antidote for the fear and isolation brought on by social and economic dislocation and the ever-present threat of nuclear war.

If the Jewish family could be convinced to weave ritual observances into the fabric of their lives, the authors believed, children and parents would develop

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<sup>53</sup> Deborah M. Melamed, *The Three Pillars: Thought, Worship, and Practice for the Jewish Woman* (1927, repr; New York: National Women's League of the United Synagogue of America, 1954), 30-31.

<sup>54</sup> On the evolution of the notion that Jewish values shaped American political ideals, see Wenger, *History Lessons*, 1-11, 37-41; and Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Cult of Synthesis in American Jewish Culture," *Jewish Social Studies* 5.1-2 (Fall 1998-Winter 1999): 52-79.

happiness, camaraderie, and emotional security; the family would rescue itself from disintegration and despair; and Jewish continuity would be ensured.<sup>55</sup>

Returning to a familiar postwar theme, the Council advocated the adoption of Jewish rituals in the home, as much for their own sake as for the psychological and emotional benefits that the family would reap as a result.

Dr. Evelyn Garfiel, a psychologist and the National Education Chairman for the Conservative National Women's League of the United Synagogue of America, seconded this argument in a 1953 article for the organization's magazine about "The Sabbath and Jewish Family Living." As Garfiel explained to her readers, human beings need to acquire a sense of belonging to a group larger than themselves, and no group is more important in this respect than the family. Accordingly, Garfiel urged her readers to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the Friday night Sabbath table rituals to cultivate familial fellowship. The act of joining together on a weekly basis to eat together, worship God, and bless one's children, she suggested, can instill "an intense feeling of being part of a self-sufficient group" upon the entire family.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> "The Synagogue and the Jewish Home of Tomorrow" (New York: Synagogue Council of America, 1950), Box E-11, Folder 3, MS-73, Women of Reform Judaism Records, American Jewish Archives. On National Family Week, see "Jewish Groups Observe National Family Week Throughout Nation, Sponsored By Synagogue Council of America," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, May 8, 1945, <http://www.jta.org/1945/05/08/archive/jewish-groups-observe-national-family-week-throughout-nation-sponsored-by-synagogue-council>, accessed July 25, 2013.

<sup>56</sup> Evelyn Garfiel, "The Sabbath and Jewish Family Living," *Women's League Outlook*, September 1953, 5, 13. For a similar argument made to an Orthodox audience about the value of Sabbath rituals for improving family relations and

To help parents achieve this goal, rabbis and educators produced a wealth of how-to literature on Jewish holiday celebrations for parents, in response to what they perceived as widespread unfamiliarity with these traditions among this particular generation of adults.<sup>57</sup> As with those rituals surrounding birth, authors of these holiday handbooks acknowledged that parents today “often find themselves unable to introduce the various home ceremonials and customs that are associated with our Festivals and Holy Days because they have long since forgotten the historic reasons for the observances, or because they never knew them.”<sup>58</sup>

In light of this knowledge gap, many such guides aimed at multi-generational education, teaching parents so they could in turn teach and celebrate with their children. Rabbi Albert Gordon’s 1947 “How to Celebrate Hanukkah at Home,” along with companion volumes on the festivals of Passover and Purim, included an explanation of each holiday’s origins; a program of

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instilling a sense of self-worth, see Irma Horowitz, “Education Begins at Home,” *Jewish Life*, May-June 1952, 54-59.

<sup>57</sup> Overwhelmingly, this genre focused on Passover and Hanukkah in particular, for two primary reasons. Their proximity to Easter and Christmas on the calendar and their abundance of rituals concentrated in the home rather than in the synagogue contributed to their relative popularity and observance among American Jews as compared to other holidays. Jenna Weissman Joselit has explained the enduring popularity of Passover observance among American Jews, even as many other Jewish holiday traditions have declined, as a result of the seder, Passover’s home-centered “ritualized exercise in collective memory,” with its special foods and time-honored customs. See Joselit, *The Wonders of America*, 225.

<sup>58</sup> Albert I. Gordon, *How to Celebrate Purim at Home*, (New York: United Synagogue of America, n.d. [1947?]), 1, Box 7, Folder 5, P-86, Rabbi Albert I. Gordon Papers, American Jewish Historical Society Archives, Boston.

Hebrew prayers and English readings; recipes for special dishes associated with each holiday; and a list of supplementary books and recordings. For children, Gordon included activities to entice their participation in the family ritual, such as a “Passover scavenger hunt,” Passover-themed charades, songs, and poems.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, Rabbi Simon Glustrom’s 1956 volume *When Your Child Asks* devoted a chapter to explaining how and why each Jewish holiday is celebrated. The author offered detailed answers for parents on questions their children might be tempted to ask about such topics as why Hanukkah is celebrated for eight days, or why Jews eat only unleavened bread during Passover.<sup>60</sup>

### **December Dilemma**

If postwar commentators viewed Jewish holidays as an invaluable opportunity to inculcate children and families with pride and security as Jews, then it is no surprise that they felt an urgent need to address the “December dilemma,” the question of whether and to what extent Jewish parents should permit their children to participate in Christmas celebrations. In a new age of increased interfaith cooperation, in which public displays of religiosity carried significant political weight, and an era of increased sensitivity to children’s mental

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<sup>59</sup> Albert I. Gordon, *How to Celebrate Hanukah at Home* (New York: United Synagogue of America, 1947); and *How to Celebrate Passover at Home* (New York: United Synagogue of America, 1947). See also Lillian T. Leiderman and Lillian S. Abramson, *Jewish Holiday Party Book: A Practical Guide for Mother and Teacher Planned for Children Ages 5 to 12* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1954); and Alex J. Goldman, *A Handbook for the Jewish Family: Understanding and Enjoying the Sabbath and Holidays* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1958).

<sup>60</sup> Simon Glustrom, *When Your Child Asks: A Handbook for Jewish Parents* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1956), 100-102, 106-111.

and emotional states, the issue of Jewish engagement with Christmas took on new dimensions.<sup>61</sup> Seeking a balance between fostering goodwill with Christians and encouraging an intensification of Jewish family holiday observance, most rabbis delineated between public and private Christmas celebrations in recommending to parents what their children should and should not be allowed to do. In the process, they turned to religious, psychological, and social considerations in weighing how American Jewish parents should act.

Augusta Saretsky, a parent educator affiliated with the Jewish Education Committee of New York, dramatized the problems that Christmas and Chanukah posed to the American Jewish family in a short play written to be performed by parents of Hebrew School children. In her piece, four Jewish mothers meet for tea and consider the pros and cons of Mrs. Leff's son's participation in a public school Christmas play. While Mrs. Abelow argues that Christmas is a national holiday and that healthy children need such opportunities for self-expression, other mothers in the group argue that Christmas is an inherently Christian celebration and that Jews should not take part in Christmas celebrations of any sort. Discussion questions accompanying Saretsky's script then prompted

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<sup>61</sup> On how American Jews dealt with Christmas observances in the public school during the post-World War II period, see Deborah Dash Moore, *To the Golden Cities: Pursuing the American Jewish Dream in Miami and L.A.* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 178-187. For a historical overview of American Jews' relationship with Christmas, see Joshua Eli Plaut, *A Kosher Christmas: 'Tis the Season to be Jewish* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 1-40.

participants to share their own feelings on Jews' celebrating Christmas and the propriety of Hanukkah and Christmas celebrations in school.<sup>62</sup>

Abraham Karp, a Conservative rabbi and author of the pamphlet "Our December Dilemma," urged readers to resist the urge and social pressure to put up a Christmas tree in their home, or to have their children participate in Christmas pageants and school celebrations. Karp's objection was rooted in both psychological and religious grounds. Such activities, he warned, could engender feelings of inferiority in the Jewish child, especially one who has not been raised to appreciate his Jewishness and the beauty of Hanukkah and other Jewish traditions. Moreover, Karp argued, when Jews decorate a Christmas tree or sing carols, they misappropriate Christian religious traditions in a manner disrespectful to believing Christians.<sup>63</sup>

Morris Landes, an Orthodox rabbi from Pittsburgh, concurred with Karp in a newspaper editorial in which he implored parents to shun Christmas celebrations to protect their children's mental health, and insisted that Christmas was a Christian holiday. The Jewish child who yearns to decorate a Christmas tree and receive a stocking full of gifts wants most of all to feel a part of something larger and greater than himself, he argued. "To give him the tree without all the religious trimmings around it is to give him the shadow without the

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<sup>62</sup> Augusta Saretsky, "The Hanukkah-Christmas Dilemma," in *Role Playing: A Creative Technique in Parent Education* (New York: Jewish Education Committee Press, 1965), 38-41.

<sup>63</sup> Abraham J. Karp, "Our December Dilemma," *Your Child and You: A Pamphlet Series for Jewish Parents*, vol. 8 (New York: United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education, 1958), 3-8.

substance and to do irreparable harm to him psychologically,” Landes wrote. “To give him both Christmas and Chanukah is to add confusion to psychic injury and to pave the way for maladjustments later in life.”<sup>64</sup>

Like Karp, Landes turned to psychology to justify to Jewish parents why they must not celebrate Christmas with their children. Instead, Landes implored readers to satisfy their children’s inner needs (and, implicitly, their own) through Judaism: “The child craves religion. Let him find it in Judaism. The child seeks status, the feeling that he belongs to something. Let him belong to the Jewish people.” This notion of attachment could not be cultivated only in December, Landes argued, but is the result of regular engagement with Jewish holidays throughout the year—decorating a *sukkah*, or outdoor hut, in the fall; listening to the Exodus story at a Passover seder in the spring; and lighting the Hanukkah candles in the winter.<sup>65</sup>

The desirability of interfaith relationships also played a role as rabbis considered what Jewish parents and their children should and should not do at Christmastime. “It is the genius and greatness of America that differing religious groups live together in peace, harmony, and mutual respect,” Karp wrote,

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<sup>64</sup> Morris A. Landes, “Pro and Con: The Christmas Tree,” *The Jewish Advocate* (Boston), December 22, 1949, 7. On the argument that Christians are offended when Jews decorate a Christmas tree, see also Glustrom, 128; and Rabbi Samuel Glasner, “A Jewish Attitude toward Christmas: A Letter to Parents,” *The Jewish Teacher* 23.1 (November 1954): 2-3.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. For a parent’s perspective on the issue, see Laura Pienkny Zakin, “A View of the ‘Christmas Problem,’” *Congress Weekly*, December 12, 1955, 9-10; and Grace Goldin, “Christmas-Chanukah: December is the Cruellest Month,” *Commentary*, November 1950, 417.

appealing to a notion of American exceptionalism grounded in theological tolerance. In this spirit, he and other rabbis did countenance certain interfaith activities at Christmastime, such as participating in a gift exchange or attending a holiday party, especially when done in a conscious spirit of goodwill between friends and neighbors of different religions. However, he cautioned, while this atmosphere of tolerance allows Jews to join with members of other faiths to mark national occasions, such as Independence Day and Thanksgiving, the same set of principles grant Jews the right to celebrate their own holidays as well.<sup>66</sup>

Given the strong pull of Christmas traditions for children, authors encouraged Jewish parents to give their children Hanukkah celebrations that matched the sensual and material festivity of the gentile holiday. Mrs. David Goldstein, writing in *Women's League Outlook*, advised mothers to bring "bright lights and starry ornaments" into their home celebrations, with the use of electric menorahs to "satisfy the urge to illumine the blackness of winter nights." Goldstein described the process by which she converted a string of Christmas tree lights into a decorative assortment of paper flowers, lights, and six-pointed Stars of David, suitable for Hanukkah display. She also recommended that families exchange gifts for the duration of the holiday, which would add to the joy

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<sup>66</sup> Karp, 4-8; Glasner, 3; and Rabbi Floyd Fierman's sermon, "Christmas Observance," in *Sermons, 1949-1958*, Box 2, Folder 2, MS-649, Floyd S. Fierman Papers, American Jewish Archives. Unlike Karp, Fierman, a Reform rabbi, allowed parents to take their children to visit Santa Claus in public, but insisted that they must not bring any Christmas traditions into their homes.

and excitement of the children, and that menorah-themed centerpieces and salads in the shape of the menorah be placed on the dinner table.<sup>67</sup>

She and others urged Jewish parents to elevate their family Hanukkah celebrations so as to mitigate the very temptation to participate in Christmas celebrations. Rabbi Albert Gordon explicitly reminded parents to “be mindful of the fact that your non-Jewish neighbors take time and pains to make Christmas an occasion of gladness. Unless you take equal pains with the Hanukah party,” he warned, “you cannot hope to make the Festival a thrilling experience.”<sup>68</sup> To deal with the religious and psychological issues at stake for Jewish children at Christmastime, Gordon and Goldstein called on American Jewish parents to invigorate their family Hanukkah celebrations with the introduction of festive decorations, games, food, and gift-giving. Remaking the holiday in the image of the American Christmas, they reasoned, was the ultimate solution to the “December dilemma.”<sup>69</sup>

### **Antidote for Antisemitism**

Observing Jewish holidays would not only bring families closer together and resolve problems at Christmastime, these commentators argued, but also could steel Jewish children with the crucial sense of self-worth they needed to

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<sup>67</sup> Mrs. David A. Goldstein, “More on Hanukah in the Home,” *Women’s League Outlook*, 16-17, 30. See also Gordon, *How to Celebrate Hanukah at Home*, 6-16.

<sup>68</sup> Gordon, *How to Celebrate Hanukah at Home*, 7.

<sup>69</sup> For more on the Americanization of Hanukkah in response to Christmas, see Plaut, 41-64; Joselit, 229-243; and Dianne Ashton, *Hanukkah in America: A History* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

withstand discrimination. Several childrearing authorities argued that this very concept of Jewish self-esteem was the critical ingredient in preparing children to confront antisemitism. Despite the fact that anti-Jewish prejudice waned considerably following World War II, memories of the 1920s and 1930s, when antisemitic publications, organizations, and personalities abounded, remained fresh. In 1947, a report from the Anti-Defamation League cited continued discrimination against Jews in social, educational, and economic settings, even as the organization's director acknowledged that antisemitism as an organized, officially sanctioned phenomenon was in clear decline.<sup>70</sup>

In *Adjusting the Jewish Child to His World*, Reform Rabbi Samuel

Markowitz maintained that Jewish holiday celebrations prepare boys and girls to overcome incidents of intolerance. Describing one such hypothetical youngster, he wrote,

To the taunt, "You are a Jew," a little Jewish five-year old nonchalantly replied, "I know it." Growing up in a pious Jewish home where the Sabbath, Festivals and Holy Days were regularly and beautifully observed, this Jewish youngster had imbibed the feeling of being different and the psychic support which Jewish observances and regular religious habits provide. To be a Jew was not to be inferior; it was only to be different.<sup>71</sup>

Echoing arguments made by Kurt Lewin decades earlier, Markowitz argued that family holiday observances in the home teach Jewish children to accept their

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<sup>70</sup> Diner, *Jews of the United States*, 210-212. See also Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 150-174.

<sup>71</sup> Samuel Markowitz, *Adjusting the Jewish Child to His World* (New York: National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, 1961), 3-5.

Jewish identity with pride and prepare them to feel comfortable as members of a minority group.

Other rabbis and psychologists also addressed the problem of teaching children how to cope with antisemitism, advocating an appeal to facts and reason. In *When Your Child Asks*, Rabbi Simon Glustrom provided parents with sections of answers to children titled “Why Are We Different?” and “Why Do Some People Hate?”. To the hypothetical question, “Are the Jews a race?”, Glustrom replied that Jews are not a race or nation, but in fact a very diverse people who share a religion, culture, and history. This diversity, he suggested, was of great positive value: “Life would be dull if everybody had the same things and did the same thing [ . . . ]. This is also true of religious beliefs and customs. [ . . . ] God is happy if different peoples can still live together and respect one another.”<sup>72</sup>

Glustrom then turned his attention to the phenomenon of antisemitism. Jews have faced discrimination throughout their history, he explained, because they have been misunderstood, blamed for problems they did not cause, and hated simply because they are different.<sup>73</sup> Like Markowitz, Glustrom also called on parents to boost their children’s emotional security through religious practices, but he differed by approaching antisemitism as a historical and irrational phenomenon.

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<sup>72</sup> Glustrom, 123-127.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 140.

Bruno Bettelheim, an Austrian-born Jewish psychologist who immigrated to the United States in 1939, prescribed a different approach in *Commentary* magazine in 1951. In an article titled, “How Arm Our Children Against Anti-Semitism?”, Bettelheim argued that the strategy of preparing children to withstand prejudice through family ritual observance was impractical and unhelpful for the majority of Jewish parents, who are not religiously inclined and do not keep most of the religious commandments.<sup>74</sup>

Instead, he counseled, mothers and fathers must help their children confront episodes of intolerance when they arise, through calm, reasoned, age-appropriate demonstrations of the folly of prejudice. While older children are capable of benefiting from a rational discussion of discrimination, Bettelheim advised, younger children need more concrete affirmations. They need to see and to feel that they are accepted by their parents and their peers. Most importantly, he argued, all children need to feel loved and protected by their parents: “[O]nly the small child who knew a maximum security within his family circle is ready to weather the insecurities of all the succeeding groups with which he may later identify himself.”<sup>75</sup>

While some historians have labeled the postwar period an American Jewish “golden age,” Jews nevertheless continued to worry about and consider how to deal with antisemitism, especially as it concerned their children’s

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<sup>74</sup> Bruno Bettelheim, “How Arm Our Children Against Anti-Semitism? A Psychologist’s Advice to Jewish Parents,” *Commentary*, September 1951, 209-211.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

successful adjustment to life as a member of a minority group.<sup>76</sup> In different ways, they applied lessons drawn from psychology to offer advice on how to help children come to terms with intolerance. While not all of the experts were convinced of religion's power to defend young American Jews against bigotry, they did concur that parents' words and actions play a critical role in preparing their children to accept their Jewish identity.

### **Conclusion**

On May 10, 1961, at the posh Park Schenley Restaurant in Pittsburgh, Lillian Friedberg addressed a local chapter meeting of Hadassah, a Zionist women's organization. Friedberg, the executive director of Pittsburgh's Jewish Community Relations Council, chose as her topic for the evening "Preparing Our Children for Living in Today's World."

In her speech, Friedberg weighed the political, economic, and technological changes affecting the American Jewish family of the 1960s, and considered the particular advantages and disadvantages that benefit and burden the Jewish child. Though Jewish youth may still face discrimination and feelings of inferiority as members of a minority group, she conceded, they could and

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<sup>76</sup> On the concept of a postwar "golden age" for American Jewry and subsequent attempts by historians to complicate this view, see Arthur A. Goren, "The 'Golden Decade,' 1945-1955," in *The Politics and Public Culture of American Jews* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 186-204; Diner, *Jews of the United States*, 259-304; Riv-Ellen Prell, "Triumph, Accommodation, and Resistance," 114-141.

should be proud of their heritage, religion, and culture, all of which inculcate a sense of moral values and social responsibility.<sup>77</sup>

Living in a predominantly Christian society, Friedberg declared, Jewish children needed a warm and comforting family environment, a strong education, and a solid foundation in the values of their religion, which she identified as democracy and human rights. Both the psychologists of today and the Jewish sages of old agree, she asserted, that the child raised in this manner is “fortified by his spiritual heritage, strengthened by self-acceptance” and “embarked on a normal move toward a mature, useful and happy life.”<sup>78</sup>

Friedberg’s prescription for raising “a good American and a good Jew—a complete person” exemplifies the themes and arguments raised in this chapter. Friedberg and others offering childrearing advice to American Jewish parents relied heavily on psychological revelations about child development and mental health, a rhetorical strategy that framed the goal of Jewish continuity in appealingly secular and scientific terms. Authors of childrearing literature also co-opted the ideological language of Cold War-era civic religion to convince Jewish parents that, as good Jews and good Americans, they should choose biblical names for their children, celebrate religious holidays as a family, and take measured steps toward interfaith goodwill efforts at Christmastime. In an era when religious faith versus godlessness defined the gap between good and evil,

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<sup>77</sup> Lillian Friedberg lecture notes, “Preparing Our Children for Living in Today’s World,” May 10, 1961, 2-3, Box 9, Folder 2, MS-283, Lillian A. Friedberg Papers, American Jewish Archives.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

and between emotional security and spiritual despair, American Jewish parenting advisers urged mothers and fathers to make religious observance a hallmark of their family life. In sum, they offered American Jewish parents what many of them wanted: a means for bestowing their children with some measure of attachment to Judaism and the Jewish people, in such a manner as would not prevent their full entry and acceptance into mainstream American life.

In her speech, Lillian Friedberg also criticized those contemporary American Jewish parents who mistakenly believe that “fine clothes, big cars, and lavish houses,” rather than a loving home and religious environment, are what make families and children content and able to withstand the pressures and anxieties of the modern age. Friedberg’s critique of materialism was echoed from the pulpits of synagogues across the United States, as rabbis of all denominations weighed in on the topic of family economy and other issues affecting all American parents.

### Chapter 3: Parenting from the Pulpit: American Rabbis on Discipline, Delinquency, and Other Dilemmas Facing the Postwar Parent

“Pity the Poor Parent Today” was the subject of Rabbi Levi Olan’s regular radio address on station KRLD in Dallas, Texas on January 20th, 1963. Olan, clergy at Dallas’s Reform Temple Emanu-El, bemoaned what he called the age of “panned parenthood,” in which parents were blamed by teachers, clergy, and psychologists for the behavioral and educational failures of their children.

Beset by high expectations and unrelenting criticism on all sides, Olan explained, today’s parents turn to magazines and self-help books for relief: “The Bible has been replaced by Spock and Gesell. Learning to be a parent is in the same class as preparing for a trade, to be a secretary or a plumber.”<sup>1</sup> The struggles of modern parents are not due to a lack of effort or interest in being good mothers and fathers, he argued; rather, they stem from larger societal and cultural problems in today’s America, including a misplaced obsession with materialism and a breakdown in family relationships.

“What shall we do about our anxieties and tensions which derive from a competitive, insatiable, lonely society?”, Olan asked his listeners. This question,

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<sup>1</sup> Levi A. Olan sermon, “Pity the Poor Parent Today,” radio address, January 20, 1963, Box 28, Folder 1, MS-181, Levi A. Olan Papers, American Jewish Archives. Olan referred to Arnold Gesell, the Yale psychologist who argued in his famous *Infant and Child in the Culture of Today* that despite biological and cultural differences, children mature in discrete, predictable stages of physical and mental growth, and that parents should not be overly dictatorial in temperament. See Arnold Gesell and Frances L. Ilg, *Infant and Child in the Culture of Today: The Guidance of Development in Home and Nursery School* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943); Hulbert, 154-159; and Grant, 184-186. For a review of Gesell’s works in a Jewish publication, see Isa Kapp, “The Study of Man: The Human Infant According to Gesell - With Some Notes on the Behavior of Mothers,” *Commentary*, November 1951, 487-492.

and a desire to answer it, motivated not only Levi Olan, but rabbis of all denominations, who used the platform of the sermon to offer childrearing advice to their congregants and to American Jews across the country during the post-World War II decades. After they were delivered on Sabbaths and Jewish holidays from synagogue pulpits, some of these sermons, like Olan's, were broadcast on the radio to mixed audiences of Jews and non-Jews, and others were collected for publication and distributed in sermon anthologies and volumes on the Jewish family.

The previous chapter examined childrearing advice on issues of special relevance to Jewish parents, such as selecting a Hebrew name for a child and determining whether and how to participate as Jews in Christmas celebrations. This chapter will explore how rabbis addressed broader concerns about childrearing and the contemporary American family, including discipline, consumerism, gender roles and parenting, and juvenile delinquency. Such concerns were not unique to the postwar Jewish community by any means; rather, they were part and parcel of the commentary and critique of middle-class American life that flourished in the 1950s and 1960s. In responding to these issues, however, rabbis brought their own particularist concerns about the future of American Jewry to bear on the problems deemed endemic to middle-class American life. Integrating insights from Jewish sources with contemporary concepts from social science, observations about modernity, and Cold War-era notions of domesticity, rabbis worried about the viability of Judaism and Jewish communal life offered advice aimed at easing Jewish parental anxieties and

validating Judaism's relevance for the modern, acculturated American Jewish family. Examining this literature is important because it reveals the anxieties of rabbis during a critical period of adjustment for American Jews following World War II, and because it sheds light on the role played by rabbis in reconciling Judaism with postwar middle-class American values.

A strong current of unease about the stability of the postwar American family, and the American Jewish family in particular, flows through their remarks. Addressing his Reform congregation in 1960 on the theme of "The Jewish Family in Transition," Harold Saperstein remarked on the crucial role that the family had played in facilitating the survival of the Jewish people throughout their long history of persecution and migration. At present, however, he feared that the qualities that sustained the Jewish family and allowed it to survive—an emphasis on the quality of home life, participation in religious ritual as a unit, and the proper administration of discipline and guidance from discerning and engaged parents—were in steep decline. The close-knit Jewish family, Saperstein sensed, was falling victim to a desire to acculturate to American social norms and to new threats to family togetherness, such as the television and the restaurant.<sup>2</sup>

As they lectured on the perceived decline in the quality of American Jewish family life, rabbis turned their attention to parents, often both to chastise them for falling short in their duties to raise Jewish children and to encourage them to work on perfecting their craft. Rabbi Solomon Roodman of Congregation

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<sup>2</sup> Harold Saperstein, "The Jewish Family in Transition," sermon delivered March 25, 1960, Box 3, Folder 3, MS-718, Harold I. Saperstein Papers, American Jewish Archives.

Anshei Sfard, an Orthodox synagogue in Louisville, Kentucky, reminded his congregants that parents who defer their responsibilities as molders of their children's Jewish and moral character to teachers and rabbis do so at great peril. "There are no substitutes for parenthood. The character of the home is all-pervading," Roodman wrote. In particularly harsh terms, he punctuated his argument: "Parental failure defies forgiveness. It knows no atonement."<sup>3</sup>

Rabbinical discourse on children and parenting took place within a wider postwar cultural conversation about the American family and the nature of middle-class life. As Elaine Tyler May and Stephanie Coontz have written, the social and economic upheavals of the Great Depression and World War II gave way to a pervasive desire for domestic bliss in American life, expressed in political rhetoric, on television, and in sociological surveys in which Americans repeatedly listed home and family as their primary sources of contentment and self-esteem. This embrace of domesticity and the middle-class nuclear family took place amid geopolitical tensions with the Soviet Union, fears of homosexual and socialist subversion in the United States, concerns about overbearing mothers and delinquent teenagers, and worsening racial tensions.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Solomon Roodman, "The Jewish Family—A Continuing Process," in *The Suburbs of the Almighty: Sermons and Discourses* (New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 1962), 84.

<sup>4</sup> May, 8-17; Coontz, 24-25. See also Jessica Weiss, *To Have and to Hold: Marriage, the Baby Boom, and Social Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). Elaine Tyler May makes the critical point that the benefits of postwar prosperity did not extend to all Americans, as African Americans and other non-white ethnic groups were systematically denied access to many government benefits and to housing in desirable suburban communities. On this topic, see also Freund, *Colored Property*; Matthew D. Lassiter, *The Silent*

Concurrent with these cultural and political currents of anxiety, American Jews joined the ranks of the middle-class in an era when a host of social critics, including C. Wright Mills, David Riesman, William Whyte, and Betty Friedan, condemned the emptiness, loneliness, and loss of individuality and creativity that they viewed as the lamentable trademarks of a typical middle-class American lifestyle. Terms such as alienation, other-directedness, the “organization man,” and the “comfortable concentration camp” entered the American cultural lexicon in the 1950s and early 1960s, providing Americans with what historian Lila Corwin Berman has termed “a language for middle-class ambivalence.”<sup>5</sup>

Postwar rabbis were not alone in bringing attention to the state of the American Jewish family. Several Jewish commentators outside the rabbinate also wrote tributes to the historical Jewish family as a bedrock of warmth, comfort, and faith, and criticized the contemporary Jewish family’s shortcomings in these and other regards. Their nostalgia for an imagined idyllic Jewish past, as well as their pessimism about the present and future, reflect a growing unease

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*Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); and Beryl Satter, *Family Properties: How the Struggle Over Race and Real Estate Transformed Chicago and Urban America* (New York: Metropolitan, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Lila Corwin Berman, “Jews and the Ambivalence of Middle-Classness,” *American Jewish History* 93.4 (December 2007): 421. The article provides an excellent treatment of how American Jewish social critics weighed the advantages and disadvantages of economic mobility for their community. For some of the most important period critiques of middle-class American life and values, see C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (1951; repr., New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); David Riesman, Reuel Denney, and Nathan Glazer, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950); William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956); and Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1963).

among communal leaders about the quality and authenticity of modern American Jewish life in middle-class, suburban settings, and indicate the strong influence of rising fears about assimilation and intermarriage in the 1950s and 1960s.

Authors such as Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, editor of *The Jewish Spectator*, a periodical addressing contemporary social and intellectual Jewish concerns, drew a sharp contrast between the glorious, tight-knit Jewish family of old and its contemporary version, which was beset by problems of adjustment to modernity. “The family as the Western world knows it is the creation of the Jews,” she wrote in 1949. “While government agencies and church groups began to focus attention upon the family only recently, Judaism has always emphasized it as the basis of civilization and a powerful prop of Jewish survival.” Weiss-Rosmarin’s tribute to Jewish family values concluded on a sour note, however, as she argued that emancipation, acculturation, and the encounter between Jews and the ‘modern standards’ of their host societies have resulted in the deterioration of family relations in recent times.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, Natalie Joffe’s *The American Jewish Family*, published by the National Council of Jewish Women in 1954, celebrated its subject’s role and performance throughout Jewish history. Joffe, an anthropologist by training, praised the close-knit, child-centered family as a hallmark of Jewish history, the

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<sup>6</sup> Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, “The Family,” in *Jewish Survival: Essays and Studies* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), 342-360. For more on Weiss-Rosmarin’s career and philosophy, see Deborah Dash Moore, “Trude Weiss-Rosmarin and *The Jewish Spectator*,” in *The “Other” New York Jewish Intellectuals*, ed. Carole Kessner (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 101-121.

vehicle through which religious traditions passed from generation to generation. Jewish parents were especially devoted to their children, she argued, and Jewish families are more intimate than those of other groups.

Following Joffe's overview, a series of discussion questions at the end of the book prompted readers to consider the social, psychological, and economic state of American Jewish families at present, and to enumerate the particular needs and problems facing today's Jewish children. While Joffe's historical overview lauded the traditional Jewish family's essentialist qualities of warmth and nurturance, the discussion questions asked if Jewish families today are "more concerned with problems of emotional security and child guidance" than non-Jewish families. The discussion questions hint at anxieties about the declining state of the contemporary Jewish family, compared to its antecedents described by Joffe.<sup>7</sup>

Benjamin Kaplan, a sociology professor at the University of Southwestern Louisiana, adopted a far more negative view of the state of the Jewish family in 1967. His book *The Jew and His Family* presented a romanticized, reductionist exploration and comparison of the Jewish family from the biblical period, to the *shtetls* of Eastern Europe, to the contemporary American suburbs. Whereas in earlier eras in other places, the Jewish family served as a "repository of human warmth and psychic fulfillment" and the incubator for the preservation of religious traditions, Kaplan argued that the contemporary middle-class, acculturated American Jewish family was adrift in a meaningless sea of "material comfort and

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<sup>7</sup> Joffe, *The American Jewish Family*, 5-11, 17, 33-36.

hollow complacency.” In their desire to fit in, succeed financially, and win acceptance within American society at large, he claimed, Jews have abandoned the moral values, religious traditions, and close-knit family structure that allowed them to survive and persevere as an ethnic and religious minority group for so many generations.<sup>8</sup>

To varying degrees, these studies suggested that the Jewish family, perceived historically to have been a robust institution and the greatest mechanism for ensuring Jewish continuity for over two millennia, was now in trouble in postwar America. From their positions of authority as ordained clergy, pulpit rabbis across the denominational spectrum entered this debate. They echoed a broader concern, both in American society at large and among intellectual leaders from the Jewish community, that the contemporary family was in a state of crisis. In crafting their solutions, rabbis applied lessons from Judaism, history, psychology, Cold War political rhetoric, and everyday life in order to advise congregants on a proper course of parental action.

In mediating between Jewish and secular bodies of knowledge, they effectively articulated a new middle-class American Jewish parenting philosophy for their constituents, one that was consistent with their conceptions of Jewish tradition and history; influenced by the prevailing popular discourse about child psychology and Victorian notions of motherhood; and responsive to the realities

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<sup>8</sup> Benjamin Kaplan, *The Jew and His Family* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), *xi-xiii*, 138-171. On the Jewish family's perceived historical strengths and contemporary shortcomings, see also Manheim S. Shapiro, "Jewish Family Values: Are They Breaking Down—Or Shifting?" (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1965, 3rd printing; originally appeared in *Council Woman*).

and insecurities of an upwardly mobile, suburbanizing, and acculturated community. In other words, these rabbis created an American Jewish vocabulary of ideas for discussing and ameliorating the concerns of middle-class parents, in an effort both to address anxieties about Jewish continuity and to demonstrate Judaism's appeal and relevance to acculturated, middle-class American Jewish parents.

An analysis of these sermons from the postwar era, which addressed the needs and fears of the rabbis on the pulpit and the parents in the pews, helps to complicate earlier historiographical impressions of the post-World War II era as a time of unbridled optimism and prosperity in American Jewish life. These sermons also shed important light on the process by which Jews transitioned into the culture, lifestyle, and ethos of the American middle class. In an era of rising concerns about assimilation and intermarriage, rabbis integrated insights from Freudian psychology and Cold War-era beliefs about faith and domesticity with concepts drawn from Jewish tradition to demonstrate Judaism's importance for modern life. In so doing, they offered their congregants a blueprint for acculturation that presented contemporary ideas about parenting within a Jewish framework – a method for blending into American society while retaining ties to Jewish traditions and thought.

Rabbis used the pulpit as a means for educating congregants about Judaism's ability to address problems of modern life. With the suburbanization of American Jewry came an era of unprecedented synagogue construction and affiliation, as many families migrated to new areas lacking pre-existing Jewish

communal infrastructure. In these communities, synagogues often became the central Jewish address in neighborhoods lacking other Jewish institutions. American Jews turned to them as a place to meet and socialize with other Jews, and a place to provide their children with a religious education. They spent more than five hundred million dollars on new synagogue buildings in the first five years after the war alone, and they joined synagogues in record numbers. From the 1950s through the early 1960s, the rate of synagogue affiliation among American Jews reached approximately 51 percent, the highest rate in history.<sup>9</sup>

In what was quantitatively, if not qualitatively, a peak era for the American synagogue, the rabbi's sermon functioned as the centerpiece of the synagogue worship service. In synagogue bulletins and local Jewish newspapers, rabbis commonly announced the titles of their sermons in advance, as an enticement to members and others in the community to attend. These same publications often subsequently reprinted sermons for wider distribution.<sup>10</sup> Jewish family life and Jewish continuity were frequent topics of discussion for rabbis, regardless of denominational affiliation. As they addressed issues related to parenting in their sermons, rabbis hoped to demonstrate to their congregants the relevance of Judaism to modern social problems and the extent to which Judaism could

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<sup>9</sup> Diner, *Jews of the United States*, 288-289; Prell, "Triumph, Accommodation, and Resistance," 120-121. Diner and Prell remind us that statistics on synagogue membership do not necessarily reflect regular attendance.

<sup>10</sup> Marc Lee Raphael, *Judaism in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 105-106.

inform their decisions as parents on quotidian issues of family life, not just on ritual matters.

In the preface to his 1959 book, *Good to Be a Jew*, Rabbi Eugene Kohn of the Reconstructionist movement lamented that “[m]any Jews today see no value in preserving Jewish group life. [ . . . ] It is the hope of the author that [this book] may help them to find value in their self-identification with the Jewish People and with Judaism.”<sup>11</sup> Kohn’s book, which explored Jewish perspectives on family life, themes in the Bible and Jewish literature, and aspects of Jewish theology, sought to persuade unaffiliated Jewish readers of the value of engagement with Jewish religious, cultural, and Jewish communal life on a mature and sophisticated level.

In the first chapter of the book, dedicated to a discussion of “The Jewish Family,” Kohn traced the history of the Jewish family from Biblical times to the present, and argued that the Jewish family plays a critical role in the child’s socialization and emotional development. “If Judaism offers the Jew means for personal self-fulfillment through identification with the Jewish community,” Kohn wrote, “it is in the family and the home that these advantages of being Jewish are first experienced.” Reiterating arguments posed by Kurt Lewin, Kohn asserted that the child who lacked positive Jewish family experiences would have difficulty forming bonds of Jewish attachment in adulthood.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Eugene Kohn, *Good to Be a Jew* (New York: The Reconstructionist Press, 1959), vii. On Reconstructionist Judaism, see Sarna, *American Judaism*, 243-249.

<sup>12</sup> Kohn, *Good to Be a Jew*, 15-16.

Like Kohn's work, Rabbi Morris Kertzer's 1953 book, *What is a Jew?*, similarly presented an overview of Jewish beliefs and practices designed to highlight Judaism's spiritual and moral value for a modern age. A Conservative rabbi and an army chaplain during World War II, Kertzer engaged in numerous outreach efforts to promote Judaism to a broad American audience, both in print and on television. Though he hoped to elucidate Judaism's teachings for the benefit of curious non-Jewish readers, Kertzer also stated in his introduction that he wished in his book to render "a faith that [. . .] has contributed richly to civilization and has grown and developed and kept pace with the changing spiritual needs of more than a hundred generations" more familiar and more meaningful to his own coreligionists.<sup>13</sup>

Kertzer devoted the third section of his book to discussions of marriage and the family in Judaism. Like all cultures, he wrote, Jews value family life. What renders the Jewish tie to family distinct, he suggested, is that Judaism relies on the family unit more than any other institution to transmit religious beliefs and practices through home rituals. The home is more important for the future of Jewish life than the synagogue, he claimed, because "the center of Jewish religious life is the home" and "[o]ur religion is essentially a family religion."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Morris N. Kertzer, *What is a Jew?* (New York: World Publishing Co., 1953), xi-xvii. For an extended discussion and analysis of Kertzer's outreach efforts in explaining Judaism to Jews and non-Jews, see Berman, *Speaking of Jews*, 119-142.

<sup>14</sup> Kertzer, *What is a Jew?*, 51-54.

Whereas Kohn charged the Jewish family with the responsibility of helping children make healthy emotional adjustments into adulthood, Kertzer tied the strong quality of Jewish family life to Judaism's past and future survival. Rabbis thus invested the Jewish family with considerable power for determining the fate of both the individual Jew and the Jewish community. Through the sermon, they hoped to address the ills they perceived as threats to the contemporary Jewish family in an effort to promote communal continuity. In their arguments, rabbis frequently applied observations from both religious and secular sources to make their case, so as to appeal to an acculturated American Jewish audience.

Historian Lila Corwin Berman has examined the impact of terminology and modes of thought from social scientific disciplines on rabbinic understandings and presentations of Jewish identity from the 1920s to the 1970s. She analyzes how sociology, psychology, and other such fields of inquiry, revered in American culture as "unrivaled sources of authority" during this period, became useful tools for rabbis and intellectuals to frame Jewishness as a set of behaviors, of which religion was only one. Contextualizing Jewish identity in scientific language, according to Berman, "offered a key for explaining and maintaining Jewishness" in terms of duty to one's ethnic group and nation. Rabbis emphasized the extent to which Jewish values shaped American traditions of democracy and equality, arguing that Jews therefore had a critical role to play in the ongoing welfare of the country and its national mission.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Berman, *Speaking of Jews*, 1-7, 72-118.

While Berman's work is primarily interested in modes of Jewish self-representation to the largely non-Jewish American public, I focus on the internal Jewish discourse, conducted inside synagogue sanctuaries and sometimes subsequently reproduced in printed volumes. Like Berman, I am interested in showing how rabbis applied knowledge from social scientific disciplines to advocate for Jewish continuity, in this case, by turning their attention to its prime engine, the American Jewish family.

Following World War II, rabbis gained stature as the leaders of synagogues, the primary "Jewish address" in many communities. To both wield and maintain their influence, they articulated an approach to parenting, grounded in both Jewish tradition and secular wisdom, designed to appeal to their middle-class congregants. Historically, prior to the nineteenth century, the rabbi's primary role was to teach and issue rulings in matters of Jewish law, and to officiate in matters of marriage, divorce, and communal disputes. Since the first ordained rabbis arrived in the United States beginning in the 1840s, American Jews have primarily asked them to serve not so much as legal authorities, but as prayer leaders, preachers, educators, sources of moral example and spiritual comfort, and as representatives of the Jewish community to the American public.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Abraham J. Feldman, "The Changing Functions of the Synagogue and the Rabbi," in *Understanding American Judaism: Toward the Description of a Modern Religion*, vol. 1, ed. Jacob Neusner (New York: Ktav Publishing, 1975), 103-112; Pamela S. Nadell, *Women Who Would Be Rabbis: A History of Women's Ordination, 1889-1985* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), xii. On the German origins of this transition in the role of the modern rabbi, see Ismar Schorsch, "Emancipation and the Crisis of Religious Authority: The Emergence

Expected to comment on moral and political questions of the day, rabbis have served as mediators between Jewish and secular sources and modes of thought, bringing both to bear on contemporary issues facing America and the Jewish people. Concepts from psychology and social science, Cold War-era ideas about gender roles and domesticity, and contemporary critiques of consumerism shaped rabbinical views to varying degrees during the period in question. At times, rabbis took pains to reconcile Judaism with other systems of knowledge. In some cases, they argued for the superiority of approaches grounded in Jewish texts and history to that of contemporary popular practice. In so doing, rabbis tried to mark the boundaries of proper American Jewish childrearing as sometimes commensurate with, and sometimes distinct from, the opinions and practices of society at large. Examining this discourse offers new insight into the complicated and multivalent process through which American Jews have attempted to balance a desire to acculturate with a desire to become fully American. Childrearing literature provides an essential window into the multiple paths of American Jewish adaptation to middle-class life during the baby boom era.

### **Parent or Pal?**

In an era of heightened anxiety over the connection between overbearing parents and maladjusted adults, one of the childrearing issues that most

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of the Modern Rabbinate,” in *Revolution and Evolution: 1848 in German-Jewish History*, eds. Werner E. Mosse, Arnold Paucker, and Reinhard Rürup (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1981), 205-248. On the first generation of American rabbis, see Sarna, *American Judaism*, 91-111.

concerned commentators was that of temperament and discipline. In the 1920s, John Watson's behaviorist theories of childrearing, centered around concepts of stimulus and response, encouraged parents to reward positive behavior and avoid spanking their children. Since punishments rarely followed inappropriate actions with the necessary immediacy, Watson reasoned, they would not produce the desired response in the misbehaving child.<sup>17</sup>

Even as Watsonian approaches to childrearing fell out of favor in the ensuing decades, an opposition to punishment and rigorous discipline remained central to the next generation of parenting advice literature. In a 1932 volume for the Child Study Association of America, Dorothy Canfield Fisher and Sidonie Gruenberg warned parents that too much discipline and harsh regimentation of behavior could lead to harmful feelings of failure and guilt in children.<sup>18</sup> Other authorities who followed over the next twenty-five years elaborated on this message, conveying to readers that deep-rooted humiliation and guilt complexes formed in childhood could last a lifetime, with dire psychological and behavioral consequences such as violence, criminality, sexual inadequacy, and deviance. Arnold Gesell, Benjamin Spock, and other developmental psychologists led the charge toward what came to be called "permissive parenting," or an approach to

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<sup>17</sup> Stearns, 57-69.

<sup>18</sup> Dorothy Canfield Fisher and Sidonie Gruenberg, *Our Children: A Handbook for Parents* (New York: The Viking Press, 1932), 119, 177, cited in Stearns, 60-61.

parenting that emphasized positive reinforcement and rational discussion with children, rather than punishment.<sup>19</sup>

The debate over discipline carried over into the American Jewish community in the postwar period. In *The Jewish Parent*, an Orthodox magazine for the parents of Jewish day school students, a clinical psychologist from Yeshiva University related the story of Morris, a thirteen-year old boy and the son of a refugee from Nazi Germany. According to the author, Morris rejected his father's attachment to Judaism and was expelled from religious school. The psychologist diagnosed the problem as stemming from the father's "excessively authoritarian" behavior toward his son, and described how he counseled the father to adopt a more loving and permissive attitude toward his son, so that he would not grow up to resent being Jewish.<sup>20</sup>

Other Jewish parenting authorities, however, lamented the cultural trend away from what they believed to be parents' proper role and responsibility. Beatrice Levin, an author, teacher, and mother of three, wrote in 1953 in defense of parents' right to punish in the Conservative movement's magazine *Women's League Outlook*. Levin argued that children require guidelines and reprimanding in order to mature properly. She recommended that parents resort to a broad arsenal of techniques to inculcate healthy attitudes and mature behavior in their

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<sup>19</sup> Stearns, 57-79; Grant, 231-232; Hulbert, 215-216; Mintz, 281-282.

<sup>20</sup> Boris M. Levinson, "The Jewish Child and His School," *The Jewish Parent*, June 1955, 13, 19.

children, including spankings, punishments, and reproach when called for, but also dialogue and example.<sup>21</sup>

Following a cultural trend dominant in the late 1940s and led by Dr. Spock, who advocated that parents hug and play with their children and not discipline their children harshly, many rabbis emphasized that parents must make an extra effort to show their children patience, love, and affection. Others, however, warned that mothers and fathers must not coddle or spoil their children, but instead reassume their role as authority figures in the family. While they divided on the issue, they were united in their use of psychological and historical evidence alongside Jewish sources in making their arguments.

Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman, most well-known for authoring *Peace of Mind*, shared his views on the parent-child relationship in an essay entitled, “Honor Thy Son and Thy Daughter,” which was published posthumously in 1959. Turning the traditional biblical commandment to honor one’s parents on its head, Liebman called on parents to “make of their home a little democracy,” in which children’s rights as individuals were respected and they could grow up in an atmosphere of encouragement, acceptance, love, and religious faith.<sup>22</sup> Liebman

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<sup>21</sup> Beatrice Levin, “Discipline is Desirable,” *Women’s League Outlook*, December 1953, 20-21.

<sup>22</sup> Joshua Loth Liebman, “Honor Thy Son and Daughter,” in *Marriage and Family Life: A Jewish View*, ed. Abraham B. Shoulson (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1959), 200-201. Continuing the motif of adapting American political traditions for the purposes of offering childrearing advice, elsewhere in the essay Liebman called on parents to “write a Bill of Rights for children” and build “the Declaration of Independence for the coming generation—spiritual and psychic and emotional independence” (200, 211).

wove the geopolitical imagery and terminology of the Cold War into his sermon, drawing a sharp contrast between the ideal “democratic” family and the tyrannical one, in which father and mother rule as omnipotent dictators.

Likewise, Rabbi Stuart Rosenberg, writing in *The Reconstructionist* magazine in 1952, urged that Jewish parents create a home environment for their children suffused with love, affection, and conviviality. The consequences of failing to do so, he warned, could be dire for their children’s future emotional and spiritual outlook: “If children are subjected to oppressive parental domination, how can they be expected to want a greater Parent whose pleasure and displeasure are made even more important?”<sup>23</sup>

According to Rosenberg, the ability of a child to conceive of and accept the notion of a loving God depended on the child’s early experiences with earthly authority figures. If parents inhibit their children’s intrinsic curiosity and punish them too harshly, their children will struggle to find inner peace and security because they will harbor doubts about God. Like Liebman, Rosenberg framed his message to American Jewish parents in contemporary political terms, encouraging them to liberate their children’s potential through family religious observances.

In a 1956 sermon entitled, “Is There Room in Our Homes for God?”, Reform Rabbi Roland Gittelsohn advanced a similar argument connecting children’s need for affection and emotional security to their future capacity for

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<sup>23</sup> Stuart E. Rosenberg, “Should We Teach Tots About God?”, *The Reconstructionist*, May 2, 1952, 26.

religious faith and personal happiness. Parents must give their child a warm and loving home environment “congenial to his own free development and growth,” in which discipline is applied only with care and consistency, so that the child will grow up with the contentment and peace of mind that are the byproducts of a life of faith.<sup>24</sup>

Gittelsohn and Liebman stressed that their call for parents to love and respect their children did not imply a total abandonment of discipline. Such a lack of control, Gittelsohn stated, “would be almost as disastrous for our children as too much discipline or the wrong kind.” Children need limits, but they must be reasonably constructed and consistently applied.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, discipline ranked behind other considerations for these clergymen as they weighed children’s greatest needs, taking insights from religion, psychology, and political rhetoric into account.

Other Jewish parenting authorities, however, lamented the cultural trend away from what they believed to be parents’ proper role and responsibility. Rabbi Norman Lamm sought to analyze the subject of discipline from the vantage point of history and traditional Jewish sources. Unlike many of his rabbinic colleagues, Lamm, an Orthodox rabbi who would go on to lead Yeshiva University in New York City in 1976, chastised those who relied upon the dictates of psychology in determining how to raise children.

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<sup>24</sup> Roland Gittelsohn, “Is There Room in Our Homes for God?”, sermon, January 20, 1956, Box 46, Folder 10, MS-704, Roland B. Gittelsohn Papers, American Jewish Archives.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.; Liebman, “Honor Thy Son and Daughter,” 200.

In a 1953 sermon, Lamm argued that historically, parents have vacillated from generation to generation between neglecting their children or ruling over them with an iron fist. In today's era, he claimed, parents have once again erred in the direction of neglect, this time hoodwinked by the promises of modern pop psychology and the "New Bible of American Family Life," a thinly-veiled scathing critique of Dr. Spock. Trained to defer and succumb to their children's every whim and desire, Lamm argued, today's parents are rearing a generation of disrespectful, selfish sons and daughters. What is needed, he claimed, is a return to traditional Jewish values of respect for elders and boundaries for children.<sup>26</sup>

Rabbi Tzvi Porath, affiliated with a Conservative congregation in Chevy Chase, Maryland, concurred with Lamm's view in a sermon titled, "Are You a Parent to Your Children?" According to Porath, while parents lately have tried "modern" and "progressive" approaches to parenting, such as letting children express themselves without limits and befriending them as equals, these tactics have ultimately failed the modern family.<sup>27</sup>

Above all, Porath insisted, children need parents, not pals. Judaism itself affirms this primary need and responsibility within the family unit:

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<sup>26</sup> Norman Lamm, "The Strange Fate of the Fifth Commandment," sermon, February 7, 1953. Available online at <http://brussels.mc.yu.edu/gsd/collect/lammserm/index/assoc/HASH29f0.dir/doc.pdf>; accessed September 3, 2013.

<sup>27</sup> Tzvi H. Porath, "Are You a Parent to Your Children?", *Best Jewish Sermons of 5717-5718*, ed. Saul I. Teplitz (New York: Jonathan David Co., 1958), 203-207.

The Hebrew word for parents is *Horim*, and it comes from the same root as *Moreh*, teacher. That this is not accidental is demonstrated by the role that parents have on earth. Our rabbis say that our parents represent God on earth to the children. This concept was of great moment when first projected by psychiatrists, yet Judaism has recognized that principle for thousands of years.<sup>28</sup>

Like Lamm, Porath turned to Jewish sources to argue against parental permissiveness. While Lamm was more openly critical of psychology as a misguided source of knowledge, Porath claimed that Freudian understandings of the parent-child relationship merely confirm ancient Jewish teachings. Their reactions against what they perceived to be parental overindulgence came not long before Dr. Spock, partly in response to criticism and frustration on the part of readers, revised his famous manual in 1957 to impress upon parents the importance of a child's need for firm guidance.<sup>29</sup>

In December 1963, Reform Rabbi Levi Olan delivered another sermon on his radio program entitled, "The Harm of a Misguided Love," in which he decried parents who love and indulge their children as the biblical patriarch Jacob did for Joseph, showering him with affection and bestowing upon him a special coat of many colors. This love, Olan argued, tore the family apart, earning Joseph the enmity of his brothers, who sold him into slavery after nearly murdering him. Borrowing from psychologist Erich Fromm's concept of mature love, Olan

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>29</sup> On Dr. Spock's change of heart, see Lisa Hammel, "Dr. Spock—No Mollycoddler," *New York Times*, November 8, 1968. <http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/05/17/specials/spock-father.html>. Accessed June 19, 2013. For an overview of changing attitudes in the United States on the issue of discipline from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, see the chapter on discipline in Stearns, *Anxious Parents*, 57-80.

explained that “[o]ne of our difficulties with the nature of love is its demand for discipline. [. . .] In a mature love which cares [and] responds [. . .] there must be a will to discipline and helpfully to correct.”<sup>30</sup>

Parents must instill in their children a healthy fear of things that are dangerous, Olan urged, and this task often requires them to use reproach. Where Jacob failed Joseph, he claimed, was in giving him gifts and encouraging his unrestrained sense of self-importance, rather than teaching him humility and respect. It may not be fashionable or popular today to discipline children, he acknowledged, but that is precisely what a mature love of them demands.

By the mid-1960s, the cultural pendulum on this issue seemed to have swung firmly back in the direction of discipline, with rabbis content to follow and provide their own perspective on an American cultural trend. Rabbinical critics of what the developmental psychologist Diana Baumrind labeled “permissive parenting” wielded a variety of arguments drawn from sources as diverse as the Hebrew language, the history of the family, the Bible, and Erich Fromm.<sup>31</sup> Responsive to contemporary social and political American trends, rabbis brought insights from the Torah and other Jewish sources together with history, psychology, and Cold War-era terminology to guide mothers and fathers on the question of parental discipline.

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<sup>30</sup> Levi A. Olan, “The Harm of a Misguided Love,” sermon, December 29, 1963, Box 24, Folder 6, MS-181, Levi A. Olan Papers, American Jewish Archives.

<sup>31</sup> Diana Baumrind, “Effects of Authoritative Parental Control on Child Behavior,” *Child Development* 37.4 (1966): 887-907.

### **Discomfort with the Comfortable Life**

In 1957, sociologist Nathan Glazer surveyed fifteen years of significant socioeconomic changes in the American Jewish community in a chapter for Marshall Sklare's volume, *The Jews*. During the period in question, Glazer noted, more and more American Jews had entered the commercial and professional ranks at a faster rate than other ethnic groups. Whereas the previous generation of Eastern European immigrants predominantly labored in wage-earning manual occupations, now studies of fourteen Jewish communities conducted in the late 1940s and early 1950s revealed that the proportion of Jews in white-collar occupations ranged from 75 to 96 percent. Glazer looked to historical explanations of Jewish economic and intellectual activity to explain why Jews, because of their training in commerce and a cultural predilection for education and postponement of pleasure, were well-positioned to take advantage of opportunities granted them in an open capitalist economy.<sup>32</sup>

As Glazer described, this period ushered in considerable socioeconomic and demographic changes for many American Jews. This generation of American Jews was the first to have financial security and considerable disposable income, and the first to raise children in suburban communities in

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<sup>32</sup> Glazer, "The Attainment of Middle-Class Rank," 138-146. On the use of cultural explanations of Jewish behavior among postwar Jewish thinkers to defend and explain Jewish economic success as an essential Jewish quality without resorting to explicitly racial language, see Berman, "Jews and the Ambivalence of Middle-Classness," 417. For a more recent scholarly analysis of the relationship between Jews, capitalism, and economic mobility, see Jerry Z. Muller, *Capitalism and the Jews* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

large numbers. The vast majority of American Jewish families emerged from the Great Depression and World War II well-positioned to move into the middle class, thanks in part to opportunities afforded them by the Servicemen's Readjustment Act and federal housing loans. With the steady decline of antisemitism in public life following the war, Jews now faced fewer barriers to educational and professional advancement, two factors directly correlated to economic mobility. These developments allowed American Jewish families to move in large numbers to the suburbs, where they financed the construction of modern, spacious houses of worship.<sup>33</sup>

American Jews rose into the ranks of the middle-class in an era that coincided with the unprecedented availability of mass-produced consumer goods at affordable prices, including televisions, automobiles, and a wide array of household appliances. Historian Lizabeth Cohen has described the emergence of what she termed the "Consumer's Republic," a vital connection forged by politicians, labor, big business and ordinary Americans between consumerism and patriotism in American culture. Following two decades of depression and war, which popularized the notion that the Americans could serve their country and demonstrate their loyalty through judicious consumption and use of purchasing power, now "the new postwar order of mass consumption deemed

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<sup>33</sup> Diner, 282-291; Prell, "Triumph, Accommodation, and Resistance: American Jewish Life from the End of World War II to the Six-Day War," 115-116, 119-120.

that the good purchaser devoted to 'more, newer and better' was the good citizen."<sup>34</sup>

This shopper's utopia, despite the clear gains it offered to many Americans, was not without its critics, who pointed out the limits of its reach and the emptiness of a life of material pursuits. Economist John Kenneth Galbraith pointed out in his 1958 work *The Affluent Society* that the benefits of postwar prosperity had not eliminated poverty. Moreover, structural discrimination prevented African Americans and other disadvantaged minorities from accessing these benefits.<sup>35</sup>

Other postwar critics of consumerism such as Vance Packard took middle-class Americans to task for blindly following the directives of advertisers, allowing themselves to be hoodwinked into believing that status symbols, such as fancy cars and exclusive club memberships, would make them happy. Betty Friedan also decried the loss of individuality and personal fulfillment that middle-class life produced, trapping women in the "comfortable concentration camps" of suburbia

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<sup>34</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 119. See also Gary Cross, *An All-Consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won in Mainstream America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); and Daniel Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939-1979* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004).

<sup>35</sup> John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), 94-97; Cohen, 166-191; other works cited above in n. 4.

where material goods, household gadgets, and the endless task of chasing after children failed to give meaning to their lives.<sup>36</sup>

Not coincidentally, then, the subjects of affluence and consumerism weighed heavily on the minds of rabbis ministering to the parents in newly-built, expensive sanctuaries.<sup>37</sup> On May 6th, 1949, as the family of David Lippner celebrated his bar mitzvah at Temple Emanu-El in Lynbrook, New York, Reform Rabbi Harold Saperstein's thoughts turned to *King Lear*, the great Shakespearean tragedy, and the relationships between parents and children. In a sermon entitled "Our Children's Heritage," Saperstein asked, what do parents *really* owe their children? Many parents believed it was their primary responsibility to see to their children's financial and material security, he began, acknowledging that he and the other parents in the audience grew up in far different economic circumstances: "A great many of us knew some measure of [want] and [deprivation] in our own childhood. We are determined that our children shall have things [sp] easier. We longed for bicycles and our parents

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<sup>36</sup> Vance Packard, *The Status Seekers: An Exploration of Class Behavior in America and the Hidden Barriers that Affect You, Your Community, Your Future* (New York: D. McKay Co., 1959); Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*. For a scholarly consideration of Packard, Friedan, and Galbraith as critics of postwar consumer culture and the collective impact of their work, see Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence*, chap. 4. On Friedan's use of the term "concentration camp" and Holocaust imagery, see Kirsten Fermaglich, *American Dreams and Nazi Nightmares: Early Holocaust Consciousness and Liberal America* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2006), 2-3, 58-82.

<sup>37</sup> On the related subject of rabbinic criticism of extravagant bar mitzvah celebrations, see Rachel Kranson, "More Bar Than Mitzvah: Anxieties over Bar Mitzvah Celebrations in Postwar America," in *Rites of Passage: How Today's Jews Celebrate, Commemorate, Commiserate*, ed. Leonard Greenspoon (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2010), 9-24.

couldn't afford to buy them—we are determined that our children shall have them”—and everything else their hearts desire.<sup>38</sup>

This approach was both understandable and commendable, Saperstein acknowledged. But it does not constitute the sum of our obligations as parents, he cautioned: “Wealth cannot guarantee happiness. Nor is it permanent or enduring. How pathetic it is to see parents slaving thru life, depriving themselves of so much, that they may leave a large legacy of wealth to children—who in turn squander it thoughtlessly, because they have no appreciation of the human cost of money.” Saperstein protested the goals of those parents who prioritize earning large salaries and providing material comforts for themselves and their children. What children need most from their parents, he contended, is a *spiritual* inheritance, bequeathed through displays of love and affection and the inculcation of moral values and Jewish traditions. Saperstein argued that the act of transmitting Jewish values from parents to children lies at the core of the biblical narrative, from Abraham to Isaac and on down through the generations. He also advocated the practice, dating back to the Middle Ages, of ethical wills, in which dying parents left letters of moral and intellectual counsel for their children. These “treasures of the spirit,” Saperstein advised, are more valuable than gold.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Harold I. Saperstein, “Our Children’s Heritage,” sermon delivered May 6, 1949, Box 2, Folder 2, MS-718, Harold I. Saperstein Papers, American Jewish Archives.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. For a similar view from another Reform rabbi, see Roland Gittelsohn, “How Parents Sin Against Their Children,” sermon delivered March 16, 1951,

Other rabbis of different denominations agreed with Saperstein's critique. They urged their congregants and wider audiences to reject materialism and a love of fancy goods and high-paying careers. Instead, rabbis counseled, parents should invest in Judaism and family relationships to find happiness and help their children succeed in life. In a Yom Kippur sermon published in 1962, Orthodox Rabbi Solomon Roodman argued that something was missing from the middle-class Jewish household: "Our homes may be spacious and possess all the physical comforts known to architectural genius, but the positive influence they exert is highly superficial and transitory," he claimed.<sup>40</sup> In strong terms, Roodman suggested that the atmosphere of a loving home, in which faith and communication forge strong bonds between parents and children, should be more valuable to Jewish families than furniture and art.

In another sermon, Roodman denounced parents who went into debt to spoil their children, but failed to teach them proper values. The ancient rabbis mandated that parents must teach their children how to swim, Roodman informed his audience. Understanding this imperative both literally and metaphorically, he explained that parents must not only see to their children's physical health and welfare, but that they must prepare their children to swim "against the tide" of harmful trends and influences, such as secularism and

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Box 42, Folder 2, MS-704, Roland B. Gittelsohn Papers, American Jewish Archives.

<sup>40</sup> Solomon Roodman, "Parenthood Which is Planned," in *The Suburbs of the Almighty: Sermons and Discourses* (New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 1962), 144.

materialism.<sup>41</sup> Roodman thus couched his own critique of the impulse toward conformism and other middle-class evils in the language of the Talmud.

On a related theme, Rabbi Alfred Kolatch spoke to congregants at the Conservative-affiliated Forest Hills Jewish Center in Queens, New York, on the subject of children and careers. Parents often make the mistake of pressuring children into or out of certain professional paths based on their own experiences and prejudices, Kolatch observed. If a child expresses a desire to become a writer or a musician, he explained, parents will usually say, "From that you expect to make a living! [. . .] Don't you know how many starving poets there are, how many starving actors there are? Why don't you want to become a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher? Why don't you come into my business?"<sup>42</sup> Parents owed it to their children not to let fiscal considerations stand in the way of their children's talents and dreams when they are making career plans, Kolatch argued. "What our children choose as a life-work, because they want it and love it, may often seem stupid and ridiculous to us, but it may be exciting and challenging to them," he advised his audience. Parents must allow their children to succeed or fail on

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<sup>41</sup> Solomon Roodman, "Children in Today's World," in *The Suburbs of the Almighty*, 176-178.

<sup>42</sup> Alfred J. Kolatch, "The Burden of Making a Career," in *Sermons for the Sixties* (New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 1965), 16-19. Rabbi Simon Glustrom offered a similar argument to parents about their children's career choices in *Living With Your Teenager: A Guide for Jewish Parents* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1961), 31.

their own terms, nurture their individual hopes and dreams, and be there to support them in either case.<sup>43</sup>

In their sermons, Saperstein, Roodman, and Kolatch addressed a generation of American Jews who, by and large, had survived the Great Depression to achieve economic security. They exhorted parents not to let the desire to give their children the material comforts they themselves had lacked in childhood overtake their duty to give children the emotional and spiritual gifts they need most.

Many rabbis thus expressed a palpable unease, if not outright disdain, for a life of carefree affluence and extravagance—a life newly attainable in the postwar period for a majority of American Jews. And yet, as Rachel Kranson has argued, many of the same rabbis who warned their congregants about the superficiality of money earned their livelihood as the salaried pulpit rabbis of large, lavish synagogues serving middle-class and upper-middle-class constituents. They benefited directly from the very financial largesse that they often criticized.<sup>44</sup>

Nevertheless, as rabbis addressed parents on issues regarding childrearing and finances, they joined a larger chorus of voices in American life who equated affluence with emptiness and careerism with slavishness. On this issue and others, their views on wealth and parenting tapped into a broader

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<sup>43</sup> Kolatch, “The Burden of Making a Career,” 16-19.

<sup>44</sup> Kranson, “Grappling with the Good Life,” 20, 158.

cultural discourse, even as they introduced perspectives and insights from Jewish sources and personal observations.

### **Imagining the Ideal Jewish Mother**

As discussed in the previous chapter, the postwar years brought increased scrutiny to American parenthood from a variety of sources. The cultural concept of the “priceless” or “vulnerable” child, which emerged as a middle-class ideal in the nineteenth century, now took on new dimensions in the age of Freudian and developmental psychology. Whereas in the early twentieth century, child advocates focused their efforts on protecting working-class children from dangerous and oppressive conditions in urban factories and slums, by midcentury, commentators on issues related to child welfare and the family targeted the overbearing mother and the absent father as the new enemies of middle-class childhood in suburbia.<sup>45</sup>

Fears that improper childrearing could cause permanent psychological harm to a child coexisted alongside idyllic fictional portraits of the nuclear American family in popular culture. Television shows such as *Father Knows Best* and *Leave It to Beaver* depicted the pleasant adventures of devoted male breadwinners and happy housewives raising loving families in Elysian suburban settings. These vignettes of domestic bliss promoted the notion that good Americans, and women in particular, could and should find their life’s fulfillment in providing a happy, comfortable life for their children. They also put forward a blueprint for a gendered division of childrearing labor between parents. While

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<sup>45</sup> Zelizer, 3-15, 56-72; Mintz, 75-80, 280-282.

mothers provided children with love and affection, in addition to food and clean clothes, fathers disciplined their children, fixed things around the house, and modeled proper masculine behavior for their sons through work and sports.<sup>46</sup>

Just as both positive and negative archetypes of American parents coexisted simultaneously in the postwar era, the same held true for representations and descriptions of the typical Jewish mother. On the one hand, the model of Jewish motherhood exemplified by Gertrude Berg's Molly Goldberg character for over three decades exuded warmth, tenderness, and practical wisdom. On radio and television shows, the matriarch of the Goldberg family nurtured and nourished her husband, children, friends and neighbors with a blend of motherly intuition and an openness to modern, child-centered approaches to parenting, such as allowing children to express their independence and eschewing punishment for bad behavior. As Joyce Antler has

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<sup>46</sup> William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America since World War II*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 123-130; Coontz, 23-41; May, 130-141. Using evidence from sociological studies of the period, Alan Petigny argues that beneath the veneer of the patriarchal family of 1950s popular culture, attitudes and practices were beginning to change in the direction of a more democratic, companionate marriage model. See Petigny, 136-144. For a different perspective on gender roles and 1950s family sitcoms, see James Gilbert, *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 135-163. On American women, men, and household chores, see also Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983); and Arlie Hochschild and Anne Machung, *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home* (New York: Viking, 1989).

demonstrated, discussions and demonstrations of parenting philosophy were central features of the plot of *The Goldbergs* throughout the show's long run.<sup>47</sup>

Other encomiums to the Jewish mother from the era included Franz Kobler's 1955 *Her Children Call Her Blessed*, a compilation of literary tributes to the Jewish mother from rabbinic literature, memoirs, poetry, and other sources; and Natalie Joffe's *American Jewish Family*, which applied the tools and methodology of anthropology in praise of Jewish parents' remarkable devotion to their children. These compositions saluted the Jewish mother for her millennia of noble and loyal service to husbands and children around the world. In the process, they promulgated the notion that the qualities of Jewish mothers—"love, tender care, and self-sacrifice," in Kobler's words—were essential and immutable, transcending time and space for thousands of years.<sup>48</sup>

At the same time, expanding on concurrent fears about the effects of poor mothering in American society, a stereotype of the Jewish mother as a domineering, conniving, and suffocating figure emerged as a trope in both popular culture and academic literature in the 1950s and 1960s. Philip Roth's

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<sup>47</sup> Joyce Antler, *You Never Call! You Never Write! A History of the Jewish Mother* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 47-71. See also Donald Weber, "The Jewish-American World of Gertrude Berg: *The Goldbergs* on Radio and Television," in *Talking Back: Images of Jewish Women in American Popular Culture*, ed. Joyce Antler (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press/University of New England Press, 1998), 85-102.

<sup>48</sup> Franz Kobler, ed., *Her Children Call Her Blessed: A Portrait of the Jewish Mother* (New York: Stephen Daye Press, 1955); Joffe, 5-6, 16-18. Joffe did note in passing that the child-oriented nature of Jewish parents "is sometimes exaggerated and may border upon neurotic anxiety," but this statement was overwhelmed by her larger emphasis on the benevolence and tenderness of Jewish parents throughout history.

portrayal of Sophie Portnoy in his 1969 book *Portnoy's Complaint*, Dan Greenburg's 1965 parody *How to Be a Jewish Mother*, and the comedy routines of Mike Nichols and Elaine May promulgated the leitmotif of the overbearing Jewish mother on paper and on stage, while psychoanalysts Martha Wolfenstein and Erik Erikson wielded the tools of their trade to diagnose the condition of the "shtetl mother," whose unhealthy attachments and vindictive behavior patterns were attributable to a range of psychological and historical causes unique to the Jewish experience.<sup>49</sup>

To be sure, these images of the pernicious Jewish mother reflected the influence and tone of Philip Wylie's best-selling 1942 book *Generation of Vipers*, in which he coined the term "momism" to describe the phenomenon of the manipulative, materialistic American middle-class mother. The product of unfulfilled desires and limited opportunities, Wylie's Mom took out her frustrations on husbands, sons, and society, enslaving them to her every whim through the family and women's organizations. Wylie was only the most popular and widely read critic of mid-twentieth century American motherhood; his caricature

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<sup>49</sup> Antler, *You Never Call*, 1-2, 73-99; Prell, *Fighting to Become Americans*, 142-176. On the Eastern European Jewish mother archetype, see Martha Wolfenstein, "Two Types of Jewish Mothers," in *The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group*, ed. Marshall Sklare (New York: Free Press, 1958), 520-534. In literature, see also Philip Roth, *Portnoy's Complaint* (New York: Random House, 1969); and Dan Greenburg, *How to Be a Jewish Mother: A Very Lovely Training Manual* (Los Angeles: Price, Stern, and Sloan, 1964).

emerged within and subsequently intensified an ongoing cultural assault on Victorian maternalism.<sup>50</sup>

Riv-Ellen Prell and Joyce Antler have argued that, despite the many similarities between Wylie's portrayal and negative depictions of Jewish mothers from the postwar era, the Jewish mother's perceived adverse qualities were the product of causes specific to Jewish family patterns and history. In this view, the Eastern European Jewish mother's unrivaled capacity for inducing guilt and for refusing to let her children mature into adults, traits forged by centuries of exile and unfulfilled longings, marked her as different from the mother described by Philip Wylie.<sup>51</sup>

Prell argues that the archetype of the oppressive Jewish mother emerged in the post-World War II era as an expression of American Jewish anxieties over a host of concerns related to their shifting and yet still unsettled status as middle-class suburbanites not quite welcomed as equals by their non-Jewish, white socioeconomic peers and superiors. Jewish men blamed women, in their roles as mothers and wives, for placing unreasonable material and emotional demands on them, for replacing them as authority figures in the home and the synagogue, and for corrupting Jewish traditions by infantilizing and domesticating them.

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<sup>50</sup> Wylie, 194-217. For recent scholarship connecting Wylie's critique of mothers to Betty Friedan and the feminist movement of the 1960s, see Rebecca Jo Plant, *Mom: The Transformation of Motherhood in Modern America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

<sup>51</sup> Prell, *Fighting to Become Americans*, 156-157; Antler, 73-74. For a contemporary dissection of the differences between Wylie's portrayal of parasitic matriarchy and the Jewish mother, see David Boroff, "The Over-Protective Jewish Mother," *Congress Weekly*, November 4, 1957, 6-8.

According to Prell's interpretation, the stereotypical Jewish mother's "excessive and dangerous nurturance held back her sons [. . .] from moving forward into adulthood," from being welcomed as "normal" middle-class Americans, and from finding meaning and succor from these strains in Judaism. As a result, the modern Jewish mother, whose ancestors had been the guardians and guarantors of Jewish continuity, now seemed to threaten simultaneously the very survival of Judaism and the Jewish family, as well as the prospective gains made by men toward complete acceptance as Americans.<sup>52</sup>

In this atmosphere of competing stereotypes about Jewish motherhood and parents in general, American rabbis rose to the defense of what they saw as the traditional model of Jewish mothering and eyed warily the changes affecting the family structure of American Jewish life in suburbia. In his 1959 study of suburban Jewish life, Rabbi Albert Gordon noted with alarm and a touch of misogyny that women were taking over many household and communal responsibilities historically assumed by men, who were too engrossed in work and leisure to do their part at home and synagogue. As a result of the American Jewish father's absence, Gordon claimed, undisciplined children became more susceptible to episodes of delinquency and rebellion, and inadequate women were left to fill the vacuum of synagogue leadership roles, despite lacking the proper education and training.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Prell, *Fighting to Become Americans*, 142-176; see also Antler, 7-9, 101-116.

<sup>53</sup> Gordon, *Jews in Suburbia*, 57-62. Beyond motherhood, American Jewish women made their mark in the postwar American public sphere as political activists, entertainers, and entrepreneurs. For a fuller discussion, see Hasia

In this discourse, the image of the Jewish mother functioned as a powerful rhetorical vessel into which communal leaders poured their own prejudices, concerns, and aspirations. Into the mid-1960s, on the eve of the first stirrings of the Jewish feminist movement, they overwhelmingly called for a return to what they understood to be traditional gender roles within the family, in order to foster social and emotional stability as well as Jewish continuity.<sup>54</sup> They relied upon both texts and archetypes from Jewish tradition, as well as contemporary insights and observations from developmental psychology, popular culture, and other sources. In the process, they articulated a new and redefined vision of motherhood that was simultaneously Jewish and American, rooted in overlapping themes and traditions from both cultures, but also responsive to contemporary trends and concerns about gender roles, the family, and Jewish continuity.

Mother's Day celebrations provided rabbis with an annual opportunity to speak to their congregants about their visions of the ideal American Jewish mother, in the context of observing national secular holidays aimed at glorifying

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Diner, Rachel Kranson, and Shira Kohn, eds., *A Jewish Feminine Mystique? Jewish Women in Postwar America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010).

<sup>54</sup> On American Jewish feminism, see Paula E. Hyman, "Jewish Feminism Faces the American Women's Movement: Convergence and Divergence," in *American Jewish Women's History: A Reader*, ed. Pamela S. Nadell (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 297-312; and Pamela S. Nadell, "A Bright New Constellation: Feminism and American Judaism," in *The Columbia History of Jews and Judaism in America*, ed. Marc Lee Raphael (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 385-405.

gendered understandings of parenthood.<sup>55</sup> In May of 1953, Rabbi Norman Lamm used the occasion of Mother's Day to speak to his Orthodox congregation in Manhattan on "Thanking Our Father in Heaven for Our Mothers on Earth." Lamm dedicated his sermon that morning to a tribute to the "*Yiddishe Mama*," a nostalgia-laden Yiddish term used to evoke the trope of the nurturing, devoted Jewish mother of the *shtetl* and the Lower East Side in Jewish literature and music.<sup>56</sup> Lamm warned his congregants, however, that this "special type of mother [. . .] is rapidly taking [her] place beside the buffalo and American Indian [. . .] as a vanishing species in American life." He then proceeded to extol the virtues of the ideal Jewish mother while pointing out the shortcomings of many modern mothers in contrast.<sup>57</sup>

The relationship between the Jewish mother and her son lasted a lifetime, Lamm argued, in a vision of the ideal mother-child relationship in which Lamm imagined the child as male. In a boy's early years, the mother is his first teacher, introducing him to the world of Jewish prayer, Bible stories, and home rituals. As he grows older, the second gift of mother to son is a loving home where Jewish traditions are observed and cherished. In adulthood, Jewish children can look to their mothers as a source of strength and a model of how to overcome adversity,

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<sup>55</sup> On American Jews' eagerness to adopt and celebrate Mother's Day, see Joselit, *Wonders of America*, 73-75.

<sup>56</sup> On the "Yiddishe Mama" trope, see Antler, *You Never Write*, 15-45.

<sup>57</sup> Norman Lamm, "Thanking Our Father in Heaven for Our Mothers on Earth," sermon, May 9, 1953. Available online at <http://brussels.mc.yu.edu/gsd/collect/lammserm/index/assoc/HASHdeec.dir/doc.pdf>; accessed September 25, 2013.

both physical and mental. Mothers demonstrate their mettle, according to Lamm, in withstanding the pangs of childbirth, the drudgery of housework, and the strains of raising children. “It has been the eternal task of women to teach their sons this noble feat of endurance,” he claimed, adding that in these matters women outpace their husbands in heroism and dedication.<sup>58</sup>

Lamm’s portrait of the ideal Jewish mother located her firmly in the home and understood her influence and importance in terms of her ability and responsibility to nurture and prepare sons for Jewish adulthood. By contrast, Lamm censured the practices of many contemporary parents, who, in his view, erred grievously as they, coddled their children, shielded them from learning before their formal schooling began, and spoke to them in “baby talk.”

Lamm noted that “[i]t is [during] this pre-school age, that, as modern psychology now teaches us, a child is most impressionable and most receptive to learning.” Nevertheless, despite this apparent congruence between science and Lamm’s understanding of Jewish tradition, confused and helpless parents persisted in these bad habits “[u]nless goaded by a psychology book which they don’t understand” to change their ways. A return to the traditional ways of Jewish parenting, as exemplified by the “Yiddishe mama” of old, Lamm implied,

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<sup>58</sup> While Lamm focused primarily on the mother-son relationship, Solomon Roodman emphasized the mother-daughter relationship and lamented the deterioration of “the pulsating religious environment” in the Jewish home, wherein the daughter learned all she needed to know about the laws and customs of Jewish homemaking by observing her mother at work. See Roodman, “Parenthood Which is Planned,” 147.

would reflect the best practices of childrearing in light of both Jewish tradition and contemporary scientific understanding.<sup>59</sup>

Conservative Rabbi Solomon Goldfarb of Temple Israel in Long Beach, New York, offered his own critique of the modern Jewish mother along similar lines, turning to both the Bible and Philip Wylie for inspiration. In a printed volume of sermons published in 1960, Goldfarb included a sermon entitled “True Mothers.” Whereas once they followed in the footsteps of Moses’ mother Yochebed, who reared a devoted Jewish family in an age of persecution, Goldfarb claimed that Jewish mothers had lately fallen prey to the unfortunate social trend toward “momism,” borrowing Wylie’s term. As a result, they prioritized their children’s comfort and happiness above the need for Jewish education, allowing them time to play and watch television, but deeming religious school to be an unwelcome burden.<sup>60</sup>

Goldfarb charged Jewish mothers with choosing between motherhood and “momism,” a choice he outlined in temporal terms. While momism as a philosophy of life, divorced from all considerations of the past and future, thinks only of the present and the immediate, he argued, motherhood “stands for responsibility to the past and a vision for the future.” Ideal motherhood, in his view, was grounded in an appreciation of Jewish history and traditions and the need to pass those on to the next generation through intensive education.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Solomon D. Goldfarb, “True Mothers,” in *Windows in Heaven* (New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 1960), 148-150. On the evils of “momism,” see Wylie, 194-217.

Goldfarb's call for a return to what he defined as the standards of Jewish motherhood drew urgency from recent dramatic events and catastrophes on the world stage. Alluding to the Soviet Union's launching of Sputnik in 1957, the Holocaust, and the struggle to establish the State of Israel as reasons to "inspire and awaken Jewish mothers to the vital need of more intensive education and Jewish awareness on the part of our sons and daughters," he assigned mothers the task of instilling Jewish children with pride and loyalty, in the tradition of Yochebed.<sup>61</sup> Like Norman Lamm, Goldfarb valorized an older, mythic version of Jewish motherhood in which women took primary responsibility for nurturing and educating their children, and in which women resisted the lure of passing secular fads in parenting styles.<sup>62</sup>

Like his colleagues, Rabbi Richard Hertz of the Reform Temple Beth El in Detroit celebrated the role of the Jewish mother in history as a guardian of tradition and transmitter of moral and religious precepts, while questioning the value of recent changes in the lifestyles of American women. In a sermon published in 1959, Hertz contended that "Jews have long understood that from the family—and especially from the mother—our people have received their deepest convictions about that to which they are committed." The Jewish

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<sup>61</sup> Goldfarb, 150.

<sup>62</sup> Paula Hyman has shown how American Jews adapted to Western middle-class gender norms as part of the process of their acculturation. Thus, women became responsible for the moral and religious training of their children, and for maintaining religious observance in the home. Previously, Jewish cultural norms had assigned these roles primarily to men. See Paula E. Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), 24-27.

mother's tender love for her children, he asserted, was more critical for the future of Jewish survival than the teachings of any rabbi.<sup>63</sup>

Hertz juxtaposed the ideal-historical Jewish mother with the American mother of the mid-twentieth century, who, despite being the beneficiary of recent advances in politics, the workplace, domestic technology, and sexual mores, felt unhappy and lacked a sense of purpose in life. Today's American Jewish mother, he suggested, was the product of both Jewish tradition and the contemporary American scene. She had inherited qualities of ethnic pride, religious faith, generosity, and kindness from Ruth, Esther, and other Jewish mothers in the Bible and other texts, and she was also subject to the same pressures and disappointments "which have compounded the ordeal of the American woman."<sup>64</sup>

Hertz acknowledged that the duties of today's suburban housewife and mother have been drained of the sophistication and skill required of previous generations of homemakers, and that many women do not find such tasks fulfilling. At the same time, however, citing "all the psychological and psychiatric studies coming out in the field of child development," he informed his audience that mothers are the single most influential force in shaping their children's personality, mentality, and faith. Therefore, "[t]he nervous mother should not be

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<sup>63</sup> Richard C. Hertz, "Our Gallant Jewish Mothers," in *Marriage and Family Life: A Jewish View*, ed. Abraham B. Shoulson (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1959), 158-169.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 166-169.

surprised to end up with a nervous child. Insecurity and emotional imbalance in the parents are reflected in the child.”<sup>65</sup>

Hertz thus sought to reinvigorate and reinvest motherhood with meaning and significance by invoking lessons and examples from American history, Jewish tradition, and psychology. More sympathetic to the plight of the unfulfilled Jewish mother than either Lamm or Goldfarb, Hertz nevertheless joined them in the project of reasserting the cultural, psychological, and historical value of motherhood in the face of these concerns.<sup>66</sup>

Fearing that social and cultural changes in America and in Jewish life were threatening the stability of the family and the Jewish community, rabbis charged women with the task of upholding their roles as mothers so that they might raise ideal Jewish children and thus rescue American Jewry from dissolution. The mythological portrait of the perfect American Jewish mother that they conjured up from a romanticized notion of the historical Jewish family—tender, loving, self-sacrificing, and homebound—differed little from portrayals of the ideal middle-class American mother on television. Implicitly if not explicitly,

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>66</sup> A discussion of rabbinical views of fatherhood from the period is beyond the scope of this dissertation, though multiple sources are available on the topic and it is a subject of interest for future work. From a cursory glance at the source material, it seems that, following a rhetorical pattern in postwar American popular culture of re-embracing Victorian gender norms, rabbis generally called on fathers to reestablish themselves as patriarchal authority figures within the family and as role models to their sons. See Robert L. Katz, “The Role of the Father: A Religious View,” in *Marriage and Family Life: A Jewish View*, ed. Abraham B. Shoulson (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1959), 129-137; Moses Mescheloff, “Father’s Place,” in Shoulson, 140-145; and Rabbi Isaac L. Swift, “Father and Son Can Learn From Each Other,” *The Jewish Parent*, March 1958, 4-5.

rabbis fashioned and promoted an ideology of middle-class American Jewish motherhood that conformed to the broader cultural gender expectations of Cold War America.

### **Diagnosing Jewish Juvenile Delinquency**

In 1961, five years after his *When Your Child Asks* first appeared, Conservative Rabbi Simon Glustrom wrote a second book, *Living With Your Teenager*, to guide parents of older Jewish children through the quandaries of raising adolescents. “Adolescent problems have appeared throughout history among all peoples in all parts of the world,” Rabbi Simon Glustrom claimed in the book’s preface. “However, the nature and intensity of the problems have varied, as they do now, because of social, economic, and religious factors.” Glustrom’s book aimed to equip parents with an understanding of both the psychological and developmental qualities of their teenagers and the tenets of Jewish thought, so that they might help their children navigate such “adolescent problems” as dating, sex, encountering prejudice, and questioning religion.<sup>67</sup>

Glustrom’s book was only one example of an extensive literary genre on the postwar American teenager that aimed alternately to describe, denounce, and defend its subject. The stereotyped teenage boy, with his denim jeans, hot-

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<sup>67</sup> Simon Glustrom, *Living with Your Teenager: A Guide for Jewish Parents* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co. 1961), *xiii-xiv*. Glustrom understood adolescence to be an eternal and essential stage of life between childhood and adulthood, rather than a social and cultural construct. Steven Mintz and other historians of childhood, however, understand the idea of adolescence as a social and cultural construct, a response to shifting family life patterns in late nineteenth century America and concerns about emasculation. On G. Stanley Hall’s introduction in 1904 of adolescence as a term and developmental stage, and an analysis of the historical context that shaped the views of Hall and others on adolescence, see Mintz, 196-197; and Hulbert, 77-88.

rod automobile, and rock and roll music, accompanied by the stereotyped sexually promiscuous teenage girl, were an unending source of fascination, confusion, and consternation for parents, politicians, psychologists, and journalists. The explosion of youth culture, with its new styles of fashion and music and its own dialect, captured the public's imagination and triggered a tidal wave of anxiety and backlash from adults who feared its supposedly immoral and subversive power. At the center of the social and cultural struggle with adolescence was a rising fear, particularly in the mid-1950s, that juvenile delinquency was a growing and uncontrollable problem among this particular generation of teenagers.<sup>68</sup>

To some extent, the panic reflected statistical findings. Between 1948 and 1954, juvenile court cases increased nearly 60 percent, with crimes ranging from sex offenses, auto theft, and robbery. However, as several scholars have shown, these numbers and the story they propose to tell were shaped to a considerable degree by new and expanded definitions of criminal behavior, increased efforts to police and punish those behaviors, and a concerted effort on the part of newspaper, radio, and television outlets to exaggerate and sensationalize juvenile delinquency in an effort to sell papers and titillate an audience.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Petigny, 179-197; Mintz, 291-302.

<sup>69</sup> James Gilbert's analysis of the data and the efforts of various organizations and media outlets to collect and disseminate the findings describes some of the flaws inherent in its reporting, as well as the ambiguities inherent in defining what constitutes delinquency in the first place. In short, historians agree, the panic over juvenile delinquency far exceeded its incidence. Nevertheless, the

For its part, the American Jewish community did not confront the issue of juvenile delinquency for the first time in the 1950s. Decades earlier, in 1908, a controversial police report of the high rate of criminality among Jewish immigrants in New York City, including the participation of Jewish youths in street theft and prostitution, spurred a communal outcry that led to the establishment of the New York *Kehillah*, an umbrella organization of Jewish committees aimed at ameliorating the living conditions of the city's Eastern European immigrant population.<sup>70</sup>

Though the exaggerated 1908 report was recanted, thanks to the efforts of Jewish communal leaders, its effect on the American Jewish psyche lingered for generations. Evidence of American Jewish criminality, these leaders feared, would incite antisemitic and anti-immigrant sentiment within the ranks of the well-established American Protestant political elite, at a time when xenophobia and fears of Anglo-Saxon racial suicide ran high.

Prior to World War II, the project of responding to accusations and assertions of Jewish criminality was tantamount to a defense of the Jew as a worthy and valuable American citizen. As Jenna Weissman Joselit has shown,

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perceived crime wave drew the attention of law enforcement agencies, academics, and senators, who frequently blamed the insidious influence of comic books, television, and movies on the teenage imagination. See James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 11-15, chs. 4, 6, and 7; Mintz, 291-293. See also the chapter on youth culture in Petigny, 179-223.

<sup>70</sup> Arthur A. Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community: The Kehillah Experiment, 1908-1922* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970) 25-26, 134-158.

the Jewish social workers, academics, and communal spokesmen who addressed the issue of Jewish criminality argued that such behavior was a product of social, cultural, and economic conditions facing the immigrant, not a set of biological Jewish predispositions. Accordingly, once the dislocations of immigration and substandard living conditions of immigrant neighborhoods were overcome, they contended, Jewish criminality would fade into oblivion, and American Jews would demonstrate their worthiness and value to America as upright and industrious citizens.<sup>71</sup>

Both before and after World War II, studies of American Jewish juvenile delinquency emphasized its rarity, especially compared to that of the non-Jewish teenage population.<sup>72</sup> However, with most American Jews well established in middle-class communities by the 1950s, the thesis that Jewish teenage criminals would cease to exist with economic mobility and acculturation came under considerable strain. A study of Jewish juvenile delinquency in New York City in 1952 concluded that only three percent of all teenage offenders that year were Jewish, whereas Jews constituted 27 percent of all New York City youth under

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<sup>71</sup> Jenna Weissman Joselit, *Our Gang: Jewish Crime and the New York Jewish Community, 1900-1940* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983), 1-12. For the classic study of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century nativism in the United States, see John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New York: Atheneum, 1963).

<sup>72</sup> For one such study of American Jewish juvenile delinquency prior to World War II, which outlined the many ways in which Jews constituted a small and declining percentage of criminal offenders, see Julius B. Maller, "Juvenile Delinquency Among the Jews in New York," *Social Forces* 10.4 (May 1932): 542-549.

the age of fifteen. Furthermore, the study claimed, the number of cases of delinquency declined dramatically among Jewish teenagers from 1930 to 1952.<sup>73</sup>

At the same time, the study demonstrated, the profile of the typical Jewish juvenile delinquent of 1952 was markedly different from that of 1930. No longer the products of working-class immigrant neighborhoods, offenders now tended to come from stable families with steady incomes, and they were better educated. Compared to their counterparts from a previous generation, whose most common crime was peddling without a license, the crimes of the Jewish delinquent of the 1950s were of a more serious nature: automobile theft, burglary, and the vague category of “ungovernable behavior.” Based on these findings, in a sign of considerable Jewish acculturation, one analyst concluded that the behavior of the Jewish delinquent of the 1950s resembled that of the non-Jewish criminal to a much greater degree than was true twenty years earlier.<sup>74</sup>

Articles in the American Jewish press brought the plight of Jewish juvenile delinquency to the fore. One such piece in 1961, “Jewish Teen-age Delinquency Uncommon But Heartache Befalls Families It Hits,” told the story of twenty

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<sup>73</sup> Sophia M. Robison, “A Study of Delinquency Among Jewish Children in New York City,” in *The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group*, ed. Marshall Sklare (New York: Free Press, 1958), 535-536.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 537-541; Miriam R. Ephraim, “Meeting the Needs of Today’s Jewish Teen-Agers,” *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* 36.1 (Fall 1959): 22-23. See also Freed Weininger, *Patterns of Delinquency Among Jewish Youth*, unpublished Master’s thesis, Wayne State University, MI, 1962; and Jerome M. Goldsmith and Irwin R. Berman, “Middle-Class Jewish Delinquency,” *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* 39.2 (Winter 1962): 192-196.

Jewish girls in Los Angeles who had been arrested for such crimes as shoplifting, promiscuity, and use of narcotics. The article described how these girls, many of them from middle-class families that had relocated from an older Jewish neighborhood, had formed ties to a gang of Mexican-American youth who now lived in that community. One of the girls had married one of these male gang members when she was only fifteen years old and pregnant. According to a social worker interviewed for the article, the girls rebelled against their parents due to “the special pressure on Jewish children to achieve” and be “a good Jewish girl.” Whereas their parents nagged them constantly and tried to control their behavior, the other members of the gang accepted them and provided them with a sense of family and belonging. The article highlighted the struggles of middle-class Jewish parents to relate to their rebellious teenage children, and suggested in lurid detail how weak family ties and cultural pressures could lead Jewish children astray. More subtly, the article also hinted at fears related to the destabilizing impact of mobility and suburbanization, implying that the girls’ behavior turned delinquent once their families left “the city’s former Jewish stronghold” behind.<sup>75</sup>

Similarly, a 1963 article in Boston’s *Jewish Advocate*, entitled “Juvenile Delinquency Strikes the Middle-Class Jewish Family,” described to readers a world of teenage parties in the heavily Jewish suburbs of Newton and Brookline,

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<sup>75</sup> Leonard Leader, “Jewish Teen-Age Delinquency Uncommon but Heartache Befalls Families It Hits,” *National Jewish Post and Opinion* (IN), April 21, 1961, p.4. See also Rabbi Simon Glustrom’s discussion of sexual ethics and dating for teenagers in *Living with Your Teenager*, 69-89.

where underage drinking, property damage, and violence occurred with regularity. According to the author of the article, a social worker, many of the Jewish delinquents he had observed were “over-privileged, over-indulged” children, whose parents lavished them with material goods instead of attention and affection. Others came from broken homes, from families scarred by divorce, or from families where parents were physically but not emotionally present.<sup>76</sup>

The phenomenon of the postwar Jewish juvenile delinquent, still more imagined than real, offered rabbis another opportunity to air their critiques of the contemporary American Jewish family and the misguided social and cultural priorities that they believed had led it astray. Returning to familiar themes, rabbis found the roots of juvenile delinquency in parents who withheld affection, parents who failed to discipline their children appropriately, and parents who valued financial success and material possessions above their children’s moral and spiritual development. To varying degrees, rabbis once again integrated sources from Jewish texts, the social sciences, and the rhetoric of the Cold War to make their case. Their arguments further illustrate the ways in which rabbis engaged a postwar middle-class Jewish audience, addressing a contemporary concern by mediating between Jewish and secular thought in order to demonstrate

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<sup>76</sup> Joel Gopen, “Juvenile Delinquency Strikes the Middle-Class Jewish Family,” *Jewish Advocate* (Boston), March 14, 1963, p.A3. The two-part series by Rufus Lears (Israel Goldberg) in 1955, by contrast, emphasized the extent to which Jewish juvenile delinquency was in steep decline, in light of statistics and historical perspective. See Rufus Lears, “Juvenile Delinquency: The Jewish Sector: I. The First Two Decades of the Century,” *Congress Weekly*, October 17, 1955, 5-7; and “Juvenile Delinquency: The Jewish Sector: II. The Last Three Decades,” *Congress Weekly*, October 24, 1955, 5-7.

Judaism's continued relevance for the modern, acculturated middle-class American Jewish family.

In a 1955 sermon titled "This Delinquent Society," Rabbi Julius Mark of Temple Emanu-El, the flagship Reform synagogue in New York City, declared that juvenile delinquency constituted "an extremely serious disease," one which punishments and incarceration would fail to cure. Mark blamed the "delinquent" institutions of American society, including the family, the school, the synagogue, the local community, and the corrupt businessmen and politicians in charge for failing to imbue children with proper values and role models.

Among these, he stressed the crucial importance for youth of having parents who were engaged in their lives and who showed them love and affection: "It cannot be sufficiently emphasized that children are likely to become emotionally disturbed and thus delinquent if they are denied the love, the affection, the understanding and the sense of belongingness resulting from normal home life." Borrowing metaphors and rhetoric from the battlefield, Mark called for a "crash program" to "win the war against juvenile delinquency," a massive investment in schools, teachers, and youth directors.<sup>77</sup>

While Mark blamed absent middle-class parents who withheld their love from their children for the rise in delinquency, Rabbi David Golovensky, of the Conservative Beth El Synagogue in New Rochelle, New York, blamed parents for

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<sup>77</sup> Julius Mark, "This Delinquent Society," in *Reaching for the Moon and Other Addresses* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1959), 135-143.

being too loving and permissive.<sup>78</sup> In “A Plea to ‘Delinquent’ Parents,” published in 1957, Golovensky cited the biblical discussion of the rebellious child in *Deuteronomy 21*, who spurns his parents and his community. According to Golovensky, the fact that the Bible then goes on to discuss the case of the rejected wife, who quarreled with her husband, is no coincidence. “The Torah recognized that a home of dissension, conflict and hostility can incubate a son who is contemptuous of his parents and society,” he insisted. Jewish juvenile delinquents are first and foremost the products of their home environment; here, the Torah is in accord with the views of the psychologist.<sup>79</sup>

Golovensky then turned his attention to contemporary parenting attitudes and the trend away from authoritativeness in parenting. “The core of the [delinquency] problem,” he wrote, “springs from our total rejection of the old system of child training and the adoption of a new concept of the role of parent.” Whereas previous generations of parents instilled in their children reverence and deference to parents and elders, qualities that prepared them for mature and responsible adulthood, today’s parents erred in the direction of egalitarianism and permissiveness. Echoing and extending themes from arguments made by Tzvi Porath and Norman Lamm, Golovensky chastised parents who befriended

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<sup>78</sup> Though he served a Conservative congregation in Westchester County, Golovensky received rabbinic ordination through Yeshiva University, an Orthodox institution. Golovensky also received a doctorate in sociology from New York University in 1954.

<sup>79</sup> David I. Golovensky, “A Plea to ‘Delinquent’ Parents,” in *The Rabbinical Council Manual of Holiday and Sabbath Sermons*, ed. Benjamin Sharfman (New York: Rabbinical Council Press, 1957), 92-93.

their children at the expense of disciplining them properly. The end result of this lax approach, he cautioned, was a delinquent child who lacked respect for authority and believed he or she could act with impunity.<sup>80</sup>

While Golovensky targeted a lack of parental discipline for censure, Roland Gittelsohn found the roots of juvenile delinquency in the “excessive materialism” of contemporary society. “Our lives are increasingly obsessed with the acquisition of things, not of inner satisfactions and self-development,” he argued in a 1956 radio address. In particular, Gittelsohn, leader of the Reform Temple Israel in Boston, decried the work of advertisers who aggressively market new products by convincing Americans to be dissatisfied with what they already have. The tension between the social and psychological pressure to own the newest and the best and the teenager’s limited financial resources was one of the primary causes of criminal behavior among teenagers, Gittelsohn claimed.<sup>81</sup>

Joining Harold Saperstein, Solomon Roodman, and other members of the rabbinate in a broader critique of American mass consumer culture, Gittelsohn explicitly tied its ill effects to the rise in teenage crime. He also singled out the “explosive social and psychological effects of war” as a second proximate cause. Citing arguments and evidence from social worker Bertram Beck of the Federal Children’s Bureau, as well as the diary of a Hiroshima survivor, Gittelsohn

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 95-97.

<sup>81</sup> Roland B. Gittelsohn, “Juvenile Delinquency: Who is to Blame?”, *The Jewish Criterion* (Pittsburgh), September 7, 1956, 145-146. Gittelsohn also claimed that studies of juvenile delinquents show that greater parental discipline and attendance at religious services, contrary to some opinions, did not have any appreciable effect on behavior.

claimed that a continuous atmosphere of warfare, with its attendant climate of brutality and dehumanization, served to destabilize and desensitize an entire society. Today's children, who have lived their entire lives in such an environment, are most vulnerable, he argued.

Like many of his peers, Gittelsohn ultimately indicted adults for failing to properly influence their children: "The real delinquents are the parents of today's youthful offenders, [. . .] all of us who have permitted our society to become perverted by a false sense of value and corrupted by the dreadful stench of war."<sup>82</sup> To blame comic books and movies for teenage crime, he argued, is to shirk parental responsibility.

### **Conclusion**

The juvenile delinquency crisis of the 1950s and the rabbinic response to it reified the central concerns of rabbis and others about the state of the postwar American Jewish family. As with the motif of the Jewish mother, in the character of the Jewish juvenile delinquent, or the non-ideal Jewish child, rabbis found another target at which to aim their critiques of contemporary society and the middle-class. Their evaluations of delinquency and its root causes often circled back to common themes in the sermon literature of the period: the pervasive influence, for good or for bad, that parents have on their children; the nature of the proper parent-child relationship, the child's need for both affection and

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 146. Unlike Golovensky and Mark, Gittelsohn's remarks, prepared for a general audience via radio broadcast, make no mention of Jewish textual sources. Gittelsohn relied instead upon statistics from the social sciences and observations from recent events, rendering his address accessible to the widest possible listenership.

discipline; and the corrosive effects of materialism on parental priorities and a child's evolving sense of values.<sup>83</sup>

Across denominational lines, many rabbis shared a belief that the contemporary American Jewish family, understood to be the most important instrument of ethnic and cultural continuity, was now in a state of crisis. In their new suburban surroundings, according to this popular view, American Jews had abandoned their distinctive religious traditions and successful childrearing practices in the process of wanting to achieve social acceptance and financial success. Having left their urban ethnic enclaves behind, suburban middle-class Jews could no longer count on the Jewish neighborhood, with its stores, restaurants, and street languages, to transmit a sense of Jewish identity. Instead, as Riv-Ellen Prell has shown, Jewishness in suburbia was effectively institutionalized, transformed into an identity primarily performed and expressed by affiliating with and attending a synagogue.<sup>84</sup>

As stewards of these synagogues and their congregants, rabbis used the platform of the sermon to participate in the larger postwar intellectual project of exposing the perceived weaknesses and false benefits of suburban life in America. Regardless of ideological differences, they wielded evidence from Jewish texts and scientific studies and borrowed the imagery and language of

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<sup>83</sup> On the tendency of rabbis to link delinquency to issues of discipline and materialism in the American Jewish family, see also Leonard B. Gewirtz, "Who Builds Character," in *The Rabbinical Council Manual of Holiday Sermons 5712/1951*, ed. Rabbi Israel Miller (New York: Rabbinical Council Press, 1951), 42-50.

<sup>84</sup> Riv-Ellen Prell, "Community and the Discourse of Elegy," 67-90.

war to make their case—to argue that Judaism could ably address the problems facing the modern, middle-class family, and that its teachings were either commensurate with or superior to popular general approaches.

This chapter and the one that preceded it have explored visions of the ideal American Jewish child and family through the medium of parenting advice literature on a broad array of topics. Through the eyes of rabbis, psychologists, academics, and other commentators, the ideal American Jewish family emerges as the product of a negotiation between both Jewish and secular modes of thought, a desire to both fit in and remain distinctive as middle-class American Jews, and a pervasive anxiety about the Jewish future. Sermons on parenting reveal the depth of the tensions that accompanied American Jews' transition into the middle class after World War II – fears about changing gender roles and their impact on parenthood, about the effect of prosperity on the quality of family life, and about proper use of discipline in an anti-authoritarian age. While Jews shared many of the same concerns about their children as non-Jewish middle-class parents, rabbis approached these concerns by engaging with ideas from both Jewish and secular sources of wisdom, and they were motivated by specific concerns about Jewish continuity in addition to general fears about societal and familial problems.

Rabbis held an array of views on childrearing issues. They generally agreed that the modern Jewish family was in danger for the same set of reasons, and they mostly agreed that perspectives from outside the Jewish canon could help shape effective parenting approaches. Their disagreements stemmed

primarily from divergent views about the relative value of psychological and scientific theories of parenting compared to ideas grounded in Jewish texts. Rabbis from the more liberal Reform and Conservative movements, such as Joshua Loth Liebman and Simon Glustrom, were more likely and eager to demonstrate the commensurability of religion and psychology, while more traditionalist authorities such as Norman Lamm and David Golovensky used psychology as a straw man to demonstrate the superiority and timelessness of Jewish thought, and the failings of modern parenting approaches. Rabbis wanted and needed to portray Judaism's value for middle-class acculturated American Jews, who largely joined synagogues for the sake of their children's education, and for opportunities to socialize with other Jews.

Ideas about children and how they should be raised, situated properly in a social and cultural context, are tools for historians seeking access to the mood and mindset of a particular group at a particular moment in history. This examination of American Jewish childrearing advice further complicates earlier historiographical perceptions of the postwar period as a time of uninhibited progress and optimism, contributes to our understanding of the American rabbi as a mediator between competing modes of Jewish and secular thought, and sheds more light on the ways in which psychology and Cold War-era ideas about religion and the family shaped evolving conceptions of Jewish identity in the postwar era.

Following on this examination of American Jewish approaches to parenting in the postwar era, the next two chapters will explore the philosophy

and praxis of American Jewish education from 1945 to 1967. In educational children's magazines, curricula, promotional materials, and classroom activities, American Jewish educators similarly laid out their own composite visions of the ideal child, putting the ideas of Kurt Lewin and other influential Jewish thinkers into practice.

#### Chapter 4: Illustrating Identity: Representing American Jewishness in Children's Periodicals

The students in Beatrice Miller's fifth-grade religious school classes at the Reform Temple Shalom in Newton, Massachusetts embarked on a special project during the 1961-1962 school year. Ms. Miller's students regularly read *World Over* in class, the educational children's magazine published by the Jewish Education Committee of New York, and took turns "reporting" to their classmates on the news headlines and stories printed inside. Once she saw how eagerly her students responded to *World Over's* content and style, Miller decided to let her students create their own version of the periodical.

"The day I presented the idea to the class, an electric shock seemed to permeate the air. Ideas began bombarding the atmosphere. An editor-in-chief was elected, and then an editorial staff was born," Miller recalled in *The Jewish Teacher*, a Reform pedagogical journal. Encouraged to harness their creativity, the students developed their own stories, current events features, puzzles, and comic strips in the style of the original magazine. The final product included a special history of Temple Shalom for its tenth anniversary as well as biographical sketches of synagogue staff. Miller's students rated "Project *World Over*" as their favorite classroom activity at year's end.<sup>1</sup>

In Jewish classrooms across the country during the 1940s and afterward, educators like Beatrice Miller turned to Jewish juvenile periodicals of various ideological persuasions to supplement their teaching and generate student

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<sup>1</sup> Beatrice L. Miller, "Project *World Over*," *The Jewish Teacher*, October 31, 1962, 6-7.

excitement. According to one estimate in 1959, the total circulation for ten of the most popular Jewish children's periodicals was approximately 160,000, reaching approximately thirty-five percent of all students enrolled in Jewish schools.<sup>2</sup>

*World Over*, the most popular and most widely distributed such magazine, was included in the curriculum of religious schools in cities throughout the country, including New York, Houston, Chicago, and St. Paul, Minnesota.<sup>3</sup> Other publications, such as the Orthodox magazine *Olomeinu* and *The Young Judaeen*, a Zionist periodical, counted readers in places as diverse as Brooklyn, New York; Sioux City, Iowa; and Oklahoma City.<sup>4</sup>

Combining fact and fiction, using vivid photographs and compelling cartoons, these magazines introduced students to Jewish history, holidays, and

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<sup>2</sup> Abraham P. Gannes, "Jewish Juvenile Periodicals as Aids in Teaching About Jewish Life," *Jewish Education* 30.2 (Winter 1960): 61. It should be noted that circulation figures only reflect the number of magazines printed, not the number of people who read them. The Jewish Education Committee, publishers of *World Over*, encouraged parents to read the magazine as well.

<sup>3</sup> "New York, Westchester, and Long Island Schools - Subscribers to *World Over*," Box 9, Folder 161, RG 592, Jewish Education Committee Records (New York), YIVO Archives; Congregation Emanu-El Religious School (Houston, TX), "Curriculum and Program, 1959-60," Box 2, Folder 5, MS-680, Tartak Learning Center Collection, American Jewish Archives; Eliezer Krumbein, "Highlights of the Religious School Curriculum - Emanuel Congregation (Chicago, IL)," Box 2, Folder 2, MS-680, Tartak Learning Center Collection, American Jewish Archives; Mount Zion Temple Religious School (St. Paul, MN), "Teacher's Manual" (1957-1958), Box 4, Folder 4, MS-680, Tartak Learning Center Collection, American Jewish Archives.

<sup>4</sup> Letters to the editor, essays, and poems contributed by children to these magazines reveal a wide geographic distribution. See, for example, Jacob Rutner's essay, "What Does Shabbos Mean to Me?," *Olomeinu*, February 21, 1947, 2; the profile of Ellen Reznek in "Doodlers—My Hero," *Young Judaeen*, April 1959, 14; and Harriet Bernat's poem, "My Adventure," *Young Judaeen*, December 1950, 18.

communal life in cities and countries throughout the world. In a manner that fulfilled the vision of psychologist Kurt Lewin that Jewish education must create positive associations for children with Jewish group living at a young age, the publications imitated the accessible and appealing style of popular secular children's magazines of the era, such as *Boys' Life* and *Junior Scholastic*, to translate Jewish learning into a fun and familiar language for children. In various and contrasting ways, Jewish educational periodicals presented young readers with strong messages about ethnic identity, gender roles, and citizenship.<sup>5</sup>

Once or twice a month during the school year, Jewish children across the country opened these magazines and learned from stories, puzzles, games, and comic strips what was expected of them as both Jews and Americans and as either boys or girls. They encountered role models and heroes, both real and fictional, designed to convey messages to them about group belongingness – to demonstrate how an American Jew should properly balance commitments to two nations, two cultures, and two identities. They read about the tragedy of the Holocaust, about the triumphs of the new State of Israel, and about Jewish life at home in America and abroad. They studied American history and current events from a Jewish perspective, with Jewish characters, contributions, and values anchored at the center of the American historical narrative.

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<sup>5</sup> Jeffrey Shandler has considered the relationship between modes of cultural production and identity formation, as well as the challenges scholars face in drawing connections in this regard when American Jewish identity is considered. See his chapter, "What is American Jewish Culture?", in *The Columbia History of Jews and Judaism in America*, ed. Marc Lee Raphael (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 337-365.

Alongside textbooks and other forms of Jewish children's literature, these magazines represent a carefully planned and purposeful attempt by authors, editors, and organizations to influence and instruct the Jewish child according to a vision of the ideal American Jew. As Anne Scott MacLeod has argued, those who write for children "bring to bear their own experience of childhood, their ideas of what childhood is or ought to be, their commitment to the conventions of their own time, and their concerns for their own society's problems and progress."<sup>6</sup> Crafted to inform as well as to entertain, to be both didactic and delightful, children's literature offers us a pathway of insight into the values, priorities, and anxieties of the adults who write for the next generation.

Historians of the American Jewish experience have also examined the link between children's literature and efforts to shape allegiances and identities. Beth Wenger has contended that American Jewish children's literature was "[c]reated by adults to impart lessons about the Jewish past and to teach the values of American Jewish life."<sup>7</sup> Her study of American Jewish juvenile history books and stories from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, part of a larger work on the self-conscious creation of an American Jewish usable past, analyzed how these texts wielded historical narratives and rhetoric about shared American and

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<sup>6</sup> Anne Scott MacLeod, *American Childhood: Essays on Children's Literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 1.

<sup>7</sup> Wenger, *History Lessons*, 13. For more on this theme linking Jewish history and identity, see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1982); and David G. Roskies, *The Jewish Search for a Usable Past* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999).

Jewish values as instruments for inculcating youth with pride, patriotism, and positive associations with Judaism and the Jewish past.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, Jonathan Krasner has traced the evolving constructions of “self” and “other” in American Jewish history and social studies textbooks in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. According to Krasner, these works functioned as agents of socialization, as ways to transmit concepts of group identity to American Jewish children, often by establishing ethnic or ideological boundaries between Jewish “insiders” and various categories of “outsiders,” including Christians, Arabs, and even Eastern European Jews. Framed in terms of an “us versus them” dialectic, these presentations of Jewish self-understanding evolved according to the needs and concerns of succeeding generations.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, Rona Sheramy’s analysis of the first efforts of American Jewish authors and educators to produce literature on the Holocaust for children in the 1940s and 1950s demonstrated that these works emphasized Jewish heroism and bravery while minimizing accounts of suffering and death. In Sheramy’s view, these thematic choices constituted a deliberate attempt to inspire ethnic pride among American Jewish children in a time of rising concerns about Jewish

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<sup>8</sup> Wenger, *History Lessons*, 135-178. On Jewish children’s literature as an identity-building tool, see also Sandra Parker, “Yiddish Children’s Literature in the Yiddish Schools,” in *Jewish Children’s Literature: Proceedings of a Conference on April 2, 1984* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Library, 1985), 41-42.

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan B. Krasner, “Representations of Self and Other in American Jewish History and Social Studies Schoolbooks: An Exploration of the Changing Shape of American Jewish Identity” (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 2002).

continuity. They also signified an effort to situate the Holocaust in a politically and psychologically useful Cold War-era American framework. In the process, she claims, “teachers transformed the destruction of European Jewry into a saga about democracy, freedom, and anti-totalitarianism.”<sup>10</sup> Reflecting the rising importance of Israel and Zionism to the postwar Jewish psyche, portrayals of Jewish freedom fighters in the Warsaw Ghetto in these books also drew upon the image of the “new Jew,” tough and defiant, ready and able to defend himself and the Jewish people from their oppressors.<sup>11</sup>

Wenger, Krasner, and Sheramy have properly situated Jewish educational literature in a historical context, analyzing authorial choices with respect to content and themes in light of a specific ideological motive or as a response to American Jewish communal anxieties and aspirations at a particular moment in time. These historians have primarily devoted their attention to textbooks, and to specific thematic issues, such as the teaching of the Holocaust or American Jewish history. This chapter will analyze juvenile periodicals, an excellent source to discover the aims and agendas of American Jewish educators in the postwar period. There was a remarkable degree of consensus across denominational and ideological lines with respect to the core lessons about American Jewish identity and gender that postwar educators wanted students to learn, and with respect to the use of fun and entertaining magazines to inculcate these lessons.

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<sup>10</sup> Sheramy, “‘Resistance and War’: The Holocaust in American Jewish Education, 1945-1960,” 289.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 289-290. For more on Zionist imagery in American Jewish textbooks, see Jonathan Krasner, “‘New Jews’ in an Old-New Land: Images in American Jewish Textbooks Prior to 1948,” *Journal of Jewish Education* 69.2 (2003): 7-22.

This broad ideological and methodological consensus reflects both the pervasive survival anxiety that set in among Jewish communal leaders in the decades after the Holocaust, as well as the wide acceptance of Lewinian approaches to Jewish education among various sectors of the community.

### **Why Children's Periodicals?**

In some respects, the Jewish children's periodicals produced in the United States after World War II were an amalgam of the kinds of fictional and non-fictional material found in other books for children, and they share many thematic similarities with the textbooks described above as well, as will become clear. Nevertheless, Jewish juvenile periodicals are unique in three respects and therefore are worthy of study as a subject in their own right.<sup>12</sup>

First, while Jewish textbooks and fiction books for children were written and printed in a specific moment in time, Jewish children's periodicals such *World Over* and *Olomeinu* appeared every two weeks during the school year for several decades. As a result, these magazines could be much more responsive

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<sup>12</sup> To date, few comparative scholarly studies of these periodicals have been undertaken. For a brief history and comparative essay about periodicals in the context of American Jewish children's literature, see Naomi M. Patz and Philip E. Miller, "Jewish Religious Children's Literature in America: An Analytical Survey," *Phaedrus* 7.1 (Spring/Summer 1980): 21-23. On the very first such periodical, *Young Israel*, see Sue Levi Elwell, "Educating Jews and Americans: The Influence of the First American Jewish Juvenile Monthly Magazine," *Religious Education* 81.2 (Spring 1986): 240-250. On the Reform movement's *Keeping Posted*, see Emily Alice Katz, "Pen Pals, Pilgrims, and Pioneers: Reform Youth and Israel," *American Jewish History* 95.3 (September 2009): 268-273. On *World Over*, see Krasner, *The Benderly Boys and American Jewish Education*, 361-368. On Yiddish-language children's periodicals, see Naomi Praver Kadar, "Far Di Kinders Vegn: Yiddish Periodicals for American Children, 1914-1950" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2007).

than textbooks to the impact of current events affecting the American Jewish community, such as developments in the Middle East, the difficulties of Holocaust survivors in European DP camps and in their new homes in America and Israel, and the struggle for African American civil rights in the United States. They connected Jewish students with events in the present as well as with tales from the past.<sup>13</sup> In teaching children to read the news from a Jewish perspective, these magazines offered educators an additional, unique way of instilling Jewish identity in their students.

Second, with the exception of *World Over*, which consciously fashioned itself as a pluralistic magazine designed to appeal to a broad Jewish audience, Jewish juvenile periodicals reflected the particular worldview of the religious and political organizations that published them. While *Olomeinu*, published by the Orthodox day school umbrella organization Torah Umesorah, devoted itself to promoting religious observance according to Jewish law, the Reform movement's *Keeping Posted* featured discussions of ethical behavior. Comparing the various Jewish children's magazines side by side illuminates the similarities and differences between the worldviews and educational approaches of different segments of the American Jewish community. A similar content analysis can also be done with textbooks, as Jonathan Krasner and Rona Sheramy have shown; however, a study of periodicals permits us to include publications from organizations that did not publish formal textbooks, such as Torah Umesorah and Young Judaea.

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<sup>13</sup> On the rising importance, purpose, and practice of teaching current events in public and parochial schools, see Gannes, "Jewish Juvenile Periodicals," 60.

Finally, unlike other genres of children's literature, periodicals occasionally offered their readers the chance to contribute essays, poems, and letters on Jewish topics. Whereas it is extremely difficult to gauge how students responded to information presented in textbooks or storybooks, these original works from children provide at least some indication of how they reacted to what they read in the periodicals. At the same time, however, these compositions must be approached with caution, especially since they were often written in response to certain prompts or leading questions from magazine editors. It is difficult to determine the extent to which these young authors may have been motivated to write to please an audience or win a prize, rather than express their own actual feelings about a subject.<sup>14</sup> Regardless, the inclusion of children's voices in Jewish juvenile periodicals adds to their value as sources for analyzing efforts to create the ideal American Jewish child.

It is essential to remember that, while it is difficult to ascertain what lessons readers actually took from their reading, we can learn a great deal about the authors' worldview if we read the prescriptive literature to analyze what information they deemed important, and how they chose to present it. As Walter Ackerman wisely noted, in his study of American Jewish history education texts, "the world as represented in textbooks is one designed by adults with a particular purpose in mind." Deliberately constructed and presented to convey facts and

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<sup>14</sup> For more on the methodological and theoretical problems posed by analyzing children's writing, see Paula S. Fass, "Childhood and Memory," *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 3.2 (Spring 2010): 160-162; and Michael Hoechsmann and Bronwen E. Low, *Reading Youth Writing: "New" Literacies, Cultural Studies, and Education* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008).

cultivate emotional responses, these texts “help us understand what one generation values sufficiently to consider worthy of transmission to that which follows.”<sup>15</sup>

The question of what students remember and internalize from their reading is an important one, but I am not concerned here with the efficacy or “success” of these periodicals in molding the minds of young American Jews. In this chapter, I focus on the choices made by authors and editors and examine what the information and ideals they decided to highlight for young readers reveals about their own beliefs and preoccupations, as reflected by the character of the ideal Jewish child they desired to develop. The common themes that emerge from these periodicals reflect the hopes and anxieties of a community very concerned with combating antisemitism, securing acceptance, and preserving the Jewish future in Cold War-era American society and around the world. While antisemitism and acceptance were not new concerns for American Jews after World War II, the overall educational goal – shaping a well-adjusted American Jewish personality, rather than simply transmitting knowledge or ethical concepts – marked a shift from previous generations of pedagogical efforts.

### **Three Common Threads**

With significant variations in emphasis and tone, three central themes permeated the educational content of American Jewish children’s periodicals

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<sup>15</sup> Walter Ackerman, “Let Us Now Praise Famous Men and Their Fathers in Their Generations: History Books for Jewish Children in America,” *Dor Ledor: Studies in the History of Jewish Education in Israel and the Diaspora* (Tel Aviv, Israel: Ramot Publishing Co., 1984), 5-6.

during the post-World War II era. First, Jewish children's magazines frequently asserted to readers that Jews were integral contributors to American history and contemporary society, and the periodicals consistently promoted the concept of a harmonious, natural compatibility between Jewish and American values. These ideas were not new trends in American Jewish education. On the contrary, as many historians have shown, these principles have shaped American Jewish educational priorities and practices since at least the nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> However, these arguments took on new urgency and dimensions in the postwar period, as the tensions and demands of Cold War politics pushed American Jews to reassert their allegiances.

Secondly, these periodicals sought to instill in American Jewish children an appreciation of *k'lal yisrael*, of their membership in a diverse and vibrant Jewish community spanning time and space. Editors of these magazines devoted numerous articles and, in some cases, entire special issues to help readers develop an affinity for and sense of kinship with Jews all over the world. They created for their readers, to paraphrase Benedict Anderson, an imagined Jewish community that was international, ethnically heterogeneous, and bound

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<sup>16</sup> For a thorough overview of this and other central themes in American Jewish education, see Wenger, *History Lessons*; Krasner, *The Benderly Boys and American Jewish Education*; Klapper, "The History of Jewish Education in America," 189-216; and Jonathan D. Sarna, "American Jewish Education in Historical Perspective," *Journal of Jewish Education* 64.1-2 (1998): 8-21. For an American Jewish textbook that echoed this motif, see Elma Ehrlich Levinger, *Jewish Adventures in America: The Story of 300 Years of Jewish Life in the United States* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1954).

by a shared culture, history, and faith.<sup>17</sup> The crux of the Jewish identity that held all these disparate communities together, as described in the periodicals, was more ethnic than religious, though religion played an important role in those magazines affiliated with a religious denomination. Framing Jewishness in terms of ethnicity allowed magazines like *World Over* to emphasize those aspects of Jewish life that bound Jews around the world together, while eliding sensitive theological differences. This pedagogic approach was shaped by dramatic developments on the global Jewish stage—the tragic loss of six million Jews in the Holocaust, and the establishment of Israel after a protracted diplomatic and military struggle. Increased concern for Jewish welfare worldwide as well as at home in America prompted this “looking outward” theme in Jewish juvenile periodicals.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, American Jewish children’s magazines also reflected and promoted a set of gender norms, drawn from both middle-class American and Jewish value systems, that communicated to readers an impression of the

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<sup>17</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991).

<sup>18</sup> Several American Jewish textbooks also introduced children to noteworthy Jewish communities of the past. See, for example, Deborah Pessin, *The Jewish People*, 3 vols. (New York: United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education), 1951-1953. Mordecai Soloff, *When the Jewish People Was Young* (Cincinnati: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1935); and Mordecai Soloff, *How the Jewish People Lives Today* (Cincinnati: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1940).

distinct behaviors and responsibilities expected of boys and of girls.<sup>19</sup> These periodicals regularly printed both real and fictional stories of brave, heroic Jewish men fighting against tyranny, as well as cartoon portrayals of Jewish boys playing sports while discussing Bible lessons. Simultaneously, depictions of women typically highlighted their nurturing feminine qualities and featured those who had made notable contributions as educators, nurses, or philanthropists. These occupations, deemed acceptable for women by contemporary American standards, amounted to extensions of women's roles as mothers, their primary purpose according to Victorian-era notions of gender.<sup>20</sup>

Descriptions of Jewish men and women engaged in gendered pursuits served two related functions. They challenged lingering antisemitic accusations about Jewish frailty and disloyalty in times of war, while satisfying conceptions of proper gender roles found in both American and Jewish cultural traditions. Role models demonstrating appropriate gender behavior in Jewish juvenile periodicals functioned as an argument for inclusion. They provided evidence that American Jews were normal middle-class men and women, fighting for the same noble causes as other Americans and raising children according to a similar set of values.

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<sup>19</sup> On American Jewish adaptation to Western middle-class gender norms in their process of acculturation, see Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History*; and Klapper, *Jewish Girls Coming of Age in America*, 7, 28-34.

<sup>20</sup> On Victorian gender role ideals in mid-twentieth century American culture, see Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 23-41; Petigny, *The Permissive Society*, 134-144; May, *Homeward Bound*, 1-21.

These discourses on ethnic identity, political identity, and gender identity point to a larger project of magazine authors and editors: their effort to shape the psyche and worldview of American Jewish children who would grow up to be comfortable and secure in their dual identities as Americans and Jews, aware of their responsibilities to their fellow Americans at home and their fellow Jews around the world, and compliant with middle-class American and Jewish gender role expectations. These priorities reflect prevailing anxieties about Jewish survival and antisemitism in the postwar American Jewish community, concerns exacerbated by the aftermath of the Holocaust. The emphasis on personality adjustment and ethnic pride as key goals of American Jewish education, goals shaped in large part by the ideas of Kurt Lewin about the importance of inculcating positive attachments in children to their fellow Jews and to Jewish culture, are what distinguish this era from its predecessor.<sup>21</sup>

### **American Jewish Children's Periodicals - A Brief History**

Trends and innovations pioneered in other magazines, both secular and Jewish, helped shape the content and approach of postwar American Jewish children's periodicals. American Jewish children's magazines first appeared in the late nineteenth century. In the style of the era, the earliest such publications, including *Young Israel* and *The Sabbath Visitor*, offered religious and moral instruction to youth in a pedantic manner, without much sensitivity to the tastes and reading abilities of their audiences. *Helpful Thoughts*, which began publication in 1897, introduced a wider range of content to readers, including

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<sup>21</sup> Krasner, *Benderly Boys*, 416-417.

information about Jewish holidays, history, legends, and important personalities alongside the customary moralizing stories and cautionary tales.<sup>22</sup>

George Alexander Kohut's *The Jewish Home*, which followed *Helpful Thoughts* in 1903, broke significant new ground in the genre. Taking inspiration from the quality children's magazines of the age, Kohut made liberal use of photographic and cartoon depictions of Jewish life in the pages of his magazine. *World Over* and other Jewish magazines produced after 1945 would adopt this formula decades later, while emphasizing Jewish content, such as holidays, history, and current events, in place of *The Jewish Home*'s broader emphasis on universal ethical teachings.<sup>23</sup>

General American children's periodicals of the twentieth century were often closely linked to a specific youth group or interest, such as *Ranger Rick's Nature Magazine* (created 1967), or targeted toward one particular gender or ethnic group, such as *Boy's Life* (1911), *The American Girl* (1917), and *The Brownies' Book* (1919). Other periodicals, such as *Junior Scholastic* (1937), were intended to complement classroom education with articles about current events and social studies topics.<sup>24</sup> Jewish children's periodicals fit into all of these categories. Those produced in the twentieth-century discarded the moralizing tenor of their predecessors in favor of an approach disguising

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<sup>22</sup> Patz and Miller, 21-22; Elwell, 240-250.

<sup>23</sup> Patz and Miller, 22.

<sup>24</sup> *Children's Periodicals of the United States*, ed. R. Gordon Kelly (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984), xxv-xxviii.

education as entertainment. They included dramatic, action-packed stories; bold photography and eye-catching illustrations; and games and puzzles that tested Jewish knowledge in a pleasurable, not-too-challenging way.

*Young Judaea* debuted in 1913, following the establishment of Young Judaea, an American Zionist youth organization, four years earlier. A 1914 advertisement in the Zionist periodical *The Maccabean*, addressed to “Mr. Father,” claimed that *Young Judaea* “satisfies all the requirements necessary to bring up a Jewish boy or girl in the proper Jewish way,” with stories and illustrations about Jewish life in Palestine, discussions of Jewish-themed news and holidays, and a Hebrew-language supplement.<sup>25</sup> Following Israel’s founding in 1948, the magazine continued to focus on daily life and major events in Israel, while documenting the activities of local Young Judaea chapters in cities throughout the United States.

*Kinder Tsaytung* (“Children’s Newspaper”), the Yiddish-language educational magazine of the socialist organization Workmen’s Circle, began publication in 1935. In the 1940s and afterward, in reaction to both anti-Semitic policies and violence in the Soviet Union and anti-Communist pressure in American culture, the magazine increasingly abandoned a secular, socialist tone in favor of a concentration on Jewish heroes, holidays, and folklore. Stories about Jewish life in Israel and America, as well as articles documenting and memorializing the tragedy of the Holocaust, became common features.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> “Attention Mr. Father!”, *The Maccabean*, October 1914, 150.

<sup>26</sup> Kadar, “*Far Di Kinders Vegn*: Yiddish Periodicals for American Children, 1914-1950,” 170-188. Kadar’s dissertation provides an excellent analysis of *Kinder*

*World Over* debuted in March 1940 as an eight-page, black-and-white publication from the New York-based Jewish Education Committee. By 1944, the magazine grew into a sixteen-page color periodical. The number of subscriptions peaked at around 106,000 in the mid-1950s and remained in six figures through the 1960s. More than 120 Jewish schools in Manhattan and Brooklyn alone, of all denominations and affiliations, ordered *World Over* for their students, according to a 1960 list of subscribers.<sup>27</sup>

The editors of *World Over* intended theirs to be a magazine for all Jewish children; as a result, the magazine aimed to strike a tone of consensus and diversity, downplaying religious ideology while stressing Jewish unity, Zionism, and the consonance of American and Jewish values. As Sigmund Laufer, the associate art director of the magazine, later recalled, the name the editors chose for the magazine symbolized their conception of American Jewish identity and shaped their approach toward the contents of the publication. The Hebrew rendering of the title, *Olam Umlo'o*, translates literally as “the world and its contents, the world in its fullness.” According to Laufer, he and the other editors

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*Tsaytung* and other Yiddish children’s periodicals. On Yiddish schools in America and their ideological orientations, see also Wenger, *History Lessons*, 140-142.

<sup>27</sup> Azriel Eisenberg, introduction to *The World Over Story Book: An Illustrated Anthology for Jewish Youth*, ed. Norton Belth (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1952), xv-xvi; “New York, Westchester, and Long Island Schools - Subscribers to *World Over*,” 1-4, Box 9, Folder 161, RG 592, Jewish Education Committee Records (New York), YIVO Archives; Brooke Baldwin, “*World Over* and Jewish Cultural Literacy,” *Judaism* 46.2 (Spring 1997): 229-233.

“were trying to encompass all Judaism,” to produce a magazine that would unite as well as educate Jews of different religious and cultural backgrounds.<sup>28</sup>

In the late 1940s and 1950s, a number of Jewish children’s magazines backed by religious denominations appeared, starting with the Orthodox publication *Olomeinu* (“Our World”), followed by the Reform movement’s *Keeping Posted*, and the Conservative magazine, *Our Age* (less commonly referred to by its Hebrew equivalent, *Doreinu*).<sup>29</sup> Designed as a traditional alternative to *World Over* and other juvenile magazines, *Olomeinu* featured stories, puzzles, illustrations, and informational articles on Judaism and Jewish history.<sup>30</sup> Unlike *World Over* and *Olomeinu*, which primarily targeted a readership of middle-school-age students, *Keeping Posted* and *Our Age* consciously targeted a slightly older, adolescent audience, eschewing fiction in exchange for articles about Jewish communities as well as American society at large, in addition to book reviews and interviews with rabbis and other important Jewish figures. At the same time, both of these publications worked to instill in its readers the

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<sup>28</sup> Baldwin, “*World Over* and Jewish Cultural Literacy,” 231-233; Krasner, *The Benderly Boys and American Jewish Education*, 361-368.

<sup>29</sup> Patz and Miller, 23, 28. The American Council for Judaism, an anti-Zionist Reform group, also produced a children’s magazine called *Growing Up*, and Chabad, a Lubavitch Hasidic organization, published *Talks and Tales* beginning in 1941.

<sup>30</sup> In 1981, looking back on the first thirty-five years of the magazine’s history, Rabbi Yaakov Fruchter, *Olomeinu*’s managing editor, praised the publication for its unwavering commitment to “Torah-true” values and its ability to shield children from “the torrent of influences alien to Torah that flowed from nearly all juvenile publications.” See Yaakov Fruchter, ed., *The Best of Olomeinu: Stories for All Year ‘Round* (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1981), vi-vii.

particular values and viewpoints of Reform and Conservative Judaism, respectively.<sup>31</sup>

### **Shared Values, Shared History - Teaching American Jewishness**

Despite their varying political and religious orientations, all of these periodicals devoted space to teaching children about American Jewish history, the accomplishments of famous Jewish figures, and their contributions to both the Jewish community and the American nation as a whole. Implicitly or explicitly, such articles often conveyed to young readers the concept of a seamless, mutually constitutive relationship between Jewish and American values.

While American Jews enjoyed an era of economic and social mobility following World War II, the need to distance themselves publicly from communism and political radicalism during the Cold War grew more urgent with the espionage trial and execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in the early 1950s. Deborah Dash Moore has argued that the tensions and insecurities stirred by the Rosenberg trial led the organized community to formally condemn left-wing politics and to assert “a new American Jewish consensus that

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<sup>31</sup> See, for example, the November 17, 1963 issue of *Our Age*, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Conservative organization United Synagogue of America; and “Debate in Reform Judaism,” *Keeping Posted*, Late March, 1961, 1. On educators’ recommendations for using these publications in Jewish educational settings, see Rebecca Lister and Louis Lister, “*Keeping Posted: Curriculum Enrichment for Teen-Agers*,” *The Jewish Teacher* 33.1 (October, 1964): 17-22; and Shlomo D. Levine, “Using ‘Our Age’ Magazine in the Youth Program,” *The Synagogue School* 19.4 (June 1961): 16-18.

embedded political values in a civic religious creed.”<sup>32</sup> In this spirit, organizers of the 1954 American Jewish tercentenary celebration emphatically insisted that their programs would demonstrate the unwavering commitment of American Jews to democratic ideals.<sup>33</sup> Jewish juvenile periodicals followed a larger trend in eschewing radical politics as they presented American Jewish history and identity to children of the Cold War.

From 1945 to 1951 alone, *World Over* printed almost forty articles and stories devoted to American Jewish historical events and famous figures. These included tributes to Abe Cahan, the legendary editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*; Jacob Schiff, a Jewish communal leader and noted philanthropist; and Emma Lazarus, the poet whose tribute to America as a land of freedom and opportunity adorned the Statue of Liberty.<sup>34</sup> These accounts and others, such as a story in *Young Judaeon* about the nineteenth-century merchant and philanthropist Judah Touro, and a *Keeping Posted* profile of the nineteenth-century Reform rabbi and abolitionist David Einhorn, celebrated the achievements of accomplished

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<sup>32</sup> Moore, “Reconsidering the Rosenbergs,” 26. For more on the American Jewish community’s reaction to the Rosenberg case, see Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 276-280.

<sup>33</sup> Wenger, *History Lessons*, 218-219.

<sup>34</sup> Edward A. Nudelman, “*World Over*” as a Curriculum Resource: *An Index to World Over Magazines from Vol. 1, 1940 to Vol. XII, 1951* (New York: Jewish Education Committee of New York, 1952), 1-2. The magazine downplayed Cahan’s socialist politics, but celebrated him as a champion of the poor. Cahan also urged his immigrant readers to embrace American culture and their new country.

American Jewish role models from the past.<sup>35</sup> The magazines honored these Jewish men and women because they fought for liberal American values presented as Jewish values, such as freedom of expression and freedom from tyranny, and stood up for the rights of the oppressed worker, slave, and immigrant. They personified an ideal vision of the American Jew, whose commitment to Jewish ethical values compelled him or her to act to build a more just American society for all people.

Unlike the Rosenbergs, whose plight was ignored in these magazines because of its controversial nature and the threat they posed to the claim of Jewish loyalty to America, these American Jews made positive, wholesome contributions to American society, all while upholding both Jewish and American values. Jewish children could take comfort in and be inspired by these heroes. In an era when the loyalty and patriotism of American Jews was still an open question, articles such as these served as classroom propaganda in the wider communal effort to quell Cold War tensions and suspicions about Jews.

Jewish children's periodicals also regularly honored Americans such as George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, extolling them for their exceptional virtues and their friendly relations with the American Jewish community.<sup>36</sup> *Kinder*

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<sup>35</sup> Leon Spitz, "Patriarch and Prophet," *Young Judaeon*, May 1946, 7; "David Einhorn," *Keeping Posted*, April 1960, 13.

<sup>36</sup> Often these tributes were printed in recognition of Brotherhood Week, a project of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, which was observed in February in connection with Washington's and Lincoln's birthdays. See, for example, "The Month of February is the Month of Brotherhood," *Keeping Posted*, February 3, 1957.

*Tsaytung* put Washington's portrait on the cover of its February 1946 issue, which also featured stories about "George Washington and the Jews of New York" and "Jews in Washington's and Lincoln's Times." The first story recalled in dramatic fashion how Rabbi Gershom Mendes Seixas implored the Jews of New York City "as proponents of freedom, as children of the Hasmoneans" who fought for religious liberty in Judea in the second century BCE, to stand for justice and independence by abandoning the city in advance of the invading British army. In the course of his speech, Seixas proudly detailed the contributions of countless Jews to the American cause, including the army officer Benjamin Nones and the financier Haym Solomon. The story closed by noting that Seixas was invited to participate in Washington's inauguration ceremony as both a spiritual leader and a personal friend of the president.<sup>37</sup>

*Olomeinu* readers encountered a similar story about Seixas and Washington in 1948, albeit framed in a more explicitly religious context suitable for an Orthodox readership. In this version of the tale, Seixas addressed the congregation on the holiday of Shavuot, which celebrates the giving of the Torah to the Jews at Mount Sinai. In his speech, Seixas compared the biblical Exodus story to the current struggle of the American revolutionaries. He reminded his congregants that the words comprising the call for universal freedom engraved

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<sup>37</sup> L. Silver, "George Washington and the Jews of New York," *Kinder Tsaytung*, February 1946, 3-4; "Jews in Washington's and Lincoln's Times," *ibid.*, 4-5. For more on the veneration and mythologization of Haym Solomon in American Jewish history, see Wenger, *History Lessons*, 179-209.

on the Liberty Bell, “Proclaim liberty throughout the land,” are “the immortal words of our Torah.”<sup>38</sup>

Introducing American Jewish children to their famous forebears aimed to teach them that Jews have always been loyal patriots and important participants in American history. With illustrations of the Bible and the Constitution side by side, stories such as these also suggested that the same fundamental principles—freedom, equality, and democracy—were central to both Judaism and the American ethos.

The editors of *Keeping Posted* and *Our Age*, periodicals aimed at teenage audiences, chose to focus more on current events than history, yet the same themes frequently resonated in their pages. In an article entitled, “The Jewish Vote—What It Is and What It Isn’t,” which appeared in *Our Age* before the 1960 election, the author asked readers to consider their views on a number of important political issues, including civil rights, the United Nations, and the situation in the Middle East. After explaining that most Jews vote for the Democratic Party on the basis of their liberal political leanings, the article provided a justification as to why the reader would likely follow suit: “[A]s a Jew, you’ve been raised in certain traditions, with specific values. You’ve learned to back civil liberties for all because your ancestors discovered that in order for freedom to survive, it had to [. . .] exist for all. [. . .] You lean toward the ‘liberal’ side of social security because charity and the care of the elderly are part of your

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<sup>38</sup> T. Levitan, “An Early American Shavuot,” *Olomeinu*, May-June 1948, 4-5. See also “Touro Synagogue,” *Olomeinu*, February 1949, 6-7.

tradition.”<sup>39</sup> This article about American Jewish political behavior translated principles drawn from Jewish religious tradition and historical experience into the vernacular of hot-button American political issues. While acknowledging that not all Jews vote the same way, the story nevertheless suggested a clear link between Jewish values and liberal American principles.

Another *Our Age* story, “Four Freedom Riders,” featured interviews with rabbis who took part in civil rights demonstrations in the South during the summer of 1961. Explaining the reasons for his participation, one rabbi cited the biblical injunction to the Israelites to remember that they were once slaves in Egypt, while another compared the bombing of African American churches in the South to the destruction of synagogues in Germany during the Hitler era.<sup>40</sup> Here again, readers of *Our Age* were presented with the argument that Jews shared common values and experiences with other Americans—in this instance, with another oppressed minority—and that Jewish beliefs mandated a certain kind of political action on the American scene.

In *Keeping Posted*, the Reform magazine, readers learned about Kivie Kaplan, a Boston-based leather manufacturer and member of a Reform Judaism-affiliated Social Action Commission, who “cannot feel comfortable in the face of injustice or inequality.” Kaplan teamed up with former baseball star Jackie Robinson to raise money for the National Association for the Advancement of

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<sup>39</sup> “The Jewish Vote: What It Is—And What It Isn’t,” *Our Age*, October 23, 1960, 7.

<sup>40</sup> “Four Freedom Riders,” *Our Age*, November 25, 1962, 4-5.

Colored People.<sup>41</sup> Other articles introduced American Jewish children to Rabbi Edward L. Israel, whose unexpected death in 1941 ended a career dedicated to social justice on behalf of American workers; and Herbert Lehman, who stood up to McCarthyism as a senator after directing relief efforts for displaced persons after World War II. Lehman's "dedication to justice," the article explained, "comes to him through the unbroken chain of the Jewish heritage. [. . .] The basic rights of each person, great or small, rich or poor, may not be trampled. This is what our Bible and our Prophets teach; this is what our American Bill of Rights guarantees."<sup>42</sup>

Jewish juvenile periodicals thus combined a commitment to what Jonathan Krasner has called "ethnic boosterism," or the cultivation of Jewish pride, with a commitment to promoting liberal American causes.<sup>43</sup> Jewish juvenile periodicals presented these American Jewish adults, whose Jewish values echoed fundamental American principles and inspired a commitment to helping their fellow Americans, as role models for young American Jews to emulate. These core principles of American Jewish education, that Jews and Americans shared the same ideals and that Jews could and should contribute to the betterment of American society as Jews, was perhaps best illustrated in a

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<sup>41</sup> "Jackie Robinson is Busier Than Ever," *Keeping Posted*, May 12, 1957, 2. On the same theme of American Jews fighting for African American rights, but from a historical perspective, see L. Silver, "Jews in the Fight for the Emancipation of the Slaves," *Kinder Tsaytung*, February 1947, 3.

<sup>42</sup> "Giants of Justice: Edward L. Israel," *Keeping Posted*, Early October, 1960, 7; "Giants of Justice: Herbert H. Lehman," *Keeping Posted*, December 1960, 6.

<sup>43</sup> Krasner, *Benderly Boys and American Jewish Education*, 367-368.

May 1962 *World Over* profile of “The Jewish School in America Today.” As part of the article, a two-page illustration featured Jewish children in action: studying current events, the Bible, Jewish and American history, and Hebrew; donating to Jewish charities; engaging in Jewish reading and prayer; and putting their Jewish education into practice at home.

By engaging in those activities, *World Over* assured readers, “you will be a better American and a better Jew!” The last illustration of the panel featured a boy and girl superimposed in front of the Ten Commandments and the Liberty Bell -- creating a perfect image of the congruity between American values and Jewish beliefs, one of the magazine’s central themes during this period.<sup>44</sup>

*Olomeinu*, by contrast, narrowed its focus and became more traditionalist in its philosophy and content in the 1950s and beyond. Whereas its competitors continued to focus on current events in American society and Jews famous for their contributions to American life, *Olomeinu* all but ignored these themes. The magazine emphasized teaching Jewish law and practice, recounting stories from important traditional Jewish communities of the past, and praising role models for their commitment to Orthodoxy as opposed to their accomplishments in American society. This inward turn signals an important shift in the worldview of postwar Orthodoxy, away from accommodation to modernity and towards a rejection of secular influences, in a relatively short period of time.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ben Einhorn (illustrator), “When You...,” *World Over*, May 11, 1962, 11-12.

<sup>45</sup> On the postwar rightward shift in American Orthodoxy, see Jeffrey S. Gurock, *Orthodox Jews in America* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009),

With the important exception of *Olomeinu*, then, postwar Jewish juvenile periodicals fused the histories and destinies of Americans and Jews and established the perception of an ideological bond between Judaism and an American civic creed. They impressed upon their readers the assertion that democracy, equality, and freedom were core values in both cultures. These themes appeared again and again in the pages of these periodicals in an effort to inculcate young American Jews with a sense of pride, responsibility, and membership in two great civilizations. Composed under the shadow of the Rosenbergs and in the age of McCarthy, this message was perhaps as much about Jewish adults trying to reassure themselves that Jews were good Americans as it was about imparting a civics lesson to Jewish children.

### ***K'lal Yisrael* - Imagining a Global Jewish Community**

While most of the Jewish periodicals under consideration were concerned with cultivating a Jewish identity in their readers that grounded Jewishness in American history and values, they also promoted an understanding of Jewish peoplehood that extended beyond the borders of the United States. Columns and special issues devoted to current events affecting contemporary Jewish communities in Latin America, Africa, and Israel, as well as articles describing the way of life in Jewish communities of the past, presented children with

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199-225; Sarna, *American Judaism*, 293-306; and Joselit, *New York's Jewish Jews*, 147-150.

snapshots of Jewish life all over the world and gave them an opportunity to see themselves as part of a diverse, global Jewish people.<sup>46</sup>

Scholars have analyzed the link between periodicals, the reading public, and the cultivation of identity in general. Benedict Anderson's work considered the ways in which a shared print culture can create bonds of identification between people scattered across large distances, prompting them to see themselves as part of a unified culture, polity, or nation.<sup>47</sup> This insight is helpful for contemplating how Jewish juvenile periodicals attempted to create an imagined world Jewish community for their readers. Without leaving their classrooms, American Jewish children could learn about the daily lives of their coreligionists in countries by reading these periodicals, just as they could learn about each other by reading the letters and essays written by fellow students in different cities across the United States.

These articles suggested to readers that, no matter where they lived and despite regional differences, Jews around the world shared a common religion, culture, language, values, and history. Even as they promoted Zionism by focusing extensive attention on the development of Jewish life in Israel, the magazines also celebrated Jewish ethnic diversity in the Diaspora as one of the

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<sup>46</sup> Educational consultants offered tips to Jewish teachers on how to use periodicals to teach their students about current events, in a manner that would inculcate "the most desirable Jewish values and experiences." See Jacob S. Golub, "Teaching Current Events with the 'World Over' Magazine," *The Synagogue School* 4.6 (April 1946), 83-86. On *Keeping Posted*, see Rebecca Lister and Louis Lister, "Keeping Posted: Curriculum Enrichment for Teen-Agers," *The Jewish Teacher* 33.1 (October, 1964): 17-22.

<sup>47</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 44-45.

positive centerpieces of contemporary Jewish life. The prevalence of this theme in all Jewish juvenile periodicals during the postwar years is understandable in the context of historical developments. In a period of transition and uncertainty following World War II, when American Jews assumed the mantle of responsibility for Jewish physical and cultural survival in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the birth of Israel, the need to train the next generation of American Jews to identify with their fellow Jews all over the world was urgent.<sup>48</sup> In teaching readers about Jewish communities around the globe, children's periodicals promoted the idea of a Jewish identity that was culturally rich and ethnically diverse.

*Keeping Posted* readers took a trip "down under" in 1961 to meet the Jews of Australia, thanks to an essay written by Rabbi John S. Levi of Temple Beth Israel in Melbourne. Levi informed his audience that Australia and America had much in common. They were nearly alike in size (before Alaska became a state, at least), and both had been used by England as penal colonies. He introduced them to Sir John Monash, a decorated army officer during World War I and the namesake of Melbourne's newest university. He described Jewish religious life in Australia, highlighting the similarities: "You'd feel at home in one of our Liberal temples. [. . .] Our services are very much like yours. Even the tunes we sing are

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<sup>48</sup> On the theme of American Jewish leadership and involvement with Jewish communities overseas after World War II, see Shapiro, *A Time for Healing*, 1-3, 60-65.

often the same.”<sup>49</sup> Besides the “Foreign Correspondents” series, of which Levi’s piece was one, *Keeping Posted* also published a “Keeping Posted Around the World” page, a staple feature of the magazine which updated American Jewish youth about events and policies affecting Jewish communities in such places as Johannesburg, Vienna, and Cairo as well as in America and Israel.<sup>50</sup>

Echoing a similar theme, the January 18th, 1963 issue of *World Over* introduced readers to “Jewish Life in Latin America,” a “continent of strange contrasts” whose 800,000 Jews had succeeded in building vibrant communities and contributing to the financial and cultural prosperity of their adopted homelands. The Jews of Latin America, according to the introductory article, overcame persecution at the hands of the Inquisition and continued antisemitism, displaying “the undefeatable spiritual strength that has been the hallmark of the Jewish people throughout history.”<sup>51</sup> On the following pages, readers learned that South American Jews played a significant role in the discovery and development of the New World, that communities in such places as Curacao and Surinam dated back more than 300 years, and that Buenos Aires was home to a flourishing Jewish cultural center. Another *World Over* issue in the same spirit,

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<sup>49</sup> John S. Levi, “The Jews ‘Down Under,’” *Keeping Posted*, May 1961, 6. Levi wrote a separate article about the Jews of New Zealand for an April 1961 issue.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, “*Keeping Posted Around the World*” in *Keeping Posted*, Late November, 1960, 3; and Late April, 1961, 3.

<sup>51</sup> Morris Epstein, “The Jews of Latin America,” *World Over*, January 18, 1963, 3. See entire issue for more articles on the subject. For *Our Age*’s coverage of the same topic, see “Kol Yisrael Haverim - All Jews Are Brothers: Argentina,” *Our Age*, February 5, 1961, 4-5.

“The Jews of Africa,” highlighted the history, experiences, and challenges faced by Jews living in Ethiopia, Libya, Morocco and other locations on the “dark continent.”<sup>52</sup>

While these articles identified some aspects of daily life that Jewish students would recognize, such as family, school, and synagogue, they also brought to light the stark differences, particularly with respect to the problem of antisemitism on other continents. Beyond merely pointing out similarities and differences in lifestyle, however, these periodicals transmitted to young American Jews the idea that all members of the Jewish people shared a set of intangible qualities—personality traits such as perseverance, bravery, and faith—that allowed them to overcome obstacles and survive as a people. In reading these magazines, American Jewish children could learn to identify with their fellow Jews all over the world, to see themselves as part of a global Jewish community, and to accept responsibility as American Jews to ensure the welfare of their less fortunate coreligionists.

Even as they devoted attention to other contemporary Jewish communities outside the United States, American Jewish children’s magazines also attributed significant space to educating readers about important Jewish communities of the past, particularly those Eastern European communities recently destroyed by the Nazis’ reign of terror. Beginning in the years immediately following the war and with increasing frequency in the 1960s, these

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<sup>52</sup> “The Jews of Africa: A Special Issue,” *World Over*, December 22, 1961. See also “Kol Yisrael Haverim - All Jews Are Brothers: North Africa,” *Our Age*, December 4, 1960, 4-5.

periodicals recreated the lost world of the shtetl for their audiences. Articles and photographs describing the way of life of Eastern European Jews before the war functioned as a method of conveying the depth of loss and destruction brought on by the Holocaust to American Jewish students, without having to grapple with the graphic horrors of concentration camps and mass execution sites.<sup>53</sup>

The Orthodox periodical *Olomeinu* featured a series in 1947 on “Cities That Were,” taking their readers on a tour of Lublin, Warsaw, Vilna, and other Eastern European Jewish communities in the years before Hitler’s rise to power. Beside photographs of Jews living in abject poverty but enriched by their devotion to Torah study, as the caption claimed, the article about Jewish Vilna celebrated Polish Jewry for its great synagogues and academies of Jewish learning. With the coming of the war, however,

all that is gone. The greater part of Polish Jewry has been ruthlessly murdered by the Nazis. The catastrophe that befell them is the most terrible in all of Jewish history. Never again will there be a beautiful Jewish life in the cities and towns of Poland. Let us

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<sup>53</sup> Rona Sheramy has argued that early American Jewish efforts in Holocaust education minimized descriptions of victimization while stressing acts of heroism and resistance. Hasia Diner, on the other hand, contends that this interpretation “does not stand up fully to the broad sweep of the evidence,” as many textbooks and periodicals did indeed describe what took place in the ghettos and concentration camps. While Sheramy’s assertion accurately describes the manner in which the Holocaust was generally portrayed in *World Over* and other American Jewish educational materials during the era, the graphic discussions in *Kinder Tsaytung* of suffering and death in the concentration camps testify to Diner’s point. Some of its material was written by author and labor activist Jacob Pat, who toured the DP camps in 1947 and interviewed survivors. See Sheramy, “‘Resistance and War,’ 287-313; and Diner, *We Remember With Reverence and Love*, 131-138, 419. On Jacob Pat and a review of his book, *Ashes and Fire*, see Hal Lehrman, “The Quick and the Dead – Ashes and Fire, by Jacob Pat,” *Commentary*, July 1, 1948.

try to capture some of the glory and richness of their lives from the pictures of Polish Jewry before the war.<sup>54</sup>

The articles in this series combined mourning for the victims of the Holocaust with reverence for the piety and purity of an idealized traditional way of life. Besides serving as a method of recalling the tragic fate of Eastern European Jewry, these photographs and stories of young Polish Jews absorbed in religious study carried the additional, if implicit, message that young American Orthodox Jews must now carry the torch of Torah study and observance forward for future generations.

After the war, *Kinder Tsaytung* publicized the plight of child survivors while memorializing the victims of the Holocaust as well. Unlike *Olomeinu* and to a greater degree than *World Over*, the Workmen's Circle publication captured the horrors of deportation and death in detail, aided by the graphic writings of Jacob Pat, who went to Germany to interview survivors. A story in the February 1947 issue, part of a series entitled, "Jewish Children Out of the Ovens," told of the plight of Daniel, a Polish Jewish boy who escaped from a Nazi train carrying children to Auschwitz to their deaths.<sup>55</sup> In March of 1950, the magazine

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<sup>54</sup> "Cities That Were: Vilna," *Olomeinu*, September-October 1947, 6-7. See also "Cities That Were: Lublin," *Olomeinu*, January-February 1948, 6-7; "Cities That Were: Cracow," *Olomeinu*, November 1947, 6-7; and "Cities That Were: Warsaw," *Olomeinu*, November 1948, 6-7.

<sup>55</sup> Jacob Pat, "Jewish Children Out of the Ovens: Daniel Returned," *Kinder Tsaytung*, February 1947, 4-5.

chronicled a visit by Leon Blum, the Jewish French Socialist leader, to a Paris sanatorium that housed orphaned children who “lost everything” during the war.<sup>56</sup>

The April 1953 edition of “Letter to a Child,” a regular feature in the magazine penned by a fictional “Uncle Nochum,” marked the tenth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising with stark words and photographs. Addressing the reader directly, the author introduced his subject: “I am sure that your teacher has told you about the great misfortune and destruction [khurbn] that Hitler brought upon the Jewish people, how he murdered approximately six million Jews in the gas chambers—men, women, and children.”<sup>57</sup> The article recalled the heroic struggle of those Jews inside the ghetto to fight back against their Nazi oppressors and exhorted those reading it never to forget their sacrifice. In one of the photographs accompanying the article, readers glimpsed a bustling city street in prewar Warsaw full of shops and people; immediately below it was a second photograph of the same street turned vacant and desolate after the Nazis burned the ghetto to the ground. A third illustration depicted the ghetto itself, engulfed in flames.<sup>58</sup>

These Holocaust anecdotes created a Jewish geography of suffering, resistance, and redemption for American Jewish children to absorb. In teaching students about Jewish communities annihilated by the Nazis, the authors and

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<sup>56</sup> “Leon Blum Visits the Wladek Sanatorium,” *Kinder Tsaytung*, March 1950, 3.

<sup>57</sup> “A Letter to a Child,” *Kinder Tsaytung*, April 1953, 4.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. See also “Seven Years After the Jewish Rebellion in the Warsaw Ghetto,” *Kinder Tsaytung*, April 1950, 7; and the poems “Reminder” and “The Nazis” in *Kinder Tsaytung*, April-May 1965, 4.

editors of these juvenile periodicals mapped Jewish identity for their readers beyond the borders of the United States. They used the task of teaching students about the Holocaust as an opportunity not only to encourage children to mourn and honor the victims, but also to reinforce the importance of solidarity and responsibility for one another as concepts central to a contemporary Jewish consciousness.<sup>59</sup>

*Young Judaeen*, a Zionist publication, linked the despair of the Holocaust with the hopeful possibility of new life in Israel. An illustrated poem entitled, "There Are Children," published in 1959, described how Jews faced discrimination and persecution from rulers in countries all over the world: "[O]ne of those rulers was more cruel than any other man that ever lived/his name was Hitler/he wanted to kill the Jews/all of them," the poem explained. In the following verses, readers learned how some of the children were rescued and taken to "Eretz Israel," where they were cared for and where they found both work and personal fulfillment. To this day, the poem concluded, Israel serves as a refuge for oppressed Jewish children from all over the world.<sup>60</sup>

Of all other Jewish communities outside America, none figured so prominently in the pages of Jewish children's periodicals as the Jewish state, and

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<sup>59</sup> For examples of Holocaust coverage in other Jewish children's periodicals, see the April 21, 1963 issue of *Our Age*, which was entirely devoted to discussion of the Holocaust in connection with Holocaust Remembrance Day; and the April 21, 1961 and May 5, 1961 issues of *World Over*, which included references to the Holocaust in the context of a special issue about Eastern European Jewish life, and coverage of the Eichmann trial, respectively.

<sup>60</sup> Ahron, "There Are Children..." *Young Judaeen*, March 1959, 11-13.

not just in magazines affiliated with Zionist organizations.<sup>61</sup> Prior to the establishment of Israel in 1948, *World Over* regularly included articles about Jewish life in Palestine and the struggles of Jewish refugees to survive and succeed there. Before David Ben-Gurion became the first prime minister of Israel after the state's founding, the magazine published a profile of him in 1946 as the chairman of the Jewish Agency of Palestine, who "speaks for the thousands of displaced Jews in Europe who are knocking upon the gates of Palestine, anxious to enter the one country which will welcome and cherish them."<sup>62</sup>

Both *World Over* and *Olomeinu* marked the founding of the State of Israel as a dramatic and miraculous development. Beginning in the fall of 1947, *Olomeinu* followed the developments in the United Nations and the Middle East that culminated in the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine in 1948. In its regular "News and Views" section, the magazine ran a column in the fall of 1947 entitled, "Will There Be a Jewish State?" The article included details and a map explaining the United Nations proposal for the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. In the subsequent issue, *Olomeinu* splashed the words "Jewish State" across its inside front cover, along with newspaper clippings from the *New*

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<sup>61</sup> On coverage of Israel in *Keeping Posted*, see Katz, "Pen Pals, Pilgrims, and Pioneers," 268-273. For an example of Israel coverage in *Kinder Tsaytung*, see "Letter to a Child," *Kinder Tsaytung*, January 1948, 2-3.

<sup>62</sup> "People in the News – David Ben-Gurion," *World Over*, November 15, 1946, 2. See also "In the News – The Battle for Palestine," *World Over*, November 29, 1946, 4; and David Shreiber, "Dawn to Dusk – How a Negev Colony is Built," *World Over*, August 1, 1947, 8-9.

*York Times* describing the celebrations of Jews in Palestine and displaced persons camps in Germany.<sup>63</sup>

*World Over* hailed the decision of the United Nations in dramatic fashion in a December 1947 article. Calling the day of the General Assembly's decision a moment that will "take its place among the memorable dates of Jewish history," the magazine explained to its young readers the significance of the new Jewish state. A Jewish Palestine, the article claimed, would provide a refuge for the Holocaust survivors and their children trapped in displaced persons camps, and serve as a center of the Hebrew culture "which has provided the Jewish people with the spiritual strength to survive centuries of wandering and persecution."<sup>64</sup> In this manner, these magazines aimed to give American Jewish children an impression of the significance of Israel's founding, and to encourage them to celebrate the news along with their Jewish counterparts in Europe and the Middle East.

After Israel became a state, news from the Middle East and information about Israeli culture could be found in almost every issue of *World Over*. For Israel's tenth anniversary in 1958, *World Over* compiled a special issue on the social, cultural, and political dynamics of the young country, complete with photographs, maps, a special crossword puzzle in the shape of the national seal, and a comic strip retelling the dramatic

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<sup>63</sup> "News and Views – Will There Be a Jewish State?", *Olomeinu*, September-October 1947, 2; "News and Views – Jewish State," *Olomeinu*, November 1947, 2.

<sup>64</sup> "In the News," *World Over*, December 26, 1947.

story of Israel's Declaration of Independence. Five years later, in celebration of Israel's fifteenth anniversary, readers of the magazines found articles about Israeli stamps and industrial development.<sup>65</sup>

These features not only acquainted readers with Israel, but also encouraged them to see connections and commonalities between Israeli and American culture and values, and to identify with both countries as homelands for the American Jew. The cover of the April 1958 issue devoted to celebrating Israel's tenth anniversary featured a hand holding a torch, an intentional allusion to the Statue of Liberty and the "shining courage" and the "bravery and devotion to freedom" that united Americans and Israelis.<sup>66</sup> In 1955, *World Over* introduced American Jewish children to *Davar Liyladim* ("Davar for Children"), an Israeli children's magazine that featured many of the same kinds of departments and columns, including games and puzzles, letters to the editor, and information about Jewish holidays and history. Seeing the contents of this "cousin-magazine published miles away" published in *World Over* may have helped young American Jews to identify with their Israeli counterparts.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *World Over* 19.13 (April 18, 1958); *World Over*, April 26, 1963, 3, 8-9.

<sup>66</sup> Cover page illustration, *World Over*, April 18, 1958, 1. For more on the ways in which American Jews conceived of Israel as a paragon of American values such as democracy and freedom, see Wenger, 212-213; and Jonathan D. Sarna, "A Projection of America As It Ought to Be: Zion in the Mind's Eye of American Jews," in *Envisioning Israel: The Changing Ideals and Images of North American Jews*, ed. Allon Gal (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 41-59.

<sup>67</sup> "Davar Liyladim: Meet Israel's Leading Children's Magazine," *World Over*, April 15, 1955, 8-9.

*Young Judaeen* featured news and stories about Israel in every issue. A two-page pictorial spread of Jerusalem in October 1949 introduced American Jewish children to “Old” and “New” Jerusalem—photographs of the walled city, with its towering ancient structures, juxtaposed with snapshots of high-rise apartment buildings and the impressive modern complex that housed the Jewish Agency. In the top center photograph, a reminder of the recent armed struggle for independence, workers removed “traces from Arab shells and mortars” from Jerusalem streets.

A short essay on the following page, “The Ingathering,” described Jerusalem as “the center of the world,” a city of great historical and spiritual significance. “Wandering from one quarter of the town to another,” the article went on, “you may see Jews from all over the world, like emissaries of various communities who have come on a holy mission.” The article introduced young readers to the various sub-communities of the city, including “our Sephardic brothers,” the descendants of those Jews from Spain who were expelled in 1492; to Hasidic Jews in their long black coats and *streimels* (fur hats); and to Jews from Yemen, “slight of figure, dark-skinned, with curly hair and dark, gleaming eyes.” The author celebrated these Yemenite Jews for their talents as craftsmen and artists, while German Jewish immigrants were noted for their manners and cleanliness.<sup>68</sup>

Despite the differences in clothes and skin color that separated the Jewish denizens of Jerusalem, however, the article claimed that universal adoption of

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<sup>68</sup> “Jerusalem” and “The Ingathering,” *Young Judaeen*, October 1949, 10-12.

the Hebrew language had brought them all together as one united community, “the new Israel.”<sup>69</sup> From this romanticized portrayal of Jewish Jerusalem and its exotic array of Jews from all corners of the globe, American Jewish children could learn to identify with their diverse coreligionists and be inspired to join them in their own study of Hebrew, touted as the universal Jewish language. Other articles in *Young Judaeen* profiled the way of life in other communities in Israel, such as Tel Aviv, Beersheba, and in the kibbutzim.<sup>70</sup>

These periodicals projected a vision of Jewish identity to American Jewish children rooted in the idea that, regardless of where they live, all Jews are one people, united by a common language, a shared history, and a unifying set of beliefs and practices. Both discussions of current events in the Jewish world, as well as discussions of the Holocaust and other events in the Jewish past, served as evidence intended to convince American Jewish children that they must look out for the welfare of their fellow Jews around the world. As Azriel Eisenberg, executive vice president of the Jewish Education Committee, remarked in a tribute to *World Over*, “Above all, through its fiction, articles, and features, *World*

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<sup>69</sup> “The Ingathering,” *Young Judaeen*, October 1949, 12. On the theme of Hebrew as a universal Jewish language, see also, “The Miracle of Modern Hebrew,” *Young Judaeen*, December 1949, 14.

<sup>70</sup> See Jaap Bar-David, “A Trip Through Israel,” an imaginary tour of different sites in Israel played as a dice game, in *Young Judaeen*, October 1953, 23-24; and “We Have Our Own Kibbutz Project: HaSollelim,” *Young Judaeen*, May 1954, 12-13.

Over tried to prepare our children for their future responsibilities as members of the [Jewish] community.”<sup>71</sup>

This educational objective—cultivating ethnic identity and political awareness through current events and history lessons about the Jewish people—took on much greater importance after World War II. With Eastern European Jewry decimated by the Nazis, and the newly established state of Israel still vulnerable, the American Jewish community now represented the largest, most politically and financially secure Jewish community in the world. Only five percent of the world Jewish population in 1875, American Jews constituted 40 percent in 1945. As historian Edward Shapiro has written, this new demographic reality following the war “virtually guaranteed that American Jews would have a decisive role in determining the Jewish future. The real question was whether they would assume the burdens of leadership or abdicate the responsibilities that recent history [. . .] had thrust on their shoulders.”<sup>72</sup> In this context, with the fate of world Jewry still very much uncertain, it was natural for Jewish educators to train the next generation for their leading role by helping them to identify with and care for Jews around the world.

### **Good Boys and Girls - Gender Role Representation**

The cover of the December 14, 1945 issue of *World Over* takes the reader inside the bedroom of an American Jewish boy. With a baseball cap perched on

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<sup>71</sup> Eisenberg, introduction to *The World Over Story Book*, ed. Norton Belth, xv-xvi.

<sup>72</sup> Shapiro, *A Time for Healing*, 60-61; Wenger, *History Lessons*, 211-212.

his head with stitching that resembles a *kippah*, or ritual head covering, the boy pores over a Hebrew book with a candy bar in his hand. But for the Hebrew book on his desk, this bedroom could belong to any American boy in 1945; the walls are covered with posters of sports heroes, a model airplane, and a medal celebrating V-J Day. The boy's baseball glove and bat rest on the bed behind him; a comic book lies propped against the bed on the floor.<sup>73</sup>

In the spring of 1947, *Olomeinu* featured a similar cover illustration. In the foreground, a boy, wearing a "Camp Torah" t-shirt and a baseball cap, looks around his bedroom as he begins to pack for the summer. A volume of rabbinic commentary and a baseball glove sit atop his dresser; the mirror holds two photographs, one of a baseball player and one of a rabbinic sage. In the background, a girl who appears to be his sister leans over a suitcase.<sup>74</sup>

Both of these covers indicate the emphasis in many American Jewish children's magazines on gendered portrayals of men, women, and children. In a manner resembling other juvenile periodicals of the period, such as *Boys' Life* and *Junior Scholastic*, publications such as *World Over* and *Olomeinu* chronicled the adventures and achievements of various types of male figures: war heroes, sports stars, politicians, scientists, rabbis, and even inquisitive Jewish boys. Such stories projected a range of Jewish masculinities to young readers,

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<sup>73</sup> *World Over*, December 14, 1945, 1.

<sup>74</sup> *Olomeinu*, May-June 1947, 1.

including the strong, heroic “new Jew” of Palestine; the intelligent, accomplished Jewish politician, businessman, and doctor; and the wise, saintly Torah scholar.<sup>75</sup>

This range of personalities served multiple functions for the authors and editors who chose to include and focus on them. First, as other historians of Jewish children’s literature have argued, portrayals of Jewish men as fighters and loyal patriots aimed to combat lingering antisemitic stereotypes about Jewish weakness and disloyalty. While antisemitism may have been in decline in the postwar era, anxieties about prejudice and barriers to inclusion remained strong during the age of McCarthyism, and therefore American Jews continued to rely on and produce evidence of their ability and willingness to fight for causes such as liberty and equality.<sup>76</sup>

Simultaneously, in an era when Jewish families were solidifying their middle-class status in American society, and when the Cold War struggle against communism fueled, in Elaine Tyler May’s words, a cultural embrace in the United States of the family “as a bastion of safety in an insecure world,” portrayals of girls and women in children’s literature centered around Western bourgeois

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<sup>75</sup> Examples of courageous and cunning Jewish heroes fit comfortably within the cultural panoply of cowboys, scouts, and detectives who appeared in other American children’s magazines. See, for example, Dee Dunsing, “Tooth of the Great One,” and Paschal N. Strong, “The Engineer Plugs in A Hole,” in *Boys’ Life*, April 1950, <http://media.boyslife.org/archive/>. (accessed November 13, 2012); and Mark Boesch, “Forest Lookout,” *Junior Scholastic*, February 20, 1959, 17-18.

<sup>76</sup> See Sheramy, 302-306; Wenger, *History Lessons*, 105-106, 133-134; Krasner, “‘New Jews’ in an Old-New Land,” 9-13. On the continued influence of the perceived threat of antisemitism on post-World War II American Jewish life and culture, see Goren, *The Politics and Public Culture of American Jews*, 198-201; and Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 164-174.

ideals of domesticity and what Riv-Ellen Prell has termed the “trptych of Jewish suburban life—family, consumption, and synagogue.”<sup>77</sup> In these periodicals, as in other examples of postwar American children’s literature written for a general audience, nurturing mothers and teachers stood out as examples of what American Jewish girls could and should aspire to be.<sup>78</sup>

In the *Young Judaeen* story, “David of Degania,” published in October 1950, a young Israeli boy halts an Arab attack on his village by hurling a grenade at an Arab tank, in a scene that consciously echoed the biblical David’s victory over Goliath with a stone and slingshot. Like his predecessor, this David is also a shepherd who relies on fearlessness and cunning to vanquish an enemy of the Jewish people.<sup>79</sup> A similar tale in *Olomeinu* from 1948, “A Souvenir for Lag Ba’Omer,” recounted how intrepid Jewish fighters managed to fend off an Arab invasion by tying grenades to the arrows usually fired in celebration of this particular Jewish holiday.<sup>80</sup> As they updated familiar stories from Jewish tradition by setting them in an action-packed contemporary Israeli context, both stories presented Jewish masculinity in terms of bravery on the battlefield.

Other articles championed Jewish war heroics throughout history and on behalf of the United States. In early 1946, *World Over* introduced readers to

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<sup>77</sup> Prell, *Fighting to Become Americans*, 169; May, 5-9.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 169-174; MacLeod, 59-60.

<sup>79</sup> “David of Degania,” *Young Judaeen*, October 1950, 8-9.

<sup>80</sup> Ben Shalom, “A Souvenir for Lag Ba’Omer,” *Olomeinu*, May-June 1948, 10-11.

“Jews in the American Armed Forces,” noting that over six hundred thousand Jewish men and women served during World War II and that more than ten thousand received medals for their valor.<sup>81</sup> A special issue in May of 1963 was devoted to the theme of “Heroism in Jewish History.” While Judaism values “the scholar, not the fighter,” the introduction read, “the history of the Jewish people is filled with epic tales of fighters for the cause of freedom.” Readers learned about such fearless, daring men as the ancient Judaeen rebel Bar Kochba, portrayed as a cunning master of guerrilla warfare; the Zionist legend Joseph Trumpeldor, who battled with one arm at Tel Hai; and the commander of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, Mordecai Anielewicz, who trained and inspired his fellow Jews to resist the Nazis to the end.<sup>82</sup>

Jewish children’s periodicals valorized other forms of Jewish masculinity in addition to the heroic soldier. As Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Sandy Koufax shot to fame in the 1960s, winning two World Series while refusing to pitch on the High Holidays, multiple magazines celebrated his athletic achievements and his loyalty to Jewish tradition.<sup>83</sup> In a series titled “Movers of Men,” *Our Age* profiled several modern Jewish philosophers, including Mordecai Kaplan, Menachem

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<sup>81</sup> “Jews in the American Armed Forces,” *World Over*, March 8, 1946, 4-5.

<sup>82</sup> “Heroism in Jewish History,” *World Over*, May 10, 1963, 2, 5, 14.

<sup>83</sup> For examples of Sandy Koufax coverage in Jewish children’s periodicals, see Bernard Postal, “Sandy Koufax: The Best Pitcher in the World,” *World Over*, November 8, 1963; “The Winner!”, *World Over*, November 12, 1965; and *Kinder Tsaytung*, “Jewish Baseball Player,” April-May 1965, 15.

Schneerson, and Abraham Joshua Heschel, among others.<sup>84</sup> The magazine also championed other Jewish male achievements in the arts and sciences, including Daniel Persky, editor of an American Hebrew-language periodical; Franz Ollendorf, an Israeli scientist working on sight technology for the blind; and Theodore Bikel, the folk singer and performer.<sup>85</sup>

Readers of *Olomeinu* encountered interpretations of Jewish masculinity that turned away from the valorizations of physical strength and secular knowledge found in other periodicals. The Israeli soldiers and kibbutzniks who graced the covers of *Olomeinu* in the late 1940s were replaced by 1958 with illustrations depicting the lifelong Jewish male relationship with Torah study, an interpretation of the familiar liturgical metaphor comparing the Torah to a tree of life. A 1963 cover repeated this theme, charting the stages of a young boy's maturation as he advances from study of the prayerbook to Torah, culminating ultimately with the Talmud.<sup>86</sup> Likewise, in accordance with promoting this religious ideal of masculinity, the magazine regularly published profiles of rabbis of the present and past who embodied a commitment to a life of study. *Olomeinu*

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<sup>84</sup> See "Movers of Men - Mordecai M. Kaplan: Jewish Reconstructionist," *Our Age*, January 7, 1962, 3, 6; "Movers of Men - Menachem Schneerson: The Lubavitcher Rebbe," *Our Age*, February 4, 1962, 3, 6; "Movers of Men: Abraham J. Heschel," *Our Age*, March 4, 1962; 3, 6.

<sup>85</sup> "Daniel Persky: A Slave to Hebrew," *Our Age*, April 15, 1962, 3; "Eyes for the Blind," *Our Age*, May 7, 1961, 2; "An Exclusive *Our Age* Interview: Theodore Bikel," *Our Age*, October 23, 1960, 3-6. See also Aubrey B. Haines, "Dr. Jonas Salk: Virus Detective," *Young Judaeen*, January 1962, 4-6.

<sup>86</sup> Cover illustrations, *Olomeinu*, May 1958 and June 1963. Compare these depictions of boys and men engaged in religious worship and study to that of the Israeli soldiers on earlier *Olomeinu* covers from December and January 1948.

readers learned about how great rabbis such as Isaac Elhanan Spector and Reuven Grozovsky exemplified honesty, humility, and complete dedication to Torah.<sup>87</sup>

As a composite portrait of Jewish adult masculinity, these various portrayals of fictional and real Jewish men in various positions of leadership conveyed the message to young Jewish boys that American Jewish males could succeed and win approval in a variety of pursuits that conformed to different conventions of the ideal successful male. In stories and cartoons depicting idealized Jewish boys, magazines such as *Olomeinu* and *World Over* modeled proper gender behavior for young Jewish men in a fashion that was more immediately relatable to their audience. As *Olomeinu* came to embrace a more religious model of masculinity, the magazine also published portrayals of ideal Jewish boys in the same light. In the story “How the War Was Won,” published in 1963, Zvi’s diligent study of halakhah during the daily summer camp rest period helps his team win the color war, rather than Avie’s pitching or Bernie’s swimming.<sup>88</sup> In the 1954 story “Pancho Comes to America,” a young unobservant Jewish boy from Panama comes to New York to visit his cousin Shimon, who helps him acclimate to America and to Judaism. After experiencing the thrill of staying up all night learning Torah on Shavuot, Pancho decides to stay in America and attend yeshiva. Lured initially to New York by the promise of

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<sup>87</sup> “*Anshe Middot: Rabbi Isaac Elchanan -- Rabbi of Kovno,*” *Olomeinu*, February 1958, 14; “*Anshe Middot: Rabbi Reuven Grozovsky,*” *Olomeinu*, April 1958, 14.

<sup>88</sup> Paysach Krohn, “How the War Was Won,” *Olomeinu*, June 1963, 4-5.

modern secular delights such as baseball games and television, Pancho learns that true happiness comes instead from an ancient, eternal source.<sup>89</sup> Zvi and Pancho are intended to serve as inspirational models, boys who prioritize their religious duties above secular distractions.

If Zvi and Pancho implied that Jewish boys should favor books over baseball, the comic strip “Joey and His Friends” in *World Over* sent a very different message. The magazine’s most popular feature according to a reader poll, “Joey and His Friends” perhaps best epitomized the way in which the creators of *World Over* tried to harmonize Judaism and Jewish living with American culture and boyhood.<sup>90</sup> Created by illustrator Herb Kruckman, “Joey and His Friends” followed the escapades of Joey, a young American Jewish boy from a suburban middle-class family, and his friend Bernie. In nearly every “Joey” adventure, he and Bernie play sports while discussing a Bible story. Once, while playing baseball in the backyard, they discuss how Samson evaded the Philistines thanks to his brute strength and wits, and wonder if he would have enjoyed collecting stamps. Another time, a game of basketball is punctuated by a conversation about King Solomon’s wisdom; Joey proclaims that Solomon would have made an excellent radio quiz show contestant.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> M. Sapeir, “Pancho Comes to America,” *Olomeinu*, May 1954, 8-10.

<sup>90</sup> Morris Epstein, “*World Over* Polls its Audience,” *Jewish Education* 23.2 (Summer 1952): 40.

<sup>91</sup> Herb Kruckman, “Joey and His Friends,” *World Over*, May 3, 1946; *World Over*, February 9, 1951, 10.

Twice a month, *World Over* readers encountered this humorous, concise, and engaging articulation of American Jewish male identity. Joey and Bernie provided young American Jewish boys from similar socioeconomic circumstances with evidence that it was possible to love both Judaism and sports, that they could be “normal” American boys and do all the things normal American boys love to do while still engaging in and enjoying Jewish learning. This message was sometimes underscored by subtle artistic touches: a ping-pong match set in a Jewish Community Center rec room, or a game of baseball played in a Little League park with advertisements that read “Study Hebrew” and “Join Your JCC.”<sup>92</sup>

*World Over*'s vision of American Jewish boyhood contrasted sharply with that found in *Olomeinu*. Jewish learning and secular games existed on a level playing field in Joey's universe; one need not choose between them, and it was possible to integrate the two interests seamlessly. On the other hand, the depth of Joey's mastery of the Bible and Jewish traditional sources pales in comparison to *Olomeinu* characters like Zvi, who acquires a command of Jewish law by dint of diligent study. These two magazines projected very different interpretations of American Jewish boyhood according to divergent understandings of American Jewish identity and the proper balance between religious and secular life.

Jewish children's magazines devoted relatively little attention to women by comparison, despite the fact that many girls read them and that *World Over* had a female editor, Deborah Pessin, at one time. Only two women earned specific

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., *World Over*, April 1, 1966, 10; April 27, 1962, 10.

mention in *World Over's* special "Heroism" issue, both of them named Hannah. The first Hannah, the legendary martyr of *II Maccabees*, allowed herself and her sons to be tortured and killed rather than be converted. The second Hannah, Hannah Szenes (Anglicized as "Senesh" in the magazine), was a talented poet and *kibbutz*nik who "joined a gallant band of parachutists" and died trying to rescue Jews trapped in Nazi-occupied Hungary.<sup>93</sup> One Hannah gave her life to save Judaism, the other gave her life to save Jews. These exceptional women facing dire circumstances truly were exceptions—exceptions to the conventions and expectations that more typically governed representations of women and girls in postwar American culture and Jewish life.

When *World Over* introduced readers to Jewish women, it most often introduced them to women like Rebecca Gratz, a philanthropist and educator who founded the nation's first Hebrew school; or Mrs. Felix Warburg, who served on the boards of such philanthropic organizations as Hadassah and the United Jewish Appeal; or Rachel Dotan, Israel's "Housewife of the Year" for 1958, who won a new gas stove "by demonstrating her skill in cooking, baking, washing, and ironing before the eyes of a panel of lady critics."<sup>94</sup> As nurturers and

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<sup>93</sup> "Heroism in Jewish History," *World Over*, May 10, 1963, 5, 14. *Our Age* also profiled Hannah Szenes; see "Courage and Carnivals: The Two Sides of Purim," *Our Age*, March 18, 1962, 4-5. Jonathan Krasner has similarly observed how *World Over* offered "few female role models" other than Hannah Senesh, whose qualities and heroism in wartime rendered her not unlike her male counterparts, who received "continued valorization" throughout the World War II years and after. See Krasner, *The Benderly Boys and American Jewish Education*, 367.

<sup>94</sup> "Great Moments in History - Rebecca Gratz," *World Over*, October 26, 1956, 16; "People in the News: Mrs. Felix Warburg," *World Over*, March 30, 1956, 2; "Israel's Housewife of the Year," *World Over*, May 2, 1958, 5. See also the

educators, these women provided examples of role models whose accomplishments were consistent with a postwar middle-class Western gender ideal that prized female domesticity and allowed for women's public engagement through ethical and educational causes, a relatively new understanding of the proper role of the Jewish woman in society.<sup>95</sup>

The profile of Trude Weiss-Rosmarin in *Our Age* in 1961 represented a rare example of a woman celebrated for her intellectual contributions, though they were couched in decidedly feminine terms. The magazine praised Weiss-Rosmarin for her efforts as editor of *The Jewish Spectator*, a quarterly American Jewish magazine, whose columns "have served as a beacon for Jewish intellectuals in America." At the same time, *Our Age* lauded her "quiet, soft-spoken" demeanor, noting with near-astonishment that "[o]ne of the few true giants [in Jewish journalism] is a woman."<sup>96</sup>

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profile of nurse and social activist Lillian Wald's work on behalf of American Jewish children in *Kinder Tsaytung*, January 1951, 2-3, 7.

<sup>95</sup> Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History*, 27-45, 168-169. See also Karla Goldman, "The Limits of Imagination: White Christian Civilization and the Construction of American Jewish Womanhood in the 1890s," in *Imagining the American Jewish Community*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2007), 191-211. For a history of American middle-class women's involvement in Progressive-era reform organizations, see Robyn Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>96</sup> "Our Age Interviews: Dr. Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, 'A Woman of Valor,'" *Our Age*, January 8, 1961, 7. For more on Weiss-Rosmarin as a leading scholar, social critic, and feminist voice in the American Jewish community, see Nadell, *Women Who Would Be Rabbis*, 127-129, 131-132. On the experiences and activism of Jewish women in postwar America amid the social and cultural expectations they faced, see the chapters in *A Jewish Feminine Mystique?*, eds. Diner, Kohn, and Kranson.

The subheading that accompanied the article, identifying Weiss-Rosmarin as a “Woman of Valor,” referenced the passage from the biblical Book of Proverbs that describes an ideal Jewish woman’s contributions to the family household in support of her husband. With this label, the magazine hung a traditional Jewish label on Weiss-Rosmarin’s life and work, even though she represented a very different kind of Jewish woman and female icon than the one praised in Proverbs.<sup>97</sup>

As in other publications, female characters in *Olomeinu* stories usually appeared in domestic roles as mothers and daughters, as in the short story, “Mama’s Happiest Shabbos,” which describes how Malkie and her mother meticulously prepare for the Sabbath by cooking and cleaning. In “As I Remember Purim,” a mother cradles her little daughter in arms and tells her the story of Purim celebrations in the small European town of her youth.<sup>98</sup> As with other stories of the era written about and for girls, these stories are light on action

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<sup>97</sup> Another example of the Jewish female writer, though she received very little attention, was Jessie Ethel Sampter, a Zionist poet profiled in *Young Judaeen*’s “Lives Our Times” comic strip series. See Rhoda B. Simon, “Lives of Our Times: Jessie Ethel Sampter,” *Young Judaeen*, March 1949, 20.

<sup>98</sup> Lillian Bernarde, “Mama’s Happiest Shabbos,” *Olomeinu*, May 1951, 8-9; Sarah Feig, “As I Remember Purim,” *Olomeinu*, February 1958, 4-6. In a similar fashion, *Young Judaeen* serialized the story of Gluckel of Hameln in 1961-1962, introducing their readers to the life and times of an early modern Jewish matriarch. See Bea Stadtler, “Gluckel of Hamlin: The Pink Ribbon,” *Young Judaeen*, October 1961, 5-9; and stories in subsequent issues.

and drama, focusing instead on emotions, family ties, and household responsibilities.<sup>99</sup>

Girls appeared in the magazine more often as contributors than as characters. Riva Friedman, an eighth-grader, won a 1952 *Olomeinu* essay contest on the theme, “What a Yeshiva Education Means to Me,” in which she described her appreciation for “our holy books” and her desire to “abide by the Jewish laws and be a true member of my nation.”<sup>100</sup> In 1958, Gail Greenfield won fifty dollars and a Talmud set for her school’s library for her essay on “Service to G-d Through Prayer.”

While *Olomeinu* did not provide girls with fictional role models outside the domestic sphere, it did offer them space to express opinions and to demonstrate their intellectual potential. The magazine simultaneously projected two contrasting ideals of Jewish femininity—the erudite, studious girl, and the nurturing, nostalgic mother. Here and in profiles of women such as Trude Weiss-Rosmarin and Hannah Szenes, Jewish children’s magazines offered young female readers sparse examples of alternative careers and lifestyles available to

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<sup>99</sup> MacLeod, 50. Despite the prevalence of such adventuresome female characters in American children’s fiction as Nancy Drew and Cherry Ames, no Jewish counterpart ever came to light in *Olomeinu* or other Jewish periodicals. For more on girls in American children’s fiction, see Sherrie A. Inness, ed., *Nancy Drew and Company: Culture, Gender, and Girls’ Series*, (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1997).

<sup>100</sup> Riva Friedman, “What a Yeshiva Education Means to Me,” *Olomeinu*, May 1952, 7; Gail Greenfield, “Service to G-d Through Prayer,” *Olomeinu*, June 1958, 5-6. See also “The Winners!,” *Young Judaeen*, December 1953, 20, for more examples of Jewish girls publicly recognized by a magazine for their creative talents.

women, just a few short years before the flowering of the Jewish feminist movement in the late 1960s and 1970s.<sup>101</sup>

## Conclusion

As *World Over* headed into its nineteenth year of publication in 1959, the Jewish Education Committee chose “Together We Make Tomorrow” as its promotional slogan. As a brochure distributed to religious schools explained, “WORLD OVER realizes that the youngsters who read it today will grow into the Jewish leaders of tomorrow.” Through the various features of the magazine -- information about current events, stories about Jewish legends and adventures, discussion of Jewish history and holidays -- the editors hoped to shape “the character and the future of our youth,” with parents, teachers, and children all sharing in *World Over’s* educational project.<sup>102</sup>

Every month during the school year, *World Over* and other American Jewish children’s magazines printed and distributed their own visions of what an American Jewish child should know and believe, of how they should act in their communities, and of the kinds of Jewish adults children should look to for inspiration. While these blueprints varied somewhat according to ideological differences, their common themes reflected a set of shared concerns and desires on the part of those who wrote for and edited these magazines. In emphasizing the harmonious relationship between Judaism and American values, the

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<sup>101</sup> On the development and influence of American Jewish feminism on the American Jewish community, see Nadell, “A Bright New Constellation,” 385-399.

<sup>102</sup> “Together We Make Tomorrow,” promotional brochure (c.1959), Jewish Education Committee (New York) Records, Box 9, Folder 159, RG 592, YIVO Archives, Center for Jewish History.

common faith and history shared between Jews all over the world, and the contrasting roles and responsibilities incumbent upon men and women, these magazines transmitted an understanding of American Jewish identity and the ideal personality to their readers that was shaped by the desire to perpetuate Judaism and Jewish life in a post-Holocaust, Cold War world.

While it is difficult to assess the degree to which students in fact internalized the messages about American Jewish identity presented in juvenile periodicals, an essay submitted to *World Over* in 1954 provides an interesting recapitulation of the magazine's core themes. The magazine sponsored an essay contest on the topic of "My Place in My Community" in conjunction with the tercentenary of the American Jewish community. Readers were invited to write on such subjects as "the history of the Jewish community you live in, the people who helped it grow, [and] the role you hope to achieve in your community as an American and a Jew."<sup>103</sup> A distinguished committee of Jewish academics, including Salo Baron of Columbia and Oscar Handlin of Harvard, selected a pool of winners and honorable mentions from students across the country.

One of the winning essayists published in the magazine, Daniel Shepro, a twelve-year-old boy from Holyoke, Massachusetts, expressed his desire to be an engaged adult American Jew who volunteers at his local Jewish Community Center and who takes "an active interest in all community affairs." Furthermore, he wrote, he hoped to contribute toward increased understanding between Jews and Christians in America. In order to accomplish this goal, he resolved to study

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<sup>103</sup> *World Over*, October 30, 1953, 3.

Jewish history. By learning “the whys and wherefores of my people through the ages,” Shepro claimed,

I will know myself and thereby help others to know me and my race. Then will I be able to teach others to have a better understanding of what it means to be a Jew and an American. I say ‘and an American’ because only by being true to myself and my race can I be a good American. By keeping an open mind, holding true to the ideals of my forefathers and the founders of this country, both of whom risked all for religious and other freedoms, I hope I can, in a small way, make my community, and the world, a better place to live in.<sup>104</sup>

Shepro’s essay reiterates the core educational messages of *World Over* and other Jewish juvenile periodicals of the postwar era: the concept of a ironclad bond between America and American Jews, an affiliation rooted in shared values and common struggles; the responsibility of Jews to work for the betterment of people everywhere; and the public role reserved primarily men as communal leaders in the social and political arena. As Daniel Shepro and other American Jewish children across the country turned the pages of magazines designed just for them, they could see what their teachers expected of them and hoped they would become.

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<sup>104</sup> *World Over*, December 10, 1954, 11.

## Chapter 5: “Give Your Children a Sense of Belonging”: Making Well-Adjusted American Jews in Classrooms and Summer Camps

In January 1951, more than a thousand educators from across the United States and Canada gathered in the Hotel Biltmore in New York City for the First National Conference on Jewish Education. As the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* reported, the delegates, representing both national and local Jewish organizations, met in an effort to “marshal the diverse religious and organizational elements in American Jewish life behind one common program of improving and expanding Jewish educational activities.”<sup>1</sup>

Among the resolutions passed by conference attendees, a “Charter of the Rights of the Jewish Child” described the universal importance of education in every country and community around the world and outlined five commitments to every American Jewish child. Deeply immersed in the rhetoric of the Cold War and the language of developmental psychology, the Charter represented an expression of the common ideals, aspirations, and motives that guided American Jewish educational efforts from the 1940s into the 1960s. Eschewing firm positions on sensitive doctrinal issues that would render consensus impossible, particularly with respect to religious belief and practice, the Charter instead

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<sup>1</sup> “First National Conference on Jewish Education Adopts Four-Point Program,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, January 15, 1951, <http://www.jta.org/1951/01/15/archive/first-national-conference-on-jewish-education-adopts-four-point-program> (accessed March 5, 2014). See also Alexander M. Dushkin and Uriah Z. Engelman, *Jewish Education in the United States: Report of the Commission for the Study of Jewish Education in the United States*, vol. 1 (New York: American Association for Jewish Education, 1959), 4.

framed the basic purpose of Jewish education in ethnic, cultural, and psychological terms.

This “bill of rights” for Jewish children, consciously drafted to echo the structure and spirit of the American Bill of Rights, listed the responsibilities of the American Jewish community, through its educators and educational institutions, to its children. According to the Charter, each Jewish child was entitled to an education that would provide him or her with “accurate knowledge and sympathetic understanding” of the saga of Jewish history; with a feeling of kinship with other Jews all over the world and with all of humanity; with opportunities for self-expression and self-realization; and with an appreciation of “democracy as the way of life most in accord with Jewish teaching.”<sup>2</sup>

As a guiding document written by and for teachers, the Charter reveals much about how Jewish educators envisioned the purpose of Jewish education and how they defined the essence of Jewish identity in the postwar period. In a clear indication of the influence of Kurt Lewin and social psychology on Jewish pedagogical thought, the authors of the Charter listed emotional security and personality development as among the most important outcomes of a Jewish education. Reflecting the influence of Cold War-era rhetoric and the need to defend and justify Jewish loyalties to America, the Charter also stressed the importance of linking Jewish values with American civic culture. The Charter presented Jewish identity not in religious terms, but as an ethnic construct with political and psychological dimensions.

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<sup>2</sup> “A Charter of the Rights of the Jewish Child,” *Jewish Education* 22.3 (Summer 1951): 76.

This document accurately reflects the common priorities that directed American Jewish education, both formal and informal, into the 1960s. Mirroring the themes and goals of the children's periodicals analyzed in the previous chapter, as well as the concepts of effective Jewish education described by psychologist Kurt Lewin, postwar American Jewish educators worked to help children develop positive attachments to Jewish identity by framing Jewishness as both quintessentially American in character and global in scope. Inspired by trends in twentieth century American pedagogy, they incorporated techniques such as drama, assemblies, music, and dance into their teaching approaches, in hopes that it would render Jewish education more fun and Jewish affiliation more appealing.

In the decades following World War II, in a manner similar to vision of Jewish education set forth in the Charter, Jewish schools and summer camps emphasized personal happiness, fulfillment, and self-realization as important outcomes of Jewish education. While they continued to teach traditional subjects such as prayer, Hebrew, and Jewish holidays, these institutions also used the arts, including theater, music, and dance, to teach their students about Judaism and Jewish culture in a fun and engaging way. Educators working in institutions representing a diverse cross-section of the American Jewish community relied on these activities, like the periodicals discussed in the previous chapter, to teach Jewish youth to be proud of the historical contributions of the Jewish people to American life and the influence of Old Testament principles on core American values; and to identify with Israel as the democratic homeland of the Jewish

people and a refuge for persecuted Jews from other countries. They worked to help American Jewish students develop “integrated personalities,” so that they would mature into loyal American citizens and dedicated members of their Jewish communities.

Teachers, administrators, rabbis, and camp counselors crafted this carefully tailored program of American Jewish education to address postwar survival anxieties about the future of Jews and Judaism in the United States. As fears about the corrosive impact of antisemitism on the psyche of young American Jews lingered well after World War II, educators consciously strove to emphasize and affirm those aspects of Jewish history, religion, and culture that they believed would inculcate a positive affinity for Jewish identity in their students and campers. In the 1960s, as concerns about intermarriage and assimilation began to supersede fear of anti-Semitism among Jewish communal leaders, and as celebrations of ethnicity and cultural difference became more commonplace in American society, positive Jewishness remained a core theme in American Jewish education. Despite differences in ideology, rabbis, teachers, and camp counselors all relied on similar tactics and approaches to present Judaism and Jewish living to youth as something positive and valuable – an identity worth choosing in an open, tolerant society more willing to accept ethnic and cultural diversity. This consensus with respect to both the goals and means of postwar American Jewish education indicates wide agreement among different sectors of the community about the challenges facing American Jews after World War II, about the value of Lewinian ideas about education and the formative

importance of positive experiences for children, and about the makeup of the ideal American Jewish child that these institutions sought to create.<sup>3</sup>

Historian Jonathan Sarna has argued that homes, schools, and summer camps function as sites of identity formation and re-formation “where American Jews confront the most fundamental question of American Jewish life: how to live in two worlds at once, how to be both American and Jewish, part of the larger American society and apart from it.”<sup>4</sup> In these settings, teachers teach and students learn what it means to be a Jew and an American; these definitions are historically and situationally contingent, and reflect both change and continuity across and within time. Thus, the study of American Jewish education from 1945 to 1967 provides insight not only into pedagogical theories and practice, but also into how American Jews understood themselves and presented their concepts of Jewish identity to children during a dynamic period of dramatic social, political, and economic transformations.

This chapter contributes to a small but growing body of scholarship on American Jewish education. To date, the literature on American Jewish education after World War II underemphasized the considerable influence of Kurt Lewin and his theories about group belongingness on the rabbis, administrators,

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<sup>3</sup> On intermarriage, assimilation, and shifting priorities in American Jewish life in the 1960s and beyond, see Diner, *Jews of the United States*, 305-308; Lila Corwin Berman, “Blame, Boundaries, and Birthrights: Jewish Intermarriage in Midcentury America,” in *Boundaries of Jewish Identity*, eds. Susan A. Glenn and Naomi B. Sokoloff (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 91-109; and Krasner, *Benderly Boys*, 416-417.

<sup>4</sup> Sarna, “American Jewish Education in Historical Perspective,” 9.

and teachers who shaped the pedagogical approaches of Jewish schools and summer camps. I argue that Lewin's ideas provided a scientific rationale for those who sought to refine and modernize the American Jewish curriculum so as to produce happy, loyal American Jews who retained strong ties to Jewish culture, religion, and peoplehood while still fitting comfortably into middle-class American life.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, Susan Glenn's contention that the effort to instill what she calls "positive Jewishness" was "largely a secular affair dominated by community centers, professional social workers, and mental health experts" does not stand up to the evidence.<sup>6</sup> On the contrary, as this study of the educational approaches and mission statements of religious schools and summer camps demonstrates, the effort to instill positive associations with Judaism and Jewish culture was a top postwar priority for a diverse range of Jewish educational institutions, including synagogue-based schools and summer camps affiliated with religious denominations.

My analysis of the records from numerous Jewish supplementary schools, all-day schools, and summer camps, including curricula, daily schedules, and promotional materials, as well as discussions and sample lesson plans in various American Jewish pedagogical journals, reveals the influences of developmental

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<sup>5</sup> Krasner, *Benderly Boys*, 353; Diner, *History of the Jews of the United States*, 254-255; Walter Ackerman, "Some Uses of Justification in Jewish Education," in Walter Ackerman, *Jewish Education – For What? and Other Essays*, eds. Ari Ackerman, Hanan Alexander, Brenda Bacon, and David Golinkin (1977, repr.; Jerusalem: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, et al., 2008), 206-210; and Glenn, "The Vogue of Jewish Self-Hatred," 102-107.

<sup>6</sup> Glenn, "The Vogue of Jewish Self-Hatred," 106.

psychology and Cold War rhetoric on postwar American Jewish education. The primary goal of Jewish education, across most denominational and ideological boundaries, was to nurture happy, well-adjusted American Jewish children who would proudly embrace their Jewish identity within a middle-class American milieu. In an effort to foster these positive associations, educators in schools and summer camps used drama, assemblies, music, and dance to inspire sentiments of group belongingness in young American Jews.

### **Developments in American Jewish Education Between World War II and the Six-Day War**

Postwar prosperity and mobility accelerated several trends in American Jewish education that had begun to take root in the 1920s and 1930s. Over the next three decades, synagogue-based supplementary schools would replace most of the communal Talmud Torah schools that were previously the most common form and location of Jewish education; Orthodox all-day schools grew steadily in popularity and the model began to spread to Conservative Jews; and summer camps of various ideological persuasions offering intensive Jewish content sprang up across the country.<sup>7</sup>

The postwar era most notably witnessed the decline of the communal Talmud Torah educational model among American Jews. Talmud Torah schools proliferated in urban Jewish communities after the 1880s to serve those immigrants from Eastern Europe who desired to complement their children's

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<sup>7</sup> On the multiple effects of the Great Depression on American Jewish education, see Krasner, *The Benderly Boys and American Jewish Education*, 159-183; and Wenger, *New York Jews and the Great Depression*, 190-193.

secular education in public school with a thorough grounding in religious texts and rituals. These schools generally held to a rigorous schedule, with students expected to attend four afternoons per week and on Sundays. In the Talmud Torah schools organized by Samson Benderly and the New York Board of Jewish Education, and others around the country inspired by this model, classes were conducted in Hebrew, and children studied the Bible, modern Jewish literature, Jewish history, and rituals.<sup>8</sup>

While some of these schools were coeducational, immigrant Jewish families were sometimes loath to enroll their daughters in formal Jewish education, following a tradition from Eastern Europe whereby girls were supposed to learn Jewish homemaking from their mothers. On the other hand, as Melissa Klapper notes, in some cases, parents were more willing to send their daughters to progressive schools with a modern, Hebrew-intensive curriculum, while preferring the traditional *cheder* system of text instruction for their sons. Talmud Torahs were often governed by local communal education boards and federations, and received community funding to stay in operation. Many of these schools nevertheless struggled with low attendance and high attrition rates, as many immigrant parents prioritized secular education and acculturation above the need for formal Jewish training for their children.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Klapper, "The History of Jewish Education in America," 193-194; Krasner, *The Benderly Boys and American Jewish Education*, 94-96.

<sup>9</sup> On girls' education and the transportation of the *cheder* style of Jewish learning to America, see Klapper, "The History of Jewish Education in America," 193-196. On Talmud Torahs and girls' education, see also Krasner, *The Benderly Boys and American Jewish Education*, 93-94, 102-104, 135-136.

As American Jewish families relocated to the suburbs in increasing numbers after World War II, they turned to synagogues to provide their children with a Jewish education. Unlike Talmud Torahs, these denominational schools often met only one to three times a week instead of five, for an average total between two and six hours of instruction. They also offered a less intensive curriculum, with classes taught in English rather than the Hebrew immersion method that characterized some Talmud Torah classrooms. With variations according to ideological orientation and the number of hours of instruction per week, the curricula of afternoon synagogue schools typically focused on Hebrew prayers, Bible stories, Jewish holidays, Jewish history, and Jewish life in America and Israel.<sup>10</sup> This shift toward denominational religious schools, in place of communal Talmud Torahs, represented one facet of a broader trend: the increasing importance of the suburban synagogue as the primary Jewish institution, designed to meet all the spiritual, social, recreational, and educational

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<sup>10</sup> For examples of weekday school curricula from Reform temples across the country, see the Tartak Learning Center Collection, MS-680, at the American Jewish Archives. For a sample curriculum produced for use in Conservative synagogues, see Louis L. Ruffman, *Curriculum Outline for the Congregational School*, rev. ed. (New York: United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education, 1959). On the curriculum in the Sholem Aleichem Folk Schools, which promoted Yiddish culture, see “Basic Principles of Education in the Sholem Aleichem Schools, Adapted at the 30th School-Conference, May 1953,” in *Our First Fifty Years: The Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute, A Historical Survey*, ed. Saul Goodman (New York: Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute, 1972), 138-139. For a sample curriculum produced for Orthodox Talmud Torahs from the World War II era, see Leo Jung and Joseph Kaminetsky, *A Model Program for the Talmud Torah: A Handbook for Rabbis, Principals, Teachers, Officers, and Lay Members of the Board of Jewish Education* (New York: Union of Orthodox Congregations of America, 1942).

needs of middle-class American Jews in communities that lacked a wide array of such facilities. Not long after 1950, 85 percent of all children enrolled in Jewish schools attended a synagogue-affiliated educational institution.<sup>11</sup>

While many in the field of Jewish education bemoaned what they saw as a dilution in the quality of instruction with the decline of Talmud Torahs and the fragmentation of the community along denominational lines, the shift to a synagogue model of Jewish education did yield some benefits, including a general increase in student enrollment. According to a 1959 report on the state of American Jewish education, between forty and forty-five percent of all American Jewish children were enrolled in formal Jewish studies as of 1958, compared to only twenty-eight percent in 1908. The statistics on the enrollment of girls reveal substantial progress in the effort to provide them with a formal Jewish education. Most notably, the study found that girls constituted almost half of the enrollment in Sunday-only Jewish schools and nearly forty percent of the student population in all-day Jewish schools. While they formed less than a third of the student population in schools meeting two or three times per week, these schools suffered a dramatic drop in boys' attendance after the bar mitzvah at age 13, while girls tended to remain in school longer. This statistic reveals the extent to which bar mitzvah training constituted the most important goal of such education in the minds of most parents. By the end of the 1950s, in another

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<sup>11</sup> Krasner, *The Benderly Boys and American Jewish Education*, 375-379; Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 290-291. See also Irving Barkan, "The Congregational Schools in American Jewish Education," *Jewish Education* 24.1 (Spring 1953): 19-22.

benchmark of increased opportunities for learning and ritual training for girls, the bat mitzvah ceremony became increasingly commonplace in many Conservative and Reform congregations.<sup>12</sup>

All-day Jewish schools, offering a dual curriculum of secular and religious instruction, also proliferated after 1940. This “Catholic” model of private religious instruction combined with secular studies, which prevailed in the American Jewish community in the early nineteenth century before public schools and compulsory education laws became commonplace, was first revitalized by the Orthodox community and parents seeking a more intensive religious education for their children. A group of leading Orthodox rabbis and laypeople founded the organization Torah Umesorah in 1944 to support and oversee the founding of Orthodox elementary all-day schools throughout the United States. By 1956, just twelve years after Torah Umesorah’s founding, the organization listed 214 affiliated day schools in seventy-three different communities in its *Directory of Day Schools*. About half of them were located outside New York City, in cities such as Kansas City and Houston and the District of Columbia. As of 1964, approximately 300 Orthodox day schools of various sizes and ideological

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<sup>12</sup> Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 290; Klapper, “The History of Jewish Education in America,” 200-201. On enrollment statistics in American Jewish schools in the 1950s and earlier, see Dushkin and Engelman, *Jewish Education in the United States*, 46-55. On the bat mitzvah, see Joselit, *Wonders of America*, 116-117, 127-133.

positions were established around the country, with a total of 56,000 students enrolled.<sup>13</sup>

The curricula of Torah Umesorah-affiliated day schools varied according to local conditions, such as the religious orientation and size of the community. In general, however, these schools emphasized the teaching of traditional Jewish texts, such as the Torah and the Talmud, to a much greater degree than supplementary afternoon schools, and their general studies curricula were carefully designed so as not to contradict or challenge a traditional Orthodox worldview. Administrators and rabbis advised teachers of secular studies to omit discussions of non-Jewish holidays with religious connotations, such as Valentine's Day and Halloween, and to use science in the classroom as a method of discovering and appreciating God's miracles in the natural world.<sup>14</sup>

In communities with fewer traditional families, where observant Jews could not sustain a day school on their own, educators and administrators tailored the curricular balance between secular and religious studies in order to attract a

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<sup>13</sup> Doniel Zvi Kramer, *The Day Schools and Torah Umesorah: The Seeding of Traditional Judaism in America* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1984), 10-14, 38-40, 150-151; Charles S. Liebman, "Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life," *American Jewish Year Book* 66 (1965): 72-74. On the applications of Protestant and Catholic models of religious education in the American Jewish community, see Sarna, "American Jewish Education in Historical Perspective," 11. For a history and analysis of the ideological foundations and impact of American Jewish day schools, see Alvin I. Schiff, *The Jewish Day School in America* (New York: Jewish Education Committee Press, 1966).

<sup>14</sup> For two perspectives on the Torah Umesorah school curriculum, see Joseph Elias, "The Hebrew and General Studies Departments"; and Moses D. Tendler, "Science in the Day School Curriculum," in *Hebrew Day School Education: An Overview*, ed. Joseph Kaminetsky (New York: Torah Umesorah/The National Society for Hebrew Day Schools, 1970), 219-228 and 229-233.

wider student population. As Melissa Klapper has argued, a critical factor in the success of all-day schools in expanding their reach beyond the most religiously observant constituents was an explicit commitment “not to move Jewish students out of American society.” The key to Torah Umesorah’s success in its early decades, from the late 1940s into the 1960s, lay in a recognition that, in an era when the vast majority of Jewish parents still highly valued integration and did not come from observant backgrounds themselves, day schools must produce observant Jews who would be capable of and comfortable with participation in American life, within the boundaries prescribed by Jewish law. This same philosophy guided other, more modern Orthodox schools established before World War II, including the Ramaz School in New York City (1937) and the Maimonides School in Boston (1937), as well as the Solomon Schechter day schools of the centrist Conservative moment, which numbered just under thirty by the late 1960s.<sup>15</sup> Holocaust survivors who came to the United States after the war and sought to give their children an intensive Jewish education also boosted the establishment of and enrollment in Jewish day schools. In some cases, rabbis and followers from traditional Orthodox Hasidic communities in Eastern Europe arrived in America after the war and established their own schools,

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<sup>15</sup> Klapper, “History of Jewish Education in America,” 208-209; Kramer, *The Day Schools and Torah Umesorah*, 29. See also Krasner, *Benderly Boys*, 391-401. On the Ramaz School, see Gurock, “The Ramaz Version of American Orthodoxy,” 313-350. On Maimonides School, see Seth Farber, *An American Orthodox Dreamer: Rabbi Joseph P. Soloveitchik and Boston’s Maimonides School* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2003). On the Solomon Schechter schools and other non-Orthodox all-day institutions established in the 1960s and after, see also Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 319-320; and Schiff, *The Jewish Day School in America*.

especially in New York City. A 1954 survey of Pittsburgh's Hillel Academy, a modern Orthodox institution, found that, of the nearly two hundred families connected with the school, twenty-one of them, or about ten percent, had arrived in the United States after 1954.<sup>16</sup>

Like Jewish day schools, Jewish educational summer camps also first emerged in the interwar period, but did not become a widespread phenomenon in American Jewish life until after the war. As with day schools, these camps offered children an intensive and immersive Jewish learning environment, usually in tandem with the recreational activities that typified the general summer camp experience, such as swimming, sports, theater, and music.

Prior to 1940, only a minority of Jewish summer camps offered educational content as a centerpiece of their program. Some of the earliest ones, such as Camp Lehman and Surprise Lake Camp, like other American camps in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, were philanthropic efforts designed to Americanize the children of immigrants and relieve them temporarily of the miserable conditions of the city.<sup>17</sup> Beginning in 1919, educators began to seize on the usefulness of the summer camp as an ideal

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<sup>16</sup> Schiff, *The Jewish Day School in America*, 77-78; Louis Nulman, *The Parent and the Jewish Day School: Reactions of Parents to a Jewish All-Day School* (Scranton, PA: Parent Study Press, 1956), 30-32. See Schiff, 59-62 and 87-91 for a detailed explanation of the differences in attitude and curriculum between modern Orthodox, Hasidic day schools, and other models.

<sup>17</sup> On the early history of American Jewish camping, see Gary P. Zola, "Jewish Camping and Its Relationship to the Organized Camping Movement," in *A Place of Our Own: The Rise of Reform Jewish Camping*, eds. Michael M. Lorge and Gary P. Zola (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 11-14.

environment in which to inculcate Jewish values and culture in the context of a completely immersive experience. In 1919, the Central Jewish Institute of New York initiated an educational summer camp program that would eventually grow into the Cejwin Camps of Port Jervis, New York. Camp Boiberik, a camp devoted to Yiddish language and culture, opened that same summer. In the years that followed, camps devoted to Zionism, socialism, and Hebrew opened their doors.<sup>18</sup>

Between 1941 and 1952, a period referred to by Jonathan Sarna as “the crucial decade in Jewish camping,” several of the most important American Jewish educational camps were established in the Midwest and on the East Coast, including the cultural-focused Brandeis Camp Institute (which moved to California in 1950), the Hebrew-language Camp Massad, the Zionist-oriented Camp Tel Yehudah affiliated with Young Judaea, two branches of the Conservative-affiliated Camp Ramah, and the flagship Reform Judaism camp, Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute. By 1960, Union Institute hosted more than 500 children each summer, while Camp Massad grew from 210 campers in 1945 to over 900 by 1946. Camp Cejwin in New York, the forerunner to these institutions, had an enrollment of over 1000 campers in the summer of 1948.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 14-18. On the Cejwin Camps and Camp Modin, see Krasner, *Benderly Boys*, 268-322; and Michael Brown, “It’s Off to Camp We Go: Ramah, LTF, and the Seminary in the Finkelstein Era,” in *Tradition Renewed: A History of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America*, Vol. 1: *The Making of an Institution of Higher Jewish Learning*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1997), 823-824.

<sup>19</sup> Jonathan D. Sarna, “The Crucial Decade in Jewish Camping,” in *A Place of Our Own: The Rise of Reform Jewish Camping*, eds. Michael M. Lorge and Gary

For the duration of a few weeks or months in the summer, Jewish educational camps constructed a holistic Jewish environment for young American Jews, in which campers learned and performed Jewishness through everyday activities -- integrating Hebrew or Yiddish words into their conversations; staging plays about events in Jewish history; eating kosher food and reciting ritual blessings; and recreating the rustic conditions of *kibbutz* life in Israel. Educators who despaired of the limited capacity of a few hours of afternoon supplementary school to transmit both a positive sense of Jewish identity as well as cultural knowledge and ritual skills turned to the summer camp and the potential of informal learning to provide youth with “a very intensive Jewish education without the campers realizing it.”<sup>20</sup>

The rise of educational camping, all-day schools, and synagogue-based religious schools in the 1940s and after, as Sarna has argued, is a manifestation of the American Jewish community’s increased commitment to education as the

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P. Zola (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 28; and Michael M. Lorge and Gary P. Zola, “The Beginnings of Union Institute in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, 1952-1970: Creation and Coalescence of the First UAHC Camp,” in *A Place of Our Own: The Rise of Reform Jewish Camping*, eds. Michael M. Lorge and Gary P. Zola (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 71. See also Jenna Weissman Joselit, “The Jewish Way of Play,” in *A Worthy Use of Summer: Jewish Summer Camping in America*, eds. Jenna Weissman Joselit and Karen S. Mittleman (Philadelphia: National Museum of American Jewish History, 1993), 15-28. On summer camps in American life, see Leslie Paris, *Children’s Nature: The Rise of the American Summer Camp* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> Joselit, “The Jewish Way of Play,” 16. See also Riv-Ellen Prell, “Summer Camp, Postwar American Jewish Youth and the Redemption of Judaism,” in *The Jewish Role in American Life: An Annual Review*, eds. Bruce Zuckerman and Jeremy Schoenberg (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2007), 77-106.

key to Jewish survival and perseverance after the Great Depression and the Holocaust.<sup>21</sup> In the aftermath of the decimation of European Jewry at the hands of the Nazis, many American Jews viewed themselves as responsible for ensuring the future survival of Judaism after the destruction of European Jewry. As the economic situation of American Jews improved steadily in the 1940s and 1950s, they dedicated more finances and material resources than ever before to constructing the synagogues, camps, and schools to meet this urgent need.

Between the 1940s and 1960s, concerns among communal leaders, rabbis, psychologists, and educators about combating the negative effects of antisemitism on Jewish youth and helping them orient to American life as Jews shifted to concerns about assimilation, rising intermarriage statistics, and community demographics. As the postwar decades brought greater affluence and acceptance for American Jews, particularly after 1950, the socioeconomic and cultural barriers that previously functioned to limit their contact with non-Jews, such as discriminatory college admissions and hiring practices, steadily eroded. Jews still tended to opt to live near other Jews, even as they migrated to suburbia, but their opportunities to learn with, work with, and fall in love with non-Jews rose dramatically. In this environment of openness, pluralism, and emphasis on personal choice, Jewishness itself became volitional to an unprecedented degree in American history, expressed most often through the acts of joining a synagogue and other Jewish organizations, and by donating money to Jewish philanthropic causes such as supporting the new state of

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<sup>21</sup> Sarna, "The Crucial Decade in Jewish Camping," 36-37.

Israel.<sup>22</sup> Framing Judaism and Jewish identity in positive terms continued to serve educators, rabbis, and all those invested in ethnic and cultural survival as the best option for encouraging youth to affiliate with the Jewish people.

### **On a Mission: The Educational Goals of Jewish Schools and Camps**

In preparation for the 1952-1953 school year, Rabbi Paul Gorin drafted a “Course of Studies” for the synagogue school staff at Congregation Shaare Emeth, a Reform synagogue in St. Louis. Rabbi Gorin’s curriculum for teachers opened with a list of educational goals intended to define the school’s mission and desired outcome for each of its students, from elementary school through high school. At the top of the list, Gorin ranked the inculcation of the “ideals and practices” of Reform Judaism in the youth of Shaare Emeth as the school’s primary goal. Subsequently, however, he listed a series of non-denominational, universal objectives for which the teachers under his supervision should strive.

In Gorin’s words, the Shaare Emeth educational experience “should make our children happier men and women [. . .] through the appreciation, knowledge, and joyous affirmation of their Jewish heritage and destiny.” Students should develop an abiding faith in God in order to feel a “sense of anchorage in the universe.” According to Gorin, a Shaare Emeth education should also help Jewish students adjust “to the American and world scene” by instilling in them a

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<sup>22</sup> Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 259-261; Berman, *Speaking of Jews*, 142, 163. On Jewish intermarriage and communal responses to it, see Berman, “Blame, Boundaries, and Birthrights,” 91-109.

sense of their moral and civic duties as American citizens and comradeship with their fellow Jews around the world.<sup>23</sup>

As Rabbi Gorin envisioned the ideal product of Shaare Emeth's Religious School, he gave strong consideration to the child's emotional development and his or her ability to identify with other Jews as well as with other Americans. As much as Gorin wanted the youth of Shaare Emeth to learn about the principles of Reform Judaism and acquire the ritual skills necessary to participate in synagogue worship and holiday observances, he also stressed the students' need to develop well-integrated American Jewish personalities, grounded in positive attachments to Jewish customs and values.

Rabbi Gorin was hardly unique in this respect. Other rabbis and educators, in charge of administering and marketing Jewish schools and summer camps across the United States from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s, outlined similar core principles as the foundational goals of their educational programs. Inspired by Kurt Lewin and others who theorized about the emotional impact of Jewish learning, they defined the ultimate purpose of American Jewish education in terms of personality adjustment, rather than knowledge acquisition. Jewish education at mid-century aimed above all to equip children with the psychological tools, conveyed through the study of religion, culture, and history, to feel at home as Jews and Americans, and to overcome antisemitic prejudice and accusations of Jewish disloyalty amid the Cold War.

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<sup>23</sup> Paul Gorin, "Aims of Our Religious School," *Course of Studies of Shaare Emeth Religious School* (St. Louis, MO), August 1952, Box 1, Folder 12, MS-680, Tartak Learning Center Collection, American Jewish Archives.

These goals are evident in the educational mission statements and recruitment materials of numerous Jewish institutions from the postwar era. Curricula, advertisements, and ideological platforms issued by the Sholem Aleichem Folk Schools, which were founded as secular, Yiddish-speaking supplementary schools in New York City beginning in 1913, reveal the pervasive influence of Lewinian psychology and Cold War politics on American Jewish educational theory at midcentury.<sup>24</sup> At an organizational conference in May of 1953, attendees drafted and ratified a list of “Basic Principles of Education in the Sholem Aleichem Schools,” in which they outlined what information, qualities, and sensibilities students should acquire in these institutions. The list bears remarkable resemblance to the one created by Rabbi Gorin for his Reform temple’s religious school: an emphasis on guiding students to identify with Jews around the world and in Israel; on helping them develop a “feeling of security to safeguard against [the] inner conflicts” experienced by members of persecuted minority groups; and on teaching those elements of the Jewish religious tradition that are “in harmony with Jewish life in America.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> While the Sholem Aleichem schools championed Yiddish culture, other Yiddish-speaking educational institutions, such as the Arbeiter Ring schools, adopted a socialist orientation. On the early history of socialist Yiddish schools, see Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), chap.4.

<sup>25</sup> “Basic Principles of Education in the Sholem Aleichem Schools, Adopted at the 30th School-Conference, May 1953,” in *Our First Fifty Years: The Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute*, ed. Saul Goodman (New York: Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute, 1972), 138-139. These documents were originally made available to Jewish parents in both Yiddish and English in 1953 or shortly thereafter.

The Sholem Aleichem schools, like Shaare Emeth in St. Louis, hoped to encourage young American Jews to embrace their Jewish identity in a manner that would help them overcome insecurities and anxieties about their place in America and the world. To accomplish this goal, these traditionally secularist and Yiddish-speaking institutions evolved by the 1950s to incorporate the selective teaching of religious traditions and of Hebrew, the language of the modern state of Israel and the Bible and therefore “an integral part of our spiritual being,” into the curriculum. In religion and the newly formed state of Israel, these Yiddishist schools and others found useful tools for instilling a positive sense of Jewish identity in students.<sup>26</sup>

Sholem Aleichem schools did not shirk from teaching students about the Holocaust and Nazi crimes against the Jews in Eastern Europe. However, as Rona Sheramy has shown, discussions of World War II in these and other American Jewish classrooms of the 1940s and 1950s frequently centered around acts of Jewish physical resistance to Nazi oppression. “In the teaching of Jewish history, Jewish heroism must be emphasized,” wrote the author of a 5th grade Sholem Aleichem school curriculum in Yiddish. The curriculum called for the teaching of “*khurbn* Hitler” (literally, “Hitler’s destruction,” a Yiddish term for the Holocaust) and the fate of the six million Jews victims to be followed by discussion of those Jews who violently resisted the Nazis, such as the

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. On the peculiar place and purpose of Judaism and Jewish holidays in the “secular” curriculum of Sholem Aleichem Schools, see Yudel Mark, “Secular Jewishness—The Basis of the Sholem Aleichem School,” and Leibush Lehrer, “The Secular and the Sacred in Jewish Education,” in *Our First Fifty Years: The Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute*, ed. Saul Goodman (New York: Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute, 1972), 85-96 and 97-101, respectively.

participants in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and the Jewish partisans. A similar Sholem Aleichem school curriculum, printed in English, added to the list of Holocaust topic subheadings the phrase “Jews fight back.” Framing the discussion in this manner allowed Jewish students to draw some measure of pride and relief from episodes of Jewish bravery in the face of evil and death, and to identify with other American and Jewish freedom fighters at home and abroad.<sup>27</sup>

Within a Cold War context, Sholem Aleichem Folk Schools, like other American Jewish institutions, also worked to inculcate in their students the notion that core American values such as peacemaking and democracy were in fact Jewish ideals with universal appeal. In this spirit, a sample curriculum for the 5th grade year in a Sholem Aleichem Folk School class included topic headings such as “Jews in the American Revolution,” “The East European Jew in America,” “American Jews help their brothers in other lands,” and “Jews in America Today.” Here and elsewhere, American Jewish youth learned about the history and contributions of their ancestors to the American cause. As a manifestation of this central educational goal, a flyer urging parents to enroll their children in Sholem Aleichem Folk Schools, issued around the same time as the “Basic Principles,” featured the headline “Give Your Children a Sense of Belonging Both to America

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<sup>27</sup> “Curriculum of the Sholem Aleichem Folk Schools” (New York: Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute, 195[?]), 14; “The Curriculum of a One-Day Sholem Aleichem School,” in *Our First Fifty Years: The Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute*, ed. Saul Goodman (New York: Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute, 1972), 156. On the varied use of the Yiddish term *khurban*, or “destruction,” to describe the Holocaust, see Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love*, 22.

and to the Jewish People.”<sup>28</sup> Like other schools and educational institutions, the Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute consciously appealed to the desires of parents to give their children a positive sense of Jewish identity rooted in culture, history, and language, framed in terms that would not discourage or hinder their full entry into mainstream American life.

Baltimore’s Beth Tfiloh Congregation, self-described in 1948 as “the leading Orthodox synagogue south of New York City,” advertised its multiple educational offerings in much the same spirit. The largest synagogue in the city, Beth Tfiloh offered its members and their children numerous opportunities for Jewish education and socialization: an all-day school that opened in 1941, a supplementary religious school, a community center with a gymnasium and an auditorium for extracurricular activities, and a summer camp.<sup>29</sup>

In an August 1950 appeal to parents to enroll their children in Beth Tfiloh schools and encourage their children’s participation in community center activities, a synagogue bulletin advertisement answered the question, “What Will Your Children Learn in Our Schools?” Atop the list of educational objectives for students in Beth Tfiloh schools, the ad listed “[t]he harmony of American ideals and the ideals which Jews have held throughout the centuries” as a fundamental tenet. Beth Tfiloh schools also promised to teach children about American

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<sup>28</sup> “Reproduction of a Circular in the 1950’s [sic],” in *Our First Fifty Years: The Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute*, ed. Saul Goodman (New York: Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute, 1972), 140.

<sup>29</sup> The brochure from the synagogue’s 1948 Spring Festival describes Beth Tfiloh’s founding and current status in detail, and illustrates a snapshot of each of the institution’s educational and extracurricular programs. See *Beth Tfiloh Spring Festival*, May 1948, available in the synagogue’s archives.

Jewish history and the significant roles played by Jews in the country's development, as well as the nature of Jewish life around the world and in Israel. Below these issues, the ad listed the Bible, Jewish literature, holidays, synagogue rituals, and Hebrew as additional subjects to study.<sup>30</sup> In ranking the most important aspects of a Beth Tfiloh Orthodox education, the ad overtly appealed to the desire of American Jewish parents seeking to raise identifiably American children in a Jewish context, even a traditional one. Beth Tfiloh promised mothers and fathers that it would first and foremost teach their children to know and appreciate the natural compatibility of Jewish and American values and the legacy of Jewish service to the American cause. At the same time, however, teachers would not neglect to impart familiarity with Jewish texts and traditions in their students. Other advertisements and descriptions of Beth Tfiloh schools followed a similar blueprint. A 1947 synagogue bulletin registration announcement for the Beth Tfiloh Day School asked parents if they were "interested in developing in [their child] an integrated, well-adjusted and happy American Jewish personality," which the school would deliver through an intensive dual secular and Jewish studies curriculum offered in a "wholesome American-Jewish atmosphere."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> "C.E.R. Activities: Enroll Your Child in Our Schools and Center NOW!", *Beth Tfiloh News*, August 18, 1950, 3. Interestingly, the ad refers to "Palestine" and not Israel, even though the ad was published two years after Israel's founding.

<sup>31</sup> "The Beth Tfiloh Day School Announces Registration for the 1947-1948 Academic Year," *Beth Tfiloh News*, June 6, 1947, 1. On the theme of integration in Day School Education, see Joseph Kaminetsky, "Evaluating the Program and Effectiveness of the All-Day School," *Jewish Education* (27.2): 39-49.

Jewish personality development at Beth Tfiloh took place outside the classroom as well. “There is hardly a field of cultural endeavor, a subject of Jewish interest, [or] a form of physical recreation, that does not find expression in some phase of the program” of Beth Tfiloh’s Community Center, boasted a description in a 1948 synagogue banquet program. According to the brochure, the community center hosted 69 different clubs and a wide variety of activities for Jewish youth of all ages, in such areas as arts and crafts, drama, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts troops, dances and other social gatherings, religious services, and sports leagues in basketball, volleyball, and other games. Jewish boys and girls who participate in these Community Center activities, the brochure claimed, benefited from such “opportunities for self-expression through group affiliation.”<sup>32</sup> This statement invoked the insights of psychologist Kurt Lewin, whose 1940 essay “Bringing Up the Jewish Child” advocated for the importance of “group belongingness” in the emotional development of the happy and confident Jewish youth. Lewin’s concepts played a central role in shaping the educational priorities of this and other postwar Jewish institutions.

Like supplementary schools and all-day schools, intensive Jewish summer camps throughout the country also marketed themselves to parents as nurturing environments where their children would not only acquire Jewish knowledge and ritual skills, but would also develop in emotional, physical, and intellectual ways that would help them persevere as well-integrated American Jews.

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<sup>32</sup> *Beth Tfiloh Spring Festival*, May 1948. See also “C.E.R. Activities: Enroll Your Child in Our Schools and Center NOW!”, *Beth Tfiloh News*, August 18, 1950, 3.

The Reform movement's Union Institute in Wisconsin, later known as Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute, advertised its summer programs to parents in yearly brochures that highlighted the camp's integrated program of Jewish and secular activities. A caption in the enrollment brochure for Summer 1959 advertised the camp as a "woodland setting for study, work and play," above a photo of three teenage boys and a girl lighting Sabbath candles. Other photographs from Union Institute brochures displayed campers milking cows, playing volleyball and tennis, reading in the camp library, and participating in Sabbath worship.<sup>33</sup>

This quartet of activities -- worship, study, work, and play -- defined the camp's self-portrayal in these brochures into the mid-1960s. To convince parents to send their children to Union Institute in the summer, the camp presented itself as a fun and nurturing environment for American Jewish character development. According to these pamphlets, the camp's program of swimming, sports, and work detail, combined with opportunities for informal Jewish learning in Hebrew, Jewish literature, and Jewish perspectives on social justice and other contemporary issues, would help campers develop leadership skills, creativity, responsibility, and a meaningful affinity for Jewish living in an American setting.<sup>34</sup> Invoking the psychological and political spirit of the postwar era, the brochures emphasized how camp presented boys and girls with

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<sup>33</sup> Union Institute summer brochures, 1959 and 1965, Box 1, Folder 9, MS-648, Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute Records, American Jewish Archives. See other brochures from the early 1950s into the 1960s in the Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute collection.

<sup>34</sup> Social justice replaced ritual observance as a cornerstone of the platform of American Reform Judaism. See Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 286-289.

opportunities for democratic decision-making in cabins and committees, as well as artistic, intellectual, physical, and spiritual outlets for self-fulfillment. Union Institute thus advertised itself to parents as the ideal environment for shaping well-informed and well-rounded American Jews.<sup>35</sup>

Brochures for the Ramah camps in California, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Wisconsin from the late 1950s similarly advertised a “summer of adventure” for Jewish children, who could come to Ramah to swim, hike, paint, and play sports. Beyond those activities, however, the brochures emphasized the centrality of Hebrew, both as an everyday language and the language of Jewish tradition, to Ramah culture. One brochure explained that for Jews, Hebrew represented “the fabric of our history” and culture and “the bond which links our people.” Therefore, at Ramah, campers could expect to use Hebrew in the dining room and on the baseball diamond, in addition to the study hall.<sup>36</sup>

The brochure also proclaimed that the study of Jewish texts was an integral part of the program, a “way of life,” at Camp Ramah. Unlike formal learning in school,

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<sup>35</sup> “1959 Summer Schedule” brochure, Union Institute, 1959, Box 1, Folder 9, MS-648, Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute Records, American Jewish Archives. On the origins of Union Institute, see Michael M. Lorge and Gary P. Zola, “The Beginnings of Union Institute in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, 1952-1970: Creation and Coalescence of the First UAHC Camp,” in *A Place of Our Own: The Rise of Reform Jewish Camping*, eds. Michael M. Lorge and Gary P. Zola (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 52-84.

<sup>36</sup> “The Story of Camp Ramah” brochure, 1957, Box 29, Folder 3, P-898, Samuel Geffen Papers, American Jewish Historical Society Archives, Center for Jewish History. In the same folder, see also “Summer is for Living at Camp Ramah” brochure, n.d., and others. On the founding of the Ramah camps, see Michael Brown, “It’s Off to Camp We Go,” 821-854; and Shuly Rubin Schwartz, “Camp Ramah: The Early Years, 1947-1952,” *Conservative Judaism* 40.1 (Fall 1987): 12-42.

however, the brochure suggested to parents that their children would have a more effective and enjoyable educational experience at Ramah, where they would put their Jewish learning into practice through the performance of rituals and the observance of Shabbat. Experiential education, the brochure suggested, would make a lasting impact on the Jewish boy or girl by creating emotional attachments to Jewish living.<sup>37</sup>

**“Inspiration, Instruction, and Entertainment”: Performing Jewishness Through Drama, Assembly, Music, and Dance**

Educators set out to achieve the goals outlined in institutional mission statements and promotional materials with the aid of a variety of resources. In addition to children’s periodicals, discussed in the last chapter, and textbooks, examined elsewhere by Jonathan Krasner and Rona Sheramy, school teachers and camp counselors used theater, assembly programs, music, and dance to transmit feelings of happiness, security, and pride to Jewish youth. All of these activities shared the aims outlined by the authors of a 1948 collection of Jewish assembly programs: “inspiration, instruction, and entertainment.”<sup>38</sup> With the aid of these progressive tools and techniques, educators hoped to frame Jewish learning and living in a fun and positive light.

Alfred Ostrum, director of assembly programs for the Beth Sholom Religious School in Philadelphia, reminded his fellow educators of the centrality

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<sup>37</sup> “The Story of Camp Ramah” brochure, 1957.

<sup>38</sup> Samuel Sussman and Abraham Segal, *50 Assembly Programs for the Jewish School* (New York: United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education, 1948), 13.

of emotional affect to effective teaching. In a November 1955 article in the Conservative pedagogical journal *The Synagogue School*, Ostrum wrote, “The total educational experience of the child in the Jewish school should help him to be a person who is happy to be a Jew, proud to be a Jew, and loving things Jewish.” According to Ostrum, drama, music, and dance helped teachers achieve these goals for their students because they have an emotional impact on students. If students were moved emotionally, he suggested, they would be more open to being challenged intellectually and to learning Jewish content.<sup>39</sup>

The effort to expand and revise the scope of Jewish education to include experiential forays into Jewish culture began well before World War II. Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan’s extraordinarily influential 1934 book, *Judaism as a Civilization*, called on American Jews to rediscover and embrace all aspects of Jewish peoplehood and culture, including history, art, language, religious customs, and literature. As head of the Teachers Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary from 1909 to 1946, and the founder and leader of Reconstructionist Judaism, Kaplan’s influence on the cadre of leading American Jewish educators was considerable.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Alfred Ostrum, “Area of Dramatics and Music,” *The Synagogue School* 14.2 (November 1955): 27. See also Israel S. Chipkin, “The Role of the Jewish Arts in Jewish Education,” *Jewish Education* 23.3 (Fall 1952): 2-3.

<sup>40</sup> Mordecai M. Kaplan, *Judaism as a Civilization: Toward a Reconstruction of American-Jewish Life* (New York: Macmillan, 1934). On Kaplan’s philosophy and the development of Reconstructionist Judaism, see Sarna, *American Judaism*, 243-249. On Kaplan’s influence on American Jewish education, see Krasner, *Benderly Boys*, 58-60, 75-79, 188-189, 355-356.

Progressive American educational theorists such as John Dewey and William Kilpatrick also shaped the philosophies and approaches of Jewish teachers and educational administrators, as Jonathan Krasner has demonstrated in his landmark work on Samson Benderly, the visionary leader of the New York Jewish community's Bureau of Education in the early decades of the twentieth century, and Benderly's disciples. Benderly believed strongly that effective American Jewish educators "must, above all things, combine knowledge of Judaism with an understanding of the needs of American children."<sup>41</sup> To accomplish this goal, Benderly's teachers-in-training studied with Dewey and Kilpatrick directly, absorbing and adapting their ideas about the usefulness of the "project method" in education, the vital importance of "learning by doing," and the powerful ability of education to preserve minority group distinctiveness and produce knowledgeable and productive citizens.<sup>42</sup>

The theories and methods espoused by Kaplan, Dewey, and Kilpatrick gained wider traction in American Jewish education in the 1940s and beyond, becoming more ubiquitous as Jewish schools and camps grew in number and enrollment; as parents increasingly counted on these institutions to provide their children with a sense of Jewish pride; and as Kurt Lewin's theories about Jewish

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<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Krasner, *Benderly Boys*, 55.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-7, 188-190, 216-224. Krasner's work is also helpful for understanding how critics of the Benderly approach, both contemporary and current, have reacted to the trend of modernizing the Jewish school curriculum, fearing that it diluted classroom content and failed to teach Jewish literacy by ignoring or minimizing text study. See Krasner's discussion of Pinchas Churgin's and Isaac Berkson's objections to Deweyian reforms in the 1920s on 216-219, and his overview of more recent negative assessments by Walter Ackerman and Ronald Kronish on 6-7.

education and group belongingness became more influential in Jewish educational circles. Many leading voices in American Jewish education espoused the importance of interactive, hands-on learning approaches.

In 1952, Emanuel Gamoran, the transformative director of the Reform movement's Commission on Education for several decades, addressed his colleagues on the importance of creative and entertaining activities for an effective educational program. In an article in *Jewish Education* titled, "Jewish Education in a Changing Community," Gamoran insisted that the Jewish school must help children acquire "a sense of psychological security" and pride in their Jewish identity. The school must socialize children as members of the Jewish group, and prepare them for participation in American society as defenders of democracy and advocates for justice. To accomplish these critical goals, Gamoran recommended that educators introduce "a rich series of Jewish experiences, such as [. . .] music, dancing, [and] arts and crafts" into their curricula, in order to render Judaism and Jewish culture relevant and meaningful, and to emphasize the joy and satisfaction that can be gleaned from active participation in Jewish life.<sup>43</sup>

Such views were not limited to liberal movements within the American Jewish community. In a 1957 overview of day school education, Joseph

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<sup>43</sup> Emanuel Gamoran, "Jewish Education in a Changing Jewish Community," *Jewish Education* 23.3 (Fall 1952): 8-16. For more on Gamoran's considerable influence on American Jewish education, see Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (1988; repr. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 298-301; Krasner, *Benderly Boys*, 143-153.

Kaminetsky, executive director of Torah Umesorah, described how some Orthodox *yeshivot* incorporated assemblies and holiday programs into their regular course of study, and sponsored school choirs and student councils as well. “Conscious of the fact that they are responsible for the ‘whole child,’ our Day School leaders are working hard to raise a generation of normal and happy American Jews,” Kaminetsky wrote. These activities, he suggested, helped to shape the well-rounded observant American Jew of the future, whose passion for Judaism would be enhanced by these extracurricular programs, and whose creative abilities and appreciation for democratic government would be nurtured as well.<sup>44</sup>

### **Shaping Identity on Stage: Theater and Assemblies in Jewish Schools and Camps**

Samuel Citron, director of the Dramatics Department of the Jewish Education Committee (JEC) of New York in the postwar decades, led the effort to produce theatrical material for Jewish schools and to convince teachers of their value. Citron edited two collections of theatrical materials on the Bible, Jewish holidays, and Jewish history for classroom use, both of which also contained notes on the pedagogical theory of learning through drama as well as practical suggestions for teachers on casting, directing, and other technical issues. He also spearheaded a number of theater projects for the JEC in the 1940s and

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<sup>44</sup> Joseph Kaminetsky, “Evaluating the Program and Effectiveness of the All-Day Jewish School,” *Jewish Education* 27.2 (Winter 1956-1957): 39-49. On the place of the arts in Reconstructionist education, see Michael Alper, *Reconstructing Jewish Education* (New York: Reconstructionist Press, 1957), 38-40.

1950s, including the JEC Theater for Children, a professional theater company aimed at producing Jewish content for young audiences in New York City, and *Headline Parade*, a series of scripts produced for classroom use, devoted to dramatizations of historical episodes and current events in the Jewish world.<sup>45</sup>

As Citron explained in the introduction to his 1961 *Dramatics for Creative Teaching*, the significance and appeal of drama as an instructional tool lay in its ability to transform students into active learners and eager participants, as opposed to “passive receptacle[s] for knowledge poured out by the teacher.” He praised theater’s potential for emotional resonance, for invoking visceral reactions in children through the vicarious enactment of the challenges and triumphs of their ancestors and contemporaries. Such experiences, he argued, enabled students to relate to their fellow Jews and to the moral lessons of Jewish history on a more profound level; helped them to remember and continue to reflect on their learning; and inspired them to view these sources of wisdom as “guiding forces” in their lives.<sup>46</sup>

Writing in the shadow of the Cold War in the early 1960s, Citron also reflected on the “excellent opportunities for experiences in democratic living”

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<sup>45</sup> Samuel J. Citron, ed., *Dramatics the Year Round*, illus. Howard Barker (New York: United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education, 1956); Samuel J. Citron, *Dramatics for Creative Teaching* (New York: United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education, 1961). On the JEC Theater for Children and *Headline Parade*, see Samuel J. Citron, “Two Projects in Educational Dramatics,” *Jewish Education* 22.1-2 (Winter-Spring 1950-51): 49-53. See also Esther Wykell, “Creative Dramatics in the Jewish Classroom,” *Jewish Teacher* 31.2 (December 1962): 14-16.

<sup>46</sup> Citron, *Dramatics for Creative Teaching*, 3-6.

provided by theater. Students in a play, he explained, must work together in harmony to achieve a common goal. In the process, they learn to compromise and cooperate, to respect peers, and to trust their own abilities and talents. Theater, Citron implied, helps shape students into better Jews *and* better American citizens, by teaching them the values and behaviors integral to both Judaism and American civic culture.<sup>47</sup>

Citron's *Headline Parade* project sought to help Jewish teachers achieve these goals by furnishing them with scripts, filled with vivid imagery and dramatic tension, about pressing contemporary issues facing the Jewish world. A March 1947 episode, "The Case of David Guttman," dramatized the plight of an American Jew jailed by the British for trying to help Holocaust survivors enter Palestine despite an immigration blockade. A December 1946 episode about the United Jewish Appeal highlighted the organization's efforts to "relieve the misery of Europe's Jews, and to continue the upbuilding of Palestine" through massive coordinated fundraising efforts.<sup>48</sup>

Scripts such as these, which were used in more than two hundred schools as of 1950, aimed to both educate and entertain Jewish students through captivating presentations of important current events issues. *Headline Parade* endeavored to prepare young American Jews for citizenship and leadership in

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>48</sup> *Headline Parade*, "The Case of David Guttman," March 14, 1947, Box 63, Folder 2, MS-706, Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York Records, American Jewish Archives; *Headline Parade*, "United Jewish Appeal—1947," December 15, 1946, Box 63, Folder 1, MS-706, Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York Records, American Jewish Archives.

the American Jewish community by facilitating emotional connections with their suffering coreligionists, and by conveying the significance of communal responsibility, as demonstrated vividly by the protagonists in *Headline Parade* stories.<sup>49</sup>

Jewish camps, such as the Reform movement's Union Institute and the Conservative movement's Ramah camps, relied heavily on theater and role-playing as keystones of their informal education programs. These activities allowed camp educators to present Jewish history and values to Jewish youth while maintaining an atmosphere of fun and excitement. The Union Institute Junior Session theme for Summer 1962 was "Jews in Distant Lands," an overview of Jewish life in such faraway places as South Africa, Yemen, Israel, and the Soviet Union. To help campers learn to appreciate the principle of Jewish peoplehood and the similarities and differences between Jewish life in the United States and in other communities around the world, counselors played the role of Yemenites adapting to life in modern Israel in one session. In the session on Jewish life in the Soviet Union, counselors recreated the repressive conditions faced by contemporary Soviet Jews. In this context, the campers' Hebrew newspaper and theater group were shut down; campers simulated the experience of applying for jobs and being rejected because they were Jewish; and they were issued Soviet passports with a Jewish identity stamp to hinder their freedom of movement. This activity introduced Jewish youth to the oppressive conditions faced by their coreligionists in the Soviet Union through

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<sup>49</sup> Citron, "Two Projects in Educational Dramatics," 53.

memorable firsthand experiences. It also illustrated vividly the differences in personal freedoms enjoyed by American Jews, versus those of Jews behind the Iron Curtain.<sup>50</sup>

This contrast in conditions for Jews in different parts of the world, and the freedoms enjoyed by American Jews and their contributions to their country, came alive when educators used drama as a technique for teaching American Jewish history. During the celebration of the American Jewish Tercentenary in 1954, the ninth grade class at Temple Judea in Philadelphia staged "This Is Your Life," a pageant mimicking the format of the popular television show of the same name, in which students playing the roles of famous heroes from the American Jewish past, such as Asser Levy and Haym Solomon, shared the stage with a religious school teacher and a pair of Jewish war veterans. The script, shared for broader use in a Reform pedagogical journal, and numerous others like it, highlighted the contributions of Jewish Americans to improve the lives of their coreligionists as well as those of their fellow countrymen. In marking the three hundredth anniversary of the American Jewish community with performances such as these, educators hoped to inspire students with examples of exemplary American Jewish citizens and to encourage them to identify as proud citizens of a free country.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> "Union Institute Junior Session, Summer 1962, Session Theme: Jews in Distant Lands," Box 2, Folder 12, MS-648, Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute Records, American Jewish Archives.

<sup>51</sup> "This Is Your Life," *Jewish Teacher* 23.2 (January 1955): 12-14. The American Jewish Tercentenary Committee released a list of program materials for teachers and others planning Tercentenary ceremonies and celebrations,

Drama figured prominently in Camp Ramah's program of informal education because it facilitated opportunities to fulfill core values of the institution – the observance of Jewish holidays and religious traditions, and the promotion of Hebrew as an everyday living language. At Camp Ramah in the Poconos in the summer of 1965, staff relied on theater and role-playing activities to create meaningful *Tisha B'Av* programming for campers. To commemorate the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av, a solemn day of mourning for the destruction of the Temples in Jerusalem and other catastrophes throughout Jewish history, campers in the Poconos attended a performance of a radio play about the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, as part of Ramah's mission to promote fluency in Hebrew as a core value in Jewish living, Ramah campers put on a Hebrew-language play every summer, including both adaptations of Jewish folk tales as well as popular English stories such as *The Wizard of Oz* and *Alice in Wonderland*.<sup>53</sup>

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which included thirty plays and radio scripts on American Jewish history, as well as several filmstrips and other teaching aids. See "Program Materials for the American Jewish Tercentenary," December 1954, Box 147, Folder 20, I-1, American Jewish Historical Society Records, American Jewish Historical Society, Center for Jewish History. For a critical perspective on the themes of the Tercentenary celebrations, see Wenger, *History Lessons*, 215-222.

<sup>52</sup> "Tisha B'Av – Nitzanim – Summer 1965," Camp Ramah Records, Box 11, Folder 27, RG 28, Jewish Theological Seminary.

<sup>53</sup> On the performance of plays in Hebrew at Ramah, see, for example, Barry Mesch, "General Report on Aidah Bet," Camp Ramah Wisconsin, Summer 1965, Box 11, Folder 29, RG 28, Camp Ramah Records, Jewish Theological Seminary; and Morris Freedman, "Camp Ramah: Where Hebrew is the Key – A Full Jewish Education for a Full Jewish Life," *Commentary* 19.5 (May 1955): 432. On religious observance and Hebrew fluency as primary educational objectives of Ramah, see "The Story of Camp Ramah," promotional brochure, 1957, in Box

At Ramah and other Jewish educational venues across the country, teachers and staff used theater as a compelling and interactive vehicle for imparting not only knowledge, skills, and values, but also emotional impressions. Samuel Citron and others hoped that the sentiments and reactions evoked in students by participating in or witnessing a dramatic performance would more effectively motivate their Jewish pride and loyalty.<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, Jewish schools and camps often used the assembly, another form of public spectacle, as a means of dramatizing and enacting American Jewish identity in vivid fashion. Assembly programs gathered an entire student body or camp together for readings, songs, prayers, and dramatic presentations, often in observance of a Jewish or American holiday. In the process, Jewish youth participated in carefully structured ceremonies designed both to instruct and to inspire, ceremonies that resembled assemblies they were used to attending in public school. Assembly programs thus aided in integrating the Jewish child into both American and Jewish cultural spheres.

In 1948, the United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education published *50 Assembly Programs for the Jewish School*, a collection of suggestions for activities and ceremonies to mark such occasions as Purim, Passover, Thanksgiving, and Lincoln's Birthday, along with thematic

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29, Folder 3, P-898, Samuel Geffen Papers, American Jewish Historical Society Archives, Center for Jewish History.

<sup>54</sup> For other examples of the use of drama in religious schools in the postwar period, see Leah Abrams, "'The Big Surprise' – A Class Project in Dramatics for Tu B'Shevat"; and Ruth Pesselnick, "Puppets as Visual Aids in Teaching Bible Stories," *Synagogue School* 14.3 (February 1956): 17-21 and 22-23, respectively.

programming on topics such as “The Jewish Home,” “Women in Israel,” and “Jewish Music.” Typical suggested programs featured opening remarks by a rabbi or teacher, followed by songs and prayers, dramatic readings, and quiz contests. The book included a series of opening and closing prayers for use at every assembly, as well as the “Pledge of Allegiance” and a “Pledge of Loyalty to the Jewish Flag,” which consisted of oaths to God, Torah, and the Jewish people, as well as a promise to “live some part of every day in a Jewish way, and to be of service to my fellowmen.”<sup>55</sup> The assembly programs in this 1948 manual illustrate how the Conservative movement’s educational department hoped educators would instill Jewish and American values and loyalties in their students through the public performance of culture.

Across the ideological spectrum, schools, synagogues, and camps made use of the assembly as a potent teaching tool. According to a 1959 survey of Jewish schools in Greater New York, eighty-five percent of the institutions studied held assemblies to celebrate Jewish holidays and special events. The Reform-affiliated Mount Zion Temple Religious School in St. Paul, Minnesota included a time slot for assemblies (as an alternative to regular religious services) into its standard Sunday schedule. Beth Tfiloh, the Orthodox congregation in Baltimore with both all-day and part-time schools, held regular

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<sup>55</sup> Sussman and Segal, 8-10, 182. The book was published in 1948 and presumably composed prior to the establishment of the state of Israel. See also Louis L. Ruffman, Ben M. Edidin, and Samuel J. Citron, *The School Assembly: A Manual for Jewish Schools* (New York: Jewish Education Committee, 1953); and Louis Lister, ed., *The Religious School Assembly Handbook* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1963).

assemblies in observance of Jewish festivals, including Passover seders, and also American holidays, such as Washington's and Lincoln's Birthdays.<sup>56</sup>

Postwar Hanukkah celebrations in schools and camps often followed the model of an assembly, combining the traditional ritual elements of the holiday with additional readings, songs, and thematic reflections on freedom and Jewish survival. In 1965, the Education Department of Workmen's Circle, a socialist Jewish organization with Yiddish cultural roots headquartered in New York City, produced a Hanukkah assembly program for use in affiliated Workmen's Circle schools. Despite the organization's secular leanings, the pamphlet justified the celebration of Hanukkah, a holiday marking the triumph of the Maccabees over their oppressors, as "an expression of Jewish pride and desire for Jewish survival."<sup>57</sup>

To inculcate in students an appreciation for Jewish culture and history, as well as the universal values of freedom and self-determination, the Education Department created an assembly celebration consisting of Yiddish songs, English readings, and a modified candlelighting ceremony, in which each of the eight Hanukkah candles was connected to a discrete value, such as faith, freedom, courage, love, and peace. Echoing the rhetoric and geopolitics of the

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<sup>56</sup> Dushkin and Engelman, *Jewish Education in the United States*, 199-201; *Teacher's Manual*, Mount Zion Temple Religious School, Sunday Schedules - 1957-1958, Box 4, Folder 4, MS-680, Tartak Learning Center Collection, American Jewish Archives; *Beth Tfiloh Spring Festival*, May 1948, Beth Tfiloh Archives.

<sup>57</sup> Workmen's Circle Education Department, *Chanuka* (New York: Workmen's Circle Education Department, 1965), *i*.

Cold War, the ceremony script described freedom, the essence of the Maccabean victory, as “the goal that has guided the destiny of the world,” a goal whose realization for all peoples now requires the courage of free people willing to fight for those who are not free.<sup>58</sup> In this assembly program, the Workmen’s Circle Education Department thus bestowed Hanukkah with contemporary relevance for an audience of nonreligious young American Jews and their parents, recasting it as a holiday that celebrated both Jewish survival and the values and military missions of the United States in the Cold War.<sup>59</sup>

Assemblies also provided important opportunities for educators to teach students about the Holocaust. School teachers and camp staff frequently wove discussion of the Nazi tragedy into religious services conducted within an assembly context, inserting new readings and ceremonies to commemorate and mourn the destruction of European Jewry. As Hasia Diner has shown, this effort began after the war and carried into the 1950s in various schools and camps, such as the Sholem Aleichem Folk Schools. As the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising of April 1943 often coincided with the timing of school Passover celebrations, the occasion provided Jewish schools with the opportunity to weave

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 3-5.

<sup>59</sup> For another example of a Hanukkah assembly program from the period, see Rose Schnall, “Two Hanukah Programs,” *Synagogue School* 14.2 (November 1955): 29-30, 32. For more on how celebrations and meanings of Hanukkah for American Jews have evolved over time, see Dianne Ashton, *Hanukkah in America: A History* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

lessons about the Holocaust into a discussion of the seder ritual and the holiday's themes of tyranny, liberation, and redemption.<sup>60</sup>

In the 1960s, following the Eichmann trial, the incorporation of Holocaust memorialization into assembly programs became even more commonplace. A 1964 Sabbath prayer service at Camp Saratoga, a Reform summer camp in California, consisted of a series of readings about events in Jewish history, interspersed with prayers and biblical excerpts. One reading described how Europe was overtaken by “a madman and his name was Adolph Hitler and he [. . .] murdered six million of our men, women, and children.” The script mitigated the horror of this period in Jewish history, however, by transitioning quickly to the establishment of the state of Israel as a “new hope” and the fulfillment of biblical prophecy about return and redemption.<sup>61</sup>

Likewise, campers at Ramah in the Poconos in the summer of 1965 participated in an evening ceremony marking Tisha B'Av, in which the traditional reading of the *Book of Lamentations* was supplemented by readings from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, a book of poems composed by children in the

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<sup>60</sup> On postwar Holocaust education and assemblies, see Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love*, 53, 131-133; Sheramy, ‘Resistance and War,’ and Krasner, *Benderly Boys*, 347-351.

<sup>61</sup> “Shabbat Services, July 24, 1964,” Camp Saratoga, Box 1, Folder 14, MS-676, Swig Camp Institute Records, American Jewish Archives. On Zionism in Reform education after World War II, see “Katz, “Pen Pals, Pilgrims, and Pioneers: Reform Youth and Israel.”

Theresienstadt internment camp. An “Eternal Candle” was lit expressly in memory of the six million who perished in the Holocaust.<sup>62</sup>

The Jewish Education Committee of New York circulated ideas for ceremonies such as these, along with other suggestions for teaching the Holocaust, in a 1962 volume entitled *Flame and Fury*. “It is advisable not to dwell on the atrocities but rather to stress the enormous fortitude which was required in order to withstand the ordeal,” wrote the book’s author, and to “build attitudes of sympathy and respect” in students for the victims of Hitler’s wrath. Accordingly, along with tips on how to stage a classroom recreation of the trial of Adolf Eichmann and various recommendations for appropriate art projects about pre-war European Jewish life, the book included a sample ceremony for Yom Ha-Shoah, the officially sanctioned day of Holocaust remembrance first established in Israel in 1951. The ceremony included the chanting of traditional funereal prayers, but these sorrowful moments were mitigated by the recitation of a speech by Mordecai Anielewicz, leader of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, and the singing of the “Song of the Partisans,” the uplifting and defiant hymn of the Jewish resistance fighters of Vilna. The ceremony thus emphasized bravery and hope, rather than destruction and despair.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> “Tisha B’Av – Nitzanim – Summer 1965,” Box 11, Folder 27, RG 28, Camp Ramah Records, Jewish Theological Seminary.

<sup>63</sup> On the establishment of Yom Ha-Shoah and the competing effort by some American Jews to use the tenth day of the Hebrew month of Tevet as a day for Holocaust remembrance, see Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love*, 52-59. On “The Song of the Partisans” and the popularity of this and other musical selections in Holocaust memorial culture in the 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s, see Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love*, 80-82; and a

As with theater, educators used the assembly to involve Jewish children in their own education, to instill them with the positive and memorable associations with Judaism and American Jewish culture that they believed would motivate them to remain Jewish, withstanding the pressures of anti-Semitism and assimilation. Frequently, assemblies provided opportunities for young American Jews to learn not only about Jewish holidays and history, but also the connections between Jewish and American values and traditions. They also offered educators a means for teaching children about the Holocaust through interactive presentations that stressed the inspirational qualities of valor and dignity in European Jews. Teachers used this strategy to render Holocaust victims more relatable and worthy of emulation for young American Jews, and to attempt to lessen the potential negative effects of associating Jewishness with victimhood and weakness in their students' minds. They did so in an effort to make young American Jews feel good about being Jewish, to present Jewish identity to them as something that would enhance their lives in a positive way.

### ***Shira v'Rikud*: Inculcating Love for Israel with Song and Dance**

In 1948, Alexander Dushkin, a Benderly acolyte and executive director of the JEC, penned an editorial in *Jewish Education* on the potential impact of the new state of Israel on American Jewish pedagogy. Declaring a need for a "new curriculum for the American Jewish school," one that would bring focus and attention to the present and future of Jewish life, Dushkin expressed gratitude for

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discussion of the song's origins on the website of *Yad Vashem*, Israel's Holocaust museum and research center, available here: [http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/music/vilna\\_partisans\\_zog\\_nit\\_keyn\\_mol.asp](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/music/vilna_partisans_zog_nit_keyn_mol.asp) (accessed June 11, 2014).

the “educational gifts of new events, new heroes, new stories [. . .] songs, [and] dances” that Israel’s nascent culture could offer in this regard.<sup>64</sup>

Over the next decade, according to statistics compiled in a 1959 national study of American Jewish educational practices, educators moved slowly to introduce Israel into their curricula as a discrete subject of study. At the same time, however, other signs pointed to the increased importance of Israel and Israeli culture in American Jewish education in the postwar era: the adoption of the Sephardi pronunciation of Hebrew in Conservative religious schools after 1948; the ubiquity of Israel-related cultural content in Reform schools and camps, despite the Reform movement’s decades-long opposition to Zionism until 1937; and the widespread popularity of Israeli dance and folk songs as teaching tools in both formal and informal Jewish education.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Alexander Dushkin, “Implications of the Jewish State for American Jewish Education,” *Jewish Education* 19.2 (Spring 1948): 4.

<sup>65</sup> There is a considerable literature, both primary and secondary, debating and evaluating Israel’s place and significance in American Jewish education between 1948 and 1967. The 1959 National Study of Jewish Education concluded that few schools had in fact elevated the study of Israel to the status of a separate subject in their curricula. See Dushkin and Engelman, *Jewish Education in the United States*, 194-195. As late as 1966, educator Barry Chazan bemoaned what he termed the “complete neglect” of Israel in Jewish schools. See Barry Chazan, “The Role of Israel in Jewish Education,” *Synagogue School* 24.2 (Winter 1966): 15-19. For historian Jonathan Krasner’s explanation of this relative lack of attention paid to Israel, see his “*Jewish Education and American Jewish Education, Part II*,” *Journal of Jewish Education* 71 (2005): 295-297. On the other hand, as the previous chapter demonstrated, news and cultural developments from Israel dominated the pages of *World Over* and other Jewish children’s magazines from the era, and pedagogical journals published articles with suggestions for Israel-themed classroom activities. See David Kuselewitz, “Israel and Zionism in the Curriculum of Our Schools,” *Jewish Education* 28.3 (Spring 1958): 74-83; and Benjamin Herson, “Providing Meaningful Experiences Through Relating Ourselves to Israel,” *Synagogue School* 14.2 (November

Concurrently, the faculty of the Teachers Institute of the Conservative-affiliated Jewish Theological Seminary revised the curriculum after World War II to include a department of arts education. By 1948, student teachers at the Institute could take classes leading to certification in music, theater, and other areas of the arts. Courses on “Music in Jewish Education,” “Development of Palestinian Music,” and “Movement as an Educational and Creative Medium” prepared teachers to bring music and dance into American Jewish classrooms and camps across the country.<sup>66</sup>

“The songs of a people describe its history and spirit,” wrote Cantor Harold Orbach of Temple Israel in Detroit in 1963. His curriculum of Hebrew folk songs, published in the Reform pedagogical journal *The Jewish Teacher*, aimed to help teachers use music to enliven the teaching of recent Jewish history and of life in

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1955): 23-24; and, for an Orthodox perspective, Meyer Karlin, “Teaching Love for *Eretz Yisroel* in our *Yeshivos*,” *Jewish Parent* 8.3 (December 1956): 8-9. More recently, scholar Emily Alice Katz has explored the prominence of Israel and Zionist content in Reform education in the postwar era, and Melissa Klapper’s overview of American Jewish education describes Israel as a cornerstone of both postwar American Jewish identity and educational efforts by the 1960s. See Katz, “Pen Pals, Pilgrims, and Pioneers,” 249-276; and Klapper, “The History of Jewish Education in America,” 210-212. On the switch to the Sephardic pronunciation of Hebrew as official policy in the Conservative movement, see Ira Sud, “The Sephardic Pronunciation in the Hebrew School,” *Synagogue School* 9.2 (November 1950): 9-12. On the Reform movement’s 1937 Columbus Platform and its evolving attitude toward Palestine and Zionism, see Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 318-320, 326-334.

<sup>66</sup> Isidor Margolis, *Jewish Teacher Training Schools in the United States* (New York: National Council for Torah Education of Mizrahi-Hapoel HaMizrachi, 1964), 124-125, 128.

modern-day Israel in religious schools.<sup>67</sup> For Orbach and other Jewish educators, the teaching of Israeli and Jewish music provided an opportunity to engage students with Jewish history and current events; with the Hebrew language; and with the diverse and emerging folk traditions of the new Jewish state.

Orbach's proposed curriculum was organized both chronologically and thematically, with sections introducing songs from the pre-state era of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; songs composed during the 1948 War of Independence; songs about "the geography of the land"; and songs with biblical roots.<sup>68</sup> Orbach's curriculum is significant, not only as further evidence of the Reform movement's evolution toward the adoption of Zionism as a core value following World War II, but also because Orbach was not alone in his assertions and efforts. Educators across ideological boundaries found music to be a valuable teaching tool in their desire to inspire positive reactions in their students toward Jewish culture and Israel.<sup>69</sup>

Harry Coopersmith played an integral role in popularizing Jewish and Israeli music and facilitating its wide use in Jewish schools and summer camps. As the JEC's music director, Coopersmith contributed articles to Jewish

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<sup>67</sup> Harold Orbach, "The Teaching of Israel – Through the Teaching of Jewish Music," *Jewish Teacher* 32.2 (December 1963): 7.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8.

<sup>69</sup> On the Reform movement's relationship to Zionism from the late nineteenth century to the post-World War II period, see Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 293-295, 326-334.

pedagogical journals on the benefits of music for educational programs and wrote a sample music curriculum for use in religious schools. He also edited multiple collections of Jewish songs, many of which highlighted the music of pre-state Palestine and, after 1948, the new state of Israel.<sup>70</sup>

In 1950, the United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education issued Coopersmith's *The Songs We Sing*, a volume featuring four hundred and fifty pages of Jewish songs on a variety of themes. The book included songs from Jewish liturgy and for holiday celebrations, as well as popular songs in Yiddish and English. Only two years after the founding of the state of Israel, Coopersmith dedicated a considerable section of the book to Israeli music, with more than sixty songs dedicated to the "Songs of Israel." Coopersmith divided the Israel section of his volume thematically, offering songs on topics such as *aliyah*, that is, immigrants "going up" to the land to start a new life; and "Love of Land," songs dedicated to geographical features in Israel such as the Negev Desert, the mountains, and the Sea of Galilee. Other collections of Israeli songs in the book celebrated the *chalutzim*, the pioneers who settled and worked the land, and their work—plowing the fields and building and guarding the new outposts of Jewish settlement.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> On Coopersmith, see Krasner, *Benderly Boys*, 354-356, 358-360. See also Harry Coopersmith, "Six-Year Song Curriculum for Congregational Schools," *Synagogue School* 8.1 (September 1949): 3-11; Harry Coopersmith, Deborah Pessin, and Margot Tomes, *Songs of Zion* (New York: Behrman House, 1942); and Harry Coopersmith, *The New Jewish Song Book* (New York: Behrman House, 1965).

<sup>71</sup> Harry Coopersmith, ed., *The Songs We Sing* (New York: United Synagogue Commission on Jewish Education, 1950), xi-xx.

As he explained in the preface to the book, Coopersmith hoped his volume would address the “awakened concern on the part of educators and parents for the development of an integrated Jewish personality [in children] through a curriculum providing for emotional as well as intellectual growth.” He invoked the potential of music to bring children and parents together, and to inspire youth with feelings of pleasure and enthusiasm for their heritage through Jewish song.<sup>72</sup> In Coopersmith’s vision, music fit perfectly into the larger Lewinian project of creating formative happy experiences for Jewish children, so as to assuage their fears and insecurities about being Jewish, and replace them with positive associations and strong emotional bonds.

Coopersmith’s selections of Israeli music featured up-tempo pieces, accompanied by illustrations of people dancing, laboring in fields, and hiking the mountains of the Promised Land. Songs such as “*Artza Alinu*” (“We Are Ascending to the Land”), “*Ashrey Ha-Ish*” (“Happy is the Man”), and “*Tehezakna*” (“Oh Strengthen”) captured and evoked the joy of Jewish pioneers settling and working the land in idealized fashion.<sup>73</sup> Schools and camps, seeking to capitalize on and produce similar reactions in students, integrated Israeli folk songs into their educational programs.

At *Beth HaYeled* (“House of the Child”), a Hebrew-language nursery school located in a synagogue on the Upper West Side in New York City, young attendees learned simple Hebrew and Israeli folk songs as part of the regular

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., *vii*.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 237-238, 257-259, 302-303.

curriculum. The United Hebrew Folk School of Detroit, a Labor Zionist institution, advertised the teaching of both “modern Hebrew and Yiddish songs” to entice parents to enroll their children in 1956. In one of the strongest examples of recognition that Jewish music was a subject worthy of study, the Hebrew Arts School of Music and Dance opened its doors in New York City in the early 1950s to provide instruction for children and adults in both traditional and contemporary forms of Jewish cultural expression, including Israeli music alongside traditional folk songs and Yiddish music. In 1963, two hundred and fifty students enrolled in the afterschool program, which included opportunities to participate in choral and orchestral performances, as well as musical assemblies.<sup>74</sup>

Israeli songs formed an integral part of the activities at summer camps like Union Institute. A 1956 list of favorite camp songs from Union Institute, geared both to appeal to Americanized Jewish youth and to promote Judaism and Israeli culture, included several Israeli folk songs, including “*Artza Alinu*” and “*Tzena*” (“Come Out”), alongside Hebrew liturgical selections and secular folk songs such as “I Gave My Love a Cherry” and “On Top of Old Smoky.” Song sessions, often accompanied by Israeli dancing, took place after Sabbath evening meals on

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<sup>74</sup> Miriam Heller and Leah Gelb, “The Beth Hayered,” *Jewish Education* 20.1 (November 1948): 53-58; “Community, Synagogue Religious Schools Open Registration for Fall Semester,” *Detroit Jewish News*, August 30, 1957, 5; Phyllis Ehrlich, “Jewish Heritage Taught With Lessons in Music,” *New York Times*, November 6, 1963, p. 68. On the founding and philosophy of *Beth Hayered*, see also Miriam Heller Guttman, “The Emergence of Beth Hayered,” *Jewish Education* 27.1 (Fall 1956): 57. On the evolution of the Hebrew Arts School for Music and Dance into a community institution without a Jewish cultural focus, see <http://www.kaufmanmusiccenter.org/kc/about/kaufman-center-history>, accessed June 23, 2014.

Fridays, and on other regular occasions in the weekly schedule. In the early 1960s, the camp hired an Israeli music specialist who significantly expanded Union Institute's catalog of Israeli songs. A 1963 songbook included songs from the Israeli composer Naomi Shemer, "*Ha-Derekh Aruka*" ("The Long Road") and "*Rad Ha-Layla*" ("Night is Coming Down") by the Israeli writer Ya'akov Orland.<sup>75</sup>

Jewish music, including Israeli folk songs, also figured prominently in camp activities at Ramah. In the camp's early years, according to historian Shuly Rubin Schwartz, campers learned the songs and dances of the *halutzim*, or pioneers, who settled Palestine in the early decades of the twentieth century, as they competed against each other in teams of performers. By 1962, Camp Ramah in the Poconos featured a group of campers devoted to learning Israeli songs, as well as music classes designed around the recorder instrument and a book of Israeli folk music.<sup>76</sup>

Along with singing Israeli folk songs, educators in schools and camps also introduced American Jewish youth to Israeli folk dancing in an effort to bring them closer to the culture of the Jewish state and to create an atmosphere of fun and excitement. In the early 1930s, the JEC hired dance educator Dvora Lapson to spread knowledge of and appreciation for Jewish folk dance traditions in

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<sup>75</sup> "Some Favorite Camp Songs at Union Institute-UAHC," November 1956, Box 4, Folder 1, MS-648, Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute Records, American Jewish Archives; Judah M. Cohen, "Singing Out for Judaism: A History of Song Leaders and Song Leading at Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute," in *A Place of Our Own: The Rise of Reform Jewish Camping*, eds. Michael M. Lorge and Gary P. Zola (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 179-193.

<sup>76</sup> Shuly Rubin Schwartz, "Camp Ramah: The Early Years," 28; "Evaluation of Music Program, Camp Ramah in the Poconos, 1962," Box 10, Folder 21, RG 28, Camp Ramah Records, Jewish Theological Seminary.

Jewish schools, community centers, and summer camps. With the establishment of the state of Israel and the expansion of the Jewish educational landscape in the postwar decades, these efforts intensified and attracted a larger audience. Lapson wrote two volumes on Jewish dance traditions for use in schools and other institutions, *Dances of the Jewish People* (1954) and *Folk Dances for Jewish Festivals* (1961), both of which included sheet music, dance step instructions, lyrics translations, and explanations of each song's origin and mood.<sup>77</sup>

"In the course of one generation," Lapson wrote in 1952, "the Jewish dance has become an integral part of our schools." With hundreds of teachers receiving special training and certification in Jewish dance education, and the proliferation of recordings and other materials for teaching dance in schools, camps, and community centers, dance had become a mainstay of both formal and informal Jewish education at midcentury.<sup>78</sup>

According to Lapson, the growing popularity of dance in Jewish schools and camps lay in its broad applicability to nearly every segment of the curriculum, as well as its potential for uniting Jewish youth of different backgrounds and

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<sup>77</sup> Dvora Lapson, *Dances of the Jewish People* (New York: Jewish Education Committee, 1954); Dvora Lapson, *Folk Dances for Jewish Festivals* (New York: Jewish Education Committee, 1961).

<sup>78</sup> Dvora Lapson, "They Dance Together," *Jewish Education* 23.3 (Fall 1952): 60-62. A third of the schools polled in the Greater New York survey cited by Alexander Dushkin and Uriah Engelman in 1959 claimed to teach dancing as a separate subject, while others incorporated dance and drama into their assembly programs. See Dushkin and Engelman, *Jewish Education in the United States*, 199.

ideological orientations. She argued that dance provided teachers with a method for teaching Jewish history, literature, languages, and holidays in their classrooms. Dances based on or inspired by biblical stories brought the experiences of the Israelites and King David to life, while Jewish folk dances from Eastern Europe could teach students a few words of Yiddish, “give the children a glimpse into the world of their grandparents, and provide an ideal emotional bond with their Jewish cultural and social background.”<sup>79</sup> Lapson hailed the ability of dance education to inculcate positive feelings of group belongingness, deemed so critical to the development of a healthy and well-integrated American Jewish personality by Kurt Lewin and his contemporaries.

Lapson also singled out Israeli folk dances for their educational value, as they helped the Jewish child to appreciate both Israel’s centrality to Jewish identity in the Jewish past and present, and to recognize their common bond with Jews from all over the world who had sought refuge in the Jewish state. Just as Jewish children’s periodicals of the era highlighted the conditions of life in Jewish communities around the world, Israeli dances, inspired by Eastern European, Yemenite, and Arab influences, similarly introduced American Jewish children to the diverse cultural traditions of their coreligionists from around the world. Lapson claimed that these dances helped young American Jews to appreciate the richness and vibrancy of Jewish life around the world, exemplified by the diverse gathering of Jews in Israel, and to identify with and “express in their own

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 60-62.

way the joy and enthusiasm which the new Jewish homeland has stirred up in the heart of every Jew.”<sup>80</sup>

Two examples of dances from Lapson’s *Dances of the Jewish People* illustrate her argument that dance could instill feelings of joy, pride, and security in Jewish participants. Israeli dances, she wrote in her introduction, represent “a new form, expressive of a young country, vigorously building a new life on its beloved soil.” The first dance in the book, the widely popular and performed “*Mayim*” (Water), encapsulated the spirit of this vision. Alongside tempo directions calling dancers to move “quickly and gaily,” Lapson explained that the dance conveys the rush of flowing water and “the joy of discovering water in an arid country.” She included the biblical source for the dance’s lyrics, a quotation from Isaiah about drawing water from the wells of salvation.<sup>81</sup>

The next dance in Lapson’s book, “*Livshu Na Oz*” (Put On Strength), consisted of a “simple line dance performed with much vigor.” Influenced by an Arabian step, the dance called for participants to slide, hop, and jump in two lines, accompanied by the following lyrics: “Put on strength/The town is our fortress/Boys, boys/With the crown of heroes.”<sup>82</sup> This song and dance, like so many other aspects of Israeli and Zionist culture from the era, emphasized masculine strength, bravery, and military might. Like literary depictions of Israeli pioneers and fighters in children’s magazines and textbooks, this vicarious

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 61-62.

<sup>81</sup> Lapson, *Dances of the Jewish People*, 7-9.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

celebration of Jewish masculinity, epitomized by the valiant Israeli soldier, could counteract lingering negative stereotypes of the Jewish male as weak and powerless, and instill positive associations with Israel and Jewish culture at the same time.<sup>83</sup>

Schools across the country incorporated dance into their educational programs. The Downtown Talmud Torah in New York City offered Jewish folk dance to students in the late 1940s as part of an extensive program of extracurricular activities that also incorporated drama and choral singing. The 1952 curriculum for the eighth grade class at Shaare Emeth, the Reform temple in St. Louis referred to earlier, incorporated folk dancing sessions into the group's study of modern Israel. Second graders at the Hebrew Institute in Pittsburgh, under the direction of an Israeli teacher, performed Israeli dances for their parents and fellow students as part of a school Hanukkah celebration in 1954.<sup>84</sup>

Dance figured even more prominently in the educational landscape of intensive Jewish camps, which incorporated it into programs built to teach an

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<sup>83</sup> On Zionist ideals, iconography, and masculinity in American Jewish culture, see Krasner, "'New Jews' in an Old-New Land," 9-13; Moore, *To the Golden Cities*, 247-261; Mark A. Raider, *The Emergence of American Zionism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 69-147, *passim*; and Arthur Aryeh Goren, "'Anu banu artza' in America: The Americanization of the *Halutz* Ideal," in *Envisioning Israel: The Changing Ideals and Images of North American Jews*, ed. Allon Gal (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 81-116.

<sup>84</sup> Jacob Mittleman, "Pupil Activities," *Jewish Education* 18.3 (Summer 1947): 31-32, 36; Paul Gorin, "Eighth Grade: Second Unit of Study: Modern Israel," *Course of Studies of Shaare Emeth Religious School* (St. Louis, MO), August 1952, Box 1, Folder 12, MS-680, Tartak Learning Center Collection, American Jewish Archives; "Hebrew Institute," *American Jewish Outlook* 41.8 (Pittsburgh), December 17, 1954, 19.

appreciation for Jewish living and for Israel, and at the same time provided structured opportunities for flirting and exploration of sexuality between Jewish boys and girls. At the Labor-Zionist Habonim Dror camps in the Northeast and Midwest in 1957, campers danced the *hora* and performed a “Yemenite Dance” for parents on Visitors Day. Descriptions of Israeli dancing at Camp Tel Yehudah, the national camp for Jewish teenagers affiliated with the Zionist organization Young Judaea, filled the pages of the group’s year-round magazine in the late 1940s, along with instructions for dancing the *hora* and an explanation of its origins.<sup>85</sup>

The 1965 Union Institute brochure included a photo of a group of campers and counselors dancing above the list of activity programs; similar lists in other Union Institute brochures throughout the 1950s and early 1960s all included dancing as a core camp activity.<sup>86</sup> At Ramah in the Poconos in the summer of

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<sup>85</sup> David Breslau, *Adventure in Pioneering: The Story of 25 Years of Habonim Camping* (New York: CHAY Commission of the Labor Zionist Movement/Shulsinger Bros., 1957), photographs between 136-137. See the also the discussion of folk dancing as an integral part of the Sabbath observance at Camp Kvutza in 1943 on p.37-38. On dancing at Tel Yehudah and in the Young Judaea movement, see Basha Persoff, “A Staff Member at Tel Yehudah,” *The Leader* 4.1(Fall 1949): 16-18; “The New Palestinian Hora,” *The Leader* 2.3 (February-March 1948): 14-15; “Dance Feature: Bo Dodi,” *The Leader* (Summer 1949): 13.

<sup>86</sup> Union Institute promotional brochure, 1965, Box 1, Folder 9, MS-672, Ernst M. Lorge Papers, American Jewish Archives. See brochures from other years in folder for similar lists of activities. Folk dancing as an elective activity also appears often in the daily schedules of Union Institute programming. See for example, the daily schedule for the Summer 1962 Junior Session, Box 2, Folder 12, MS-648, Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute Records, American Jewish Archives; and “Daily Schedule,” Summer 1957, Box 2, Folder 5, MS-672, Ernst M. Lorge Papers, American Jewish Archives.

1962, campers participated in Israeli dancing every Friday night as part of their Sabbath celebrations. That same year, the National Ramah Commission issued a sample activity guide for dance instructors at Ramah camps, offering them suggestions on how to build interest in and structure a program of Israeli and Jewish folk dancing over the course of eight weeks. The guide urged instructors to encourage interest in dancing among the campers, in part, by having “one demonstration by a good-looking girl with an inch or two of leg showing,” and a boy-girl demonstration “involving physical contact” and presenting sexuality as “healthiness.”<sup>87</sup> Teaching Israeli folk dances at camp thus served not only to strengthen campers’ relationship to Israel in a fun and engaging way, but also to facilitate heterosocial contact and encourage boys and girls to form relationships around a shared love of Israel and Jewish culture.

The Orthodox day schools formed under the aegis of Torah Umesorah did not incorporate Israeli dance into their programs, because they did not wish to encourage what they deemed to be inappropriate contact between the sexes, and because they wished to present Israel to their students in a manner consistent with their overall educational approach, as the Holy Land of the Bible and the ideal Jewish society. In a 1956 article for *The Jewish Parent*, a magazine for the parents of students in Torah Umesorah schools, Rabbi Meyer

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<sup>87</sup> “Bogrim Evening Activities – Summer 1962,” Camp Ramah in the Poconos, Box 10, Folder 21, RG 28, Camp Ramah Records, Jewish Theological Seminary; “Israeli Folk Dance,” National Ramah Commission, Box 9, Folder 9, RG 28, Camp Ramah Records, Jewish Theological Seminary. See also the description of Friday night dancing at Camp Ramah in Connecticut in 1955 in Freedman, “Camp Ramah: Where Hebrew is the Key,” 434-435.

Karlin recommended that Orthodox schools use discussions of the Land of Israel in the Bible and the Talmud to inculcate a love for Israel in their students. When students read the study of God's promise to Abraham and his journey to Canaan, for example, Karlin advised that "emphasis should be placed upon the fact that the State of Israel today is part of the land promised to our forefathers." Students should also study the agricultural laws that apply to produce grown in Israel, he recommended, since those laws now have practical applications for Jews today. In this manner, he believed, Orthodox children would grow to embrace and appreciate Israel for its religious significance, in addition to its political importance.<sup>88</sup> While Karlin rejected the use of Israeli folk culture, nevertheless, his ultimate pedagogical goal – teaching students to identify with and form emotional attachments to the Land of Israel – remained the same as that of most of his non-Orthodox contemporaries.

As with music, drama, and assembly programs, many educators turned to dance as yet another method of inculcating students with positive emotional connections to Jewish group life. While theater and assemblies often blended American and Jewish cultural traditions and themes, reinforcing the lesson that Jews belonged in America and that their holidays, history, and values fit comfortably within the American milieu, however, learning the folk dances and

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<sup>88</sup> Meyer Karlin, "Teaching Love for Eretz Yisroel in Our Yeshivos," in *Hebrew Day School Education: An Overview*, ed. Joseph Kaminetsky (New York: Torah Umesorah/The National Society for Hebrew Day Schools, 1970), 200-204.

songs of Israel reinforced other lessons: the centrality of Israel and its culture to a vibrant and meaningful Jewish life in America.<sup>89</sup>

This theme both reflected and magnified a growing trend in American Jewish culture in the 1960s and beyond, as political and philanthropic support for Israel became the single most effective unifying causes in an American Jewish community otherwise divided by religious denomination. Without question, schools and summer camps played a significant role in bringing Israel to the forefront of the American Jewish consciousness for those who came of age in the 1950s and 1960s. Israel rose to occupy a prominent place in American Jewish education, not only because it offered American Jews a rallying point of consensus, but also because it provided a wellspring of opportunities – in music and dance, as well as other cultural forms – to provide American Jewish children with the critically important positive connections to Jewish group life championed by Kurt Lewin and others.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> While Israeli dance functioned to teach young American Jews the values of *k'lal yisrael* and Jewish distinctiveness, other forms of dancing in schools and camps, such as social dancing, mirrored the activities of their non-Jewish peers and were designed to facilitate their integration. See, for example, the discussion of social dancing at the Ramaz School, a modern Orthodox day school in Manhattan, in Gurock, "The Ramaz Version of American Orthodoxy," 335-341.

<sup>90</sup> As Melissa Klapper notes in her historical survey of American Jewish education, thanks to a teacher exchange program established in the 1950s, a quarter of the teachers in American Jewish weekday religious schools during the decade were Israeli. On this and the supremacy of Israel in postwar American Jewish education by the 1960s, see Klapper, "The History of Jewish Education in America," 211-212.

## Conclusion

In the fall of 1957, the religious school of Young Israel Center of Oak Woods, an Orthodox institution outside Detroit, published an ad in the *Detroit Jewish News* in the form of a letter addressed “[t]o the Jewish Child.”<sup>91</sup> It read,

Dear Jewish Boy and Girl:

You can’t wait to grow up and be a pride to your parents. You are open-eyed and enthusiastic and you cheerfully expect great things out of life.

There is hardly anything more important and more fun for you than a fine Jewish education on a modern progressive basis. Imagine singing songs, speaking Hebrew, acting in plays – having a good time – and learning what it means to be a Jew all at once!<sup>92</sup>

This ad, though written in the guise of a letter to children, was more likely intended to catch the eye and tug the heartstrings of American Jewish parents. The letter described both the desired outcome, in theory, of a Young Israel education – enthusiastic, cheerful children in whom parents could take pride – and the method for achieving the outcome: a “modern progressive” Jewish education, grounded in fun, engaging approaches to learning.

This 1957 ad for an Orthodox religious school testifies to the widespread popularity of approaches to Jewish education grounded in the ideas of Kurt Lewin and developmental psychology. The notion that the goal of Jewish education is to foster personality development and personal happiness, and that

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<sup>91</sup> On the Young Israel movement and its rightward evolution, see Jeffrey S. Gurock, *American Jewish Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective*, 86-88, 97-99, 227-230; and M. Herbert Danziger, *Returning to Tradition: The Contemporary Revival of Orthodox Judaism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 33-36.

<sup>92</sup> “To the Jewish Child,” *Detroit Jewish News*, August 24, 1956, p.10.

those ends could be met through interactive approaches to learning, such as theater, music, and dance, can be traced back to Lewin's writings in the 1940s. To be sure, visionary educators such as Samson Benderly and his disciples played an indispensable role in this philosophical shift in American Jewish pedagogy, and educational theorists such as Dewey and Kilpatrick contributed vital concepts and techniques to this generation of Jewish teachers. Nevertheless, Lewin's importance to this story, largely ignored by scholars, cannot be denied.

Just as rabbis and educators invested Jewish education with the power to make young American Jews happy and proud of their Jewishness, they also believed in its capacity to integrate youth into the American fold. Uriah Engelman, one of the directors of the 1959 national study of Jewish education, wrote in 1947 that a progressive course of studies in the modern Hebrew school had the potential to "help the American Jewish child become integrated intellectually, religiously, aesthetically and emotionally, through his Jewishness, with the wider American environment of which he is an integral part." The study of the arts, along with the study of the Judaic roots of American civic values, Engelman claimed, could help young American Jews find their place as confident members of society, unperturbed by false anti-Semitic claims of Jewish disloyalty or weakness.<sup>93</sup> Across denominational and ideological lines, Jewish educators worked to achieve these goals in an effort to combat the

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<sup>93</sup> Uriah Z. Engelman, "Hebrew Education in America," in *Judaism and the Jewish School: Selected Essays on the Direction and Purpose of Jewish Education*, eds. Judah Pilch and Meir Ben-Horin (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1966), 75.

survival anxiety that shook the American Jewish community in the decades after World War II.

## Conclusion

Because ideas about childhood are not static, but historically contingent, we can learn much about the values, anxieties, and hopes of a society or group by studying its attitudes and approaches toward parenting and education. Childrearing advice literature, children's magazines, and school curricula provide critical insights into the mindset of American Jewish communal leaders during the child-centered postwar era of the baby boom and suburbanization. Their perspectives enrich our scholarly understanding of the ways in which, in the decades after World War II, Jews articulated their way into the American middle-class as Jews.

American Jewish approaches to education and childrearing after World War II encouraged parents and children to embrace Judaism and Jewish culture as a means of attaining personal happiness, emotional security, and middle-class status in contemporary American life. Continued fears about the impact of antisemitism on the psyche of Jewish children in the late 1940s and 1950s, along with rising concerns about intermarriage in the 1960s and the quality and authenticity of suburban Jewish life, framed the manner in which rabbis, educators, psychologists, and other communal professionals envisioned both the means and ends of Jewish education and family life. While these pervasive sources of anxiety created the need for a program of positive Jewishness, Kurt Lewin's theories about the formative importance for children of early positive associations with Jewish culture and group life, and ideas drawn from American Cold War-era culture, which idealized religion and domesticity as the ultimate

sources of happiness, provided the scientific evidence and the rhetoric that influenced how American Jews thought about childrearing and education in this era. American Jews' reliance on the rhetoric of the Cold War, and the eagerness with which they incorporated ideas about child psychology into a Jewish framework in the era of Dr. Spock, are strong indicators of the degree to which Jews successfully integrated themselves into the culture and lifestyle of the American middle class.

Prior to the 1940s, many educators and parents viewed content transmission and the acquisition of ritual skills as the primary goals of Jewish education. School curricula focused on the study of the Bible and other traditional texts, not on the emotional well-being of the child. In the decades after World War II, progressive approaches to Jewish education championed by Samson Benderly and his acolytes in earlier decades became much more widespread, thanks in large part to the arguments made by Kurt Lewin and others engaged in studying and writing about the psychological needs of the Jewish child. In the process, personality adjustment became an equally, if not more, important pedagogical goal, transcending most denominational and ideological divisions in the postwar American Jewish community. Childrearing authorities encouraged parents to send their children to Jewish schools and camps and to make Judaism an integral part of their family life so that their children could learn to feel good about and take pride in being Jewish, and to view their Jewish identity as completely harmonious with American values and attitudes. Accordingly, in Jewish childrearing advice literature from the postwar

era, authorities urged parents to choose biblical names for their children in tribute to both their Jewish and American heritage, and to celebrate Jewish holidays at home for the emotional relief that domestic religion could provide the family. At school, educators provided children with entertaining educational periodicals, which relied on stories, games, and cartoons to teach children about Jewish history, holidays, and current events. In classrooms and camps of various ideological persuasions, teachers incorporated the arts into their activity programs, using theater, dance, and music as engaging methods for inculcating ethnic pride and cultural awareness in American Jewish students.

The post-World War II era was neither a golden age nor a dark age in American Jewish life. On the one hand, pervasive fears about Jewish survival colored the ways in which communal leaders approached childrearing and education, suggesting that the “golden age” label is misplaced. On the other hand, the depth and breadth of American Jewish creativity during this era, as evidenced in both the childrearing literature and the educational materials analyzed here, indicates that this period was not a cultural and intellectual low point, as has also been suggested.

Furthermore, I argue that Kurt Lewin’s theories about the emotional needs of the Jewish child, and the ability of positive Jewish social and cultural experiences to fulfill those needs, had a profound influence on the rabbis, educators, and other childrearing professionals who counseled Jewish parents and taught Jewish children during this era. My work offers new insights into the process by which American Jews articulated a way to be both American and

Jewish in the climate of the Cold War, and explores how they transmitted these integrated visions of American Jewish identity, rooted in ethnicity and religion, to children. This project also provides a case study for scholars interested in examining how minority groups in the United States engage with issues of acculturation and self-preservation as they raise and educate their children to retain their ethnic and cultural identity, and to become American.



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