



KAUFMANN KOHLER

1843-1926

AMERICAN JEWISH SCHOLARSHIP: A SURVEY

In Honor of the Centenary of Kaufmann Kohler

By ISMAR ELBOGEN

HEINRICH HEINE aptly said that the Jew had a portable fatherland. Wherever the Jew migrated he carried with him his spiritual heritage. Different countries at different periods of Jewish history have held the hegemony in Jewish studies. During the past fifty years the mantle of Elijah has fallen on the United States. America was fast becoming a center of Jewish scholarship, and within the past decade it has become the sole center — with the exception of Palestine.

I

OUR sages were wont to express the continuity of Jewish tradition by the expression, "Before the sun of A set, the sun of B rose." Kaufmann Kohler, who was born in the old Kehillah of Fürth, Bavaria, one hundred years ago — May 10, 1843 — had the good fortune to become a link between the generations. He was one of the last *bahurim* of an old-fashioned *yeshivah*, and he became a student of modern universities. As a high school student at Frankfurt, he came under the influence of Samson Raphael Hirsch, and a few years later under the spell of Abraham Geiger, then rabbi of the same city. While the neo-Orthodox Hirsch "imbued him with the divine ardour of true idealism," he received from the Reformer Geiger the inspiration for liberalizing the Jewish religion and for studying it in the light of modern biblical criticism and historical research.

Kohler landed in the United States in 1869. The American Jewish community was then going through a period of

transition. The first generation of Reform Rabbis was nearing Jordan. The thriving Jewish middle class had had their way; services after a new pattern were instituted, held in a modernized house of worship and in an aesthetically attractive form. The small group of rabbis searched for a Credo. What they found was in the main negative, proclaiming what Judaism was not, and saying little about what Judaism stood for or what Reform Judaism was to be. The leaders were disciples of the German school of Reform. They clung to its slogans not realizing that they lived in a new world.

What American Judaism needed was a new program — a revival of the Jewish tradition of learning. America was a colonial land. Jewish immigrants arrived in the tens of thousands and found no spiritual atmosphere. The Sephardic congregations, always very exclusive, showed no interest in attracting the new arrivals. Besides, they had but little to offer as far as Jewish learning was concerned. As a matter of fact, they themselves had to turn for spiritual leadership to the group they looked down upon; the old Sephardic Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia offered its pulpit to Isaac Leeser, a German, in 1829. The choice, however, could not have been a happier one. Leeser was a man of great ability and considerable achievements. It was he who "anglicized" the American Jewish community of the time. Sermons in English, an English translation of the Bible and the prayer book, numerous popular tracts, as well as the monthly publication *The Occident* are to the credit of this indefatigable leader. But Leeser was a self-educated man and no trained scholar. The wisdom he had to offer was secondhand. He was not the creative genius to lay the foundations for scholarly study.

Isaac Mayer Wise tells of an experience he had in a New York synagogue shortly after he landed in 1846. "I asked the *Shamash*," he writes, "whether I could obtain a volume of the Mishnah. That individual laughed so mockingly that I readily perceived what a sign of 'greenness' it was on my part to ask for an ancient Hebrew book in the New World." In another synagogue he listened to what was offered as Jewish learning and found that "ignorance swayed the scepter and darkness ruled."

II

ISAAC M. WISE was to turn the tide. He was a man of vision and of energy. He foresaw that the New World was to become a Jewish center and would have to provide for Jewish spiritual needs. He set about to produce studies on biblical and theological themes. More, he aimed at an organized effort to sow Jewish scholarship in American soil. No sooner did he settle as rabbi in Albany, N. Y., than he launched the project of a union of Jewish congregations with the primary object to educate rabbis and teachers. This is not the place to follow the *via dolorosa* Wise had to travel before he succeeded. A quarter of a century of bitter controversy was needed before the Union of American Hebrew Congregations was formed, with the express purpose "to establish and support a scholastic institute, and the library appertaining hereto, for the education of rabbis, preachers and teachers of religion."

Prior to that, in 1867, Philadelphia, then the citadel of Jewish spiritual life in the United States, had opened a "Maimonides College," which met with no success and closed its doors at the end of 1873. No more successful were the preparatory classes established at Temple Emanu-El in New York City. But the Hebrew Union College, founded by Wise in Cincinnati in 1875, was to endure. It became the first training and (later) research school for Jewish learning in the New World.

The College as such claimed no monopoly of Jewish scholarship. It expected that the graduate rabbis would be the standard bearers of Jewish learning. Soon experience showed that the American rabbinate, with its burden of daily routine and frequent appearance before the public eye which entirely absorbed its energies, had no leisure for study and research. Even Samuel Hirsch, who had come over with a great reputation as thinker and scholar, found no time for further scholarly work. The learned *Hebrew Commentary on Job* by Benjamin Szold, rabbi at Baltimore, was not published before 1886. Marcus Jastrow could only use the leisure enforced by poor health for the preparation of his great work, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (1886-

1903). This product of twenty-five years' labor was the first attempt in the English language to deal with this vast field. It was a momentous event when that distinguished talmudic scholar, Alexander Kohut, was called to New York. He had already achieved a reputation with the publication of four volumes of his monumental *Arukh ha Shalem*; but the manuscript for the remaining four volumes he brought with him on his arrival. Kohut was a student in the classical mold, wholly devoted to his research work. His enthusiasm for study could not fail to command the highest respect of the laymen and professional alike.

The Hebrew Union College was Isaac M. Wise's favorite child. All the organizations which he founded he considered subsidiary to this. It was by no means easy to nurse this child and to secure its existence and growth, to provide the College with an adequate staff and with a useful library. Wise always stressed the need for support of what he conceived to be the center of gravity for Judaism, but his appeals did not meet with too generous a response, and his travails were heavy. The Hebrew Union College started with preparatory courses to which after four years was added a collegiate department. It did not have sufficient means to pay a proper staff and had to employ such volunteer teachers as happened to be available in Cincinnati. A new method had to be worked out for making rabbinical texts accessible to American boys, a new terminology coined for rendering rabbinic writings into English. Moses Mielziner, instructor in Talmud and the first full-time professor at the College, devoted himself to this task, in cooperation with Dr. Wise and Dr. Max Lillenthal. His work, *An Introduction to the Talmud*, coped with the difficulties of terminology and methodology, and became a guide to rabbinic studies for several generations. To this he added an appendix entitled "Outlines of Talmudic Ethics." Mielziner presented talmudic matters, especially legal subjects, in a systematic way at a time when no works of this kind were available to American readers. The Cincinnati group set for itself far-reaching objectives. As early as 1879 Lillenthal founded a Rabbinical Literary Association of America and published the *Hebrew Quarterly Review*, which, however, did not survive more than ten issues (1880-82). The attempt

was premature; America needed twenty-five more years of preparation before it could successfully support such a venture.

These years of stress and trial coincided with the first period of heavy Russian immigration. Many of the immigrants had received a thorough Jewish education in Russia, but the sudden change of environment and the struggle for a livelihood re-directed their interests, and no talmudic scholar of any eminence came to the fore. In any case, the next generation, the sons of these immigrants, had a background quite different from that of American-born young men of German stock and a much better qualification for Jewish studies.

In order to widen the scope of the studies of the college, Dr. Wise enlarged the staff and engaged more and more European scholars. In 1891 he extended a call to Gotthard Deutsch, gifted historian and writer. Deutsch had not inherited—as was expected—the mantle of his teacher Heinrich Graetz, but he possessed wide knowledge, was familiar with the most out-of-the-way sources of history and collected with unceasing industry thousands of data of the past. He was animated by the zeal to inculcate the will for research in his pupils. Max Leopold Margolis, who joined the faculty a year later, was the son of a renowned rabbinic authority. He had been brought up in the atmosphere of the old *Beth Hamidrash* but had acquired the scientific method at Columbia University and was prepared to become a master of philological research. He had a peer in Caspar Levias who after his studies and teaching in American universities joined the College in 1895 and became one of the most talented Semitists in the United States. Unfortunately, Levias was not a steady worker and did not accomplish what was expected of him, but his publications are a source of inspiration to workers in the field. When Margolis left the College—to return in 1905—Moses Bottenwieser filled his place. He had but recently arrived from Germany and was an enthusiastic student of the then predominant Biblical Higher Criticism. In the year 1900 Henry Malter joined the faculty. He was a pupil of Moritz Steinschneider, trained in Judæo-Arabic literature and medieval philosophy and a very sound philological method.

David Philipson was the first graduate of the College to join the faculty. Thus, in the course of a decade a faculty had been assembled whose members furthered Jewish research through creative work.

III

IN THE meantime American universities began to open their doors to Jewish studies. As early as 1886 Richard J. H. Gottheil began his teaching career at Columbia University, where for several years he held an endowed chair in the field of rabbinic literature. In his classes men like Margolis, Levias, and later Israel Davidson received their training; and in the Columbia University Oriental Series directed by him, many a valuable book in this field appeared. In 1888 Paul Haupt appointed Cyrus Adler, the first student to receive a Ph.D. degree in Semitics from an American university, to the Semitics Department of Johns Hopkins University, opening to him a fruitful career. His subsequent appointment to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington offered the young scholar the opportunity of traveling to the Near East to prepare the Oriental Section of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, 1893. Henceforth, Adler became a strong influence in Jewish scholarly and spiritual endeavors, combining knowledge, wisdom and enthusiasm with high executive ability. From 1892 until his death in 1921, Morris Jastrow, Jr., occupied the chair of Semitic languages at the University of Pennsylvania, and though his *magnum opus* dealt with the religion of Babylonia and Assyria, he cultivated biblical studies and stimulated many a student to further work in this field. Emil G. Hirsch brought his rich gifts to the chair of rabbinic literature and Jewish philosophy to which the University of Chicago had called him in 1892. Johns Hopkins appointed William Rosenau to the Department of Semitics in 1898, where under the direction of Paul Haupt, the Oriental studies flowered. The University later appointed Rosenau an Associate in Rabbinitics.

It was an important step to create positions which left to their incumbents leisure for scientific study. It was no less important to enable them to publish the results of their

researches. Such an agency was The Jewish Publication Society of America in Philadelphia, founded in 1888 after two previous attempts which had failed. One of the first undertakings of the Society was the publication of the English translation of Heinrich Graetz' *History of the Jews*. Unfortunately, the Notes of the German original, that incomparable guide for further research into the sources, were omitted. Numerous learned works written for the Society were to follow. As early as 1892 the Society envisaged a new English translation of the Bible with original contributions by a score of scholars in the United States and England. Due to the rather ponderous procedure nothing came of the undertaking except the translation of the Psalms done by Kaufmann Kohler (1903). It was not before the reorganization of the Bible Translation Committee, with Max L. Margolis as the Chief Editor, that the translation was completed (1917).

Most promising was the founding of the American Jewish Historical Society in the year 1892, the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. It marked the entry of Cyrus Adler into Jewish institutional life. The object of the Society was "to collect and publish material bearing upon the history of our country." This program stimulated historical research on various aspects of Jewish life in the Americas—the Inquisition in Latin America, the early Jewish settlements in North America, the Jewish contributions to the growth and development of the colonies, and the part played by Jews in the Revolution and in subsequent periods. Oscar S. Straus, the first president of the Society, Cyrus Adler, its first secretary, and others became enthusiastic collaborators, while sons of older scholars, such as Max J. Kohler and George A. Kohut, here won their first spurs. The Society has to its credit thirty-six volumes of rich historical material. Unfortunately, the Society did not have the understanding and support of the wider Jewish community, and a systematic endeavor to study the history of the Jews in America is still wanting.

Another noteworthy undertaking of Cyrus Adler was the *American Jewish Year Book*, which was published from the beginning by The Jewish Publication Society. Its forty-five volumes contain a mine of valuable information and its

pages were opened to a new branch of Jewish studies, the investigation of social conditions at home and abroad. The *American Jewish Year Book* has become the main source for statistical data about the Jews in all countries and their migrations. Nor must we forget the *Year Book* of the Central Conference of American Rabbis which in its fifty volumes contains many stimulating papers. The same may be said of the *Proceedings* of the Rabbinical Assembly of America, the Conservative wing of the rabbinate, of more recent date.

IV

ALL these endeavors prepared American Jewry for greater undertakings. Isidore Singer, that Dreamer of the Ghetto, who in vain had tried to interest Jewish Maecenas in Europe to finance his grand idea of a Jewish encyclopedia, succeeded in finding in the New World what he had been denied in the Old. The American environment was young and more receptive for a plan of such magnitude. Here he found a publisher. Dr. Isaac Funk — significantly enough a non-Jew — of the well-known firm of Funk and Wagnalls, saw at once the importance of the idea and was ready to give it all support. Soon the whole plan was worked out. And a great plan it was indeed. To quote its Preface, *The Jewish Encyclopedia* endeavored “to give, in systematized, comprehensive, and yet succinct form, a full and accurate account of the history and literature, the social and intellectual life, of the Jewish people — of their ethical and religious views, their customs, rites, and traditions in all ages and in all lands . . . With the publication of *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, a serious attempt is made for the first time to systematize and render generally accessible the knowledge thus far obtained.”

American scholars undertook the responsibility of carrying out a gigantic work which had no precursor in Jewish literature. The Encyclopedia being a new venture in Jewish scholarship, the Board of Editors had to cope with many complicated and delicate problems. Renowned scholars would not, and often could not, condense and popularize their subjects. Speaking generally, one of the shortcomings

of "Jewish Science" was neglect of systematization; its adepts praised Maimonides but did not emulate his method and system. The Encyclopedia, however, called for basic comprehensive articles. In some fields, such as Americana and Slavonica, pioneer work had to be done. The editors set the example, writing themselves the main articles of their respective departments. Scholars such as Kaufmann Kohler and Emil G. Hirsch, Gotthard Deutsch and Richard J. H. Gottheil, Cyrus Adler and Hermann Rosenthal here presented the results of life-long study. Joseph Jacobs, Australian-born, European-bred, a man of wide experience and broad outlook, a repository of facts and ideas, enriched the work with his studies in the new fields of anthropology and sociology. Louis Ginzberg was the Benjamin of the Board of Editors but their equal in scholarly attainments. Thus, the Encyclopedia was a training school for systematic studies. Isaac Broydé, Jacob Z. Lauterbach, William Popper — to name only a few men who later became prominent in the field of scholarship—here found their first opportunity for variegated research and systematic presentation.

Every first attempt has its difficulties, every collective work its faults. *The Jewish Encyclopedia* was no exception, but considered as a whole it was a scientific success. Its twelve volumes, produced within the span of five years, remain a standard work. Scholars have often lamented the fact—and with justice—that the publishers did not later issue a revised edition. It is a proof of both the success of the work and the changed conditions in American Jewish life that J. B. Eisenstein used the Encyclopedia as the basis of the ten-volume Hebrew encyclopedia, *Otzar Yisrael* (1907–1913).

V

The Jewish Encyclopedia was a landmark in the evolution of American Jewish scholarship. It inaugurated the period of maturity and productivity which led to the importation of the most renowned Jewish scholar of Europe, Solomon Schechter, as president of the reorganized Jewish Theological Seminary, founded in 1887 under the aegis of that noble personality, Sabato Morais. Schechter was the harbinger

of a new era in American Jewish scholarship. His ideas about Judaism and Jewish learning were original and fascinating. His discovery of the Hebrew original of portions of Ben Sira and his subsequent exploration of the Genizah in Cairo had revealed vast new areas for research promising a rich harvest. His commanding personality was to give Jewish scholarship a new impetus. Schechter was given full power to organize a new faculty, and with the clear insight characteristic of him, he selected the right men. In New York he found Louis Ginzberg whose articles for the Encyclopedia promised a distinguished scholarly career. From Europe he called Alexander Marx whom he had met in Cambridge and recognized as a man of wide and broad scholarly interests; besides filling the chair of Jewish history and literature, Marx also built up a great library. Schechter called to the Seminary Israel Friedlaender, then instructor at the University of Strasbourg. He at first suspected Friedlaender, a pupil of Theodor Noeldeke, of being an adept of Protestant Higher Criticism, but it soon became evident that his Jewish piety and loyalty were impeccable. To be sure, Friedlaender was inhibited in Biblical research and specialized instead in Arabic lore. He gave much of his time to public interests and died a martyr's death on his relief trip to the Ukraine in 1920. In 1905 Schechter appointed Israel Davidson who was to become an authority on Hebrew poetry. Mordecai M. Kaplan, an alumnus of the Seminary, was called as organizer of the Teachers Institute, where he laid the foundations of a Jewish pedagogy. In addition, Kaplan explored Jewish theology for a new basis of Jewish doctrine and life. In 1915 Moses Hyamson, who had come from England two years previously, joined the faculty. He combined talmudic learning with knowledge of Roman Law, making the comparative study of the two legal systems his specialty.

VI

THE reorganization of the Jewish Theological Seminary was a challenge to the Hebrew Union College, which met it by offering the vacant presidency to the most outstanding scholar in the American Reform movement, Kaufmann

Kohler. Kohler gave up a prominent rabbinical position and accepted the call which enabled him to devote the rest of his life entirely to scholarship. He was 60 years old when he took office, but he felt vigorous and was eager for new activities. His aim was to raise the academic standards of the institution and to stimulate the faculty to scholarly endeavor. The new president made a number of important additions to the faculty. He secured young Julian Morgenstern, who had only a few years before returned from studies of Assyriology in Europe, for Bible, a field in which he later distinguished himself; Morgenstern became the first American-born and the first graduate of the College to attain to a full professorship at the institution of which he later became president. Kohler also secured Jacob Z. Lauterbach whose abilities he had learned to appreciate at the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. Lauterbach had been a student of talmudic and rabbinic lore from his early youth and had been especially advised by his teacher Julius Wellhausen not to give up that field, but to explore with modern scholarly methods the early rabbinic conception of the Jewish religion. Lauterbach followed this advice in his studies on the Pharisees and the Sadducees and in his research on early Jewish rites and customs. Kohler also called to the College faculty, to become its first professor of systematic philosophy, David Neumark, an original interpreter of the evolution of Jewish philosophy whose new expositions were rejected during his lifetime but came to be accepted later on. Neumark was one of the pioneers of the modern Jewish renaissance, and he knew how to overcome Kohler's resistance against modern Hebrew—a subject which he was instrumental in introducing into the College curriculum.

Kohler himself, though a busy executive, cultivated extensive scholarly activities. When he assumed the presidency he did not sever his connection with the *Jewish Encyclopedia* for which he wrote some 300 articles. The first fruit of his new activity was his *Jewish Theology* (1910), written in German for that grand series *Grundriss der Gesamtwissenschaft des Judentums*. The book was the first attempt to cover every aspect of the subject. A few years later the same series published Hermann Cohen's *magnum opus* on Jewish philosophy, which relegated Kohler's book to a

lower place. However, the enlarged English version, published in 1918, still ranks high in the field.

Kohler's favorite study, wherein he showed his full mastery, was comparative history of religion. The fifty volumes of F. Max Mueller's *Sacred Books of the East* on his book shelves were not a mere decoration of his study but his spiritual property. His interest in comparative religion was already discernible in his doctoral thesis, published in 1867, and half a century later, in his swan song, he urged the establishment at the College of a chair in the History of Religion. He had a predilection for that blank leaf between the Old and the New Testaments—the literature of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha—and for the Hellenistic and Patristic writings. When the Dante anniversary occurred in 1923, the octogenarian surprised his friends with a book entitled *Heaven and Hell* wherein he relates the poet's vision to the past history of religion. And when called to the World on High, he left a volume on the *Origins of the Synagogue and the Church*, a summary of his favorite studies, which was at the same time a bequest and a challenge to his many pupils and admirers.

VII

AN UNEXPECTED stimulus was offered to Jewish studies when Moses Aaron Dropsie of Philadelphia in his will directed "that there be established and maintained in the city of Philadelphia a College for the promotion of and instruction in the Hebrew and cognate languages and their respective literatures and in the Rabbinical learning and literatures." The Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, which received its charter in 1907, opened new avenues to Jewish scholarship. It was the first post-graduate Jewish institution in the world having no other purpose than scientific research. It was non-sectarian, there was to be "no distinction on account of creed, colour or sex in the admission of students." Dropsie College found in Cyrus Adler a congenial president. The first appointments of faculty members could not have been happier; Henry Malter and Max L. Margolis were at their right place in a research institute. Two gifted scholars, Jacob Hoschander

and Benzion Halper, headed the Department of Cognate Languages. When in 1913 the History Department was added, Abraham A. Neuman became its head. In 1925 Nathaniel J. Reich was called to head the Department of Egyptology. Upon the death of several of the older men, their chairs were occupied by their pupils. Joseph Reider and for some time Ephraim A. Speiser conducted the courses in Biblical Philology. At present, Solomon Zeitlin heads the Rabbinic Department, and Solomon L. Skoss is Professor of Arabic. Neuman was appointed president in 1941. The College invited guest-lecturers, one of whom was that jurist and humanist Judge Mayer Sulzberger, whose lectures are contained in his published studies on the ancient Hebrew constitution and legislation.

It was evident that Jewish scholarship was moving to the West. When the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, that British medium for Jewish learning, was discontinued in 1908, Dr. Adler, in association with Solomon Schechter, resumed its publication in Philadelphia (1910), thus providing the College and American students at large with a scholarly organ of a high standard. However, he limited it to purely learned investigations. After the death of Schechter in 1915, Adler carried the burden alone. It is symbolic that the 30th volume of the periodical, which was to have been the last, was just leaving the press when he died. Eager to preserve this organ, A. A. Neuman and Solomon Zeitlin continued the publication as joint editors.

There was a stimulating rivalry between the various institutions of higher Jewish learning. Above all, the Jewish Theological Seminary was very productive. Louis Ginzberg published in rapid succession the volumes of his *Legends of the Jews*, *Yerushalmi Fragments* and *Geonica*. Schechter stirred up quite a sensation with his *Documents of Jewish Sectaries*. Schechter could point out that within a decade after his arrival in this country more had been done in the field of Jewish learning than in all of the previous years of American Jewish history.

The opportunities for study and publication continued to increase. Jacob H. Schiff established a fund with the Jewish Publication Society of America, for the publication of a series of Hebrew classics analogous to the Loeb Classics.

The program included critical editions of ancient texts, accompanied by translations. In this series appeared Lauterbach's *Makilla*, Malter's *Taanit*, Husik's edition of Albo's *Ikkarim*, Kaplan's edition of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto's *Mesillat Yesharim*, Davidson's volumes of the poetry of Solomon ibn Gabirol and Judah Halevi, and S. Solis-Cohen's translation of the poetry of Moses ibn Ezra.

Jewish studies also found serious attention outside the organizations referred to. We instance: Isaac Husik's work at the University of Pennsylvania, especially his *A History of Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, and Arnold B. Ehrlich's critical notes to the Bible, *Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel*. The acquisitions of great book collections gave a stimulus to bibliography, cultivated by the two guardians of the richest treasures, Alexander Marx at the Jewish Theological Seminary and Adolph S. Oko at the Hebrew Union College, and not less so by that quixotic personality Abraham Solomon Freidus, the first chief of the Jewish Division of the New York Public Library, where he was succeeded by Joshua Bloch; by Israel Schapiro of the Library of Congress, and by such collectors as David W. Amram, A. S. W. Rosenbach and Ephraim Deinard. The fact-finding inquiries into Jewish education and the enthusiastic interest of physicians such as Harry Friedenwald and David I. Macht, both devoted equally to Judaism and to medicine, resulted in noteworthy contributions in these special fields. Talmudic studies of the old type had likewise found strongholds in this country since the beginning of the century. In Chicago, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, New York and Philadelphia orthodox groups made efforts to revive the traditional studies of Talmud and Halakha. Such studies were far removed from modern systematic research, but they helped to bring Hebrew books into the country, to create an atmosphere and a love for Rabbinics and occasionally even to publish their *Hiddushe ha-Torah*.

VIII

WORLD WAR I shook the foundations of European Jewish organizations and institutions, but it also strengthened the sense of solidarity among American Jews. They realized

that they were destined to become the center of Jewish life and became conscious of the implied responsibility. Money was made available for Jewish scholarship, and American Jewish learning, already creative as we have seen, now entered upon a period of expansion. New institutions, new generations of scholars, new publications mark the twenties of this century. We are too close to that decade, and we must needs be reserved in discussing living personalities.

Stephen S. Wise, fascinating orator and vigorous communal leader, founded, in 1922, the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York. The Institute was to be a progressive school. Research was not to be fettered or bound to any one interpretation of Judaism. The Institute also laid stress on the study of contemporary Judaism and especially of problems connected with Palestine. It invited guest lecturers—Jewish and non-Jewish—whose visits brought American and European scholars into closer contact and collaboration. The system, however, did not work; the institution needed a permanent faculty, which it eventually brought over largely from Europe: Chaim Tschernowitz, famous as historian of the Halakah and pioneer in a new method of Talmud study; Julian J. Oberman, who later became professor of Semitic languages at Yale University where he specialized in Hebrew Paleography; Salo W. Baron, who in his comprehensive works is seeking for a philosophy of Jewish history (he later was appointed Professor of Jewish History, Literature and Institutions on the Miller Foundation at Columbia University); and the poetic Shalom Spiegel, who from a long sojourn in Palestine brought a deep affection to Hebrew language and poetry. Sidney S. Goldstein inaugurated social studies at the institution, and Henry Slonimsky contributed to a deeper appreciation of philosophy and education. From the ranks of its own students came Ralph Marcus, a specialist in Hellenistic literature, who with Abraham S. Halkin teaches Semitic languages at Columbia University. Among its professors were also Nissan Touroff, distinguished Hebraist, devoted to the problems of psychology and education and, last but not least, Harry A. Wolfson who later occupied the Nathan Littauer Chair at Harvard University, where he has enriched Jewish learning with his

profound studies of the history of Jewish philosophy. The Institute press has published a number of valuable works, the latest of which is G. Scholem's inspiring *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (1941), based on a course of lectures delivered at the Institute.

A noteworthy feature was the expansion of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary by the addition of a Yeshiva College and a Teachers Institute. This represented the first attempt at a combination of a traditional Talmudical academy with modern academic course of study. A century ago it was the orthodox dogma that he who had attended a university was not acceptable as a rabbi. American orthodoxy now broke with this view and created a new norm. Bernard Revel, who built up the institution, was a student of the evolution of the Halakah, as was Julius Kaplan who died at an early age. Of the present faculty, Samuel Belkin specializes in Hellenistic studies and Joshua Finkel in Judaeo-Arabic literature; Pinkhos Churgin created the semi-annual *Horeb* (1934), and Jekuthiel Ginsberg, the *Scripta Mathematica* (1932). The sister institution, the Hebrew Theological College in Chicago, gave Meyer Waxman the opportunity to prepare his four-volume *History of Jewish Literature* (1938-1941).

IX

IN THE meantime the older institutions maintained and even enlarged their programs. The Hebrew Union College called Jacob Mann, an indefatigable student of the Genizah who in his short life enriched Jewish historical research with several highly valuable volumes of source material, and when he died was engaged upon a work of great scope — namely, *The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue*. Like him, Zevi H. W. Diesendruck died in the prime of life; he gave his attention to the study of two princes of philosophy — Plato, four of whose dialogues he translated into classic Hebrew, and Maimonides, whose philosophical teachings he illuminated in special studies designed as parts of a comprehensive work on “The Concept of God in the philosophy of Maimonides.” Another loss was Abraham Z. Idel-

sohn who, in his monumental *Thesaurus of Hebrew Oriental Melodies* (1914-32; 10 vols.), brought together the richest collection of Jewish music, folkloristic and liturgical. These melodies, many of which he reproduced phonographically, he analyzed and compared with the music of other nations. A group of younger scholars, all graduates of the College, introduced new lines of Jewish study: Israel Bettan, the history of Jewish preaching; Samuel S. Cohon, Jewish theology as related to Jewish life; Abraham Cronbach, the social sciences; Jacob R. Marcus, systematic studies of modern history; and, later, Sheldon H. Blank, biblical investigation, and Nelson Glueck, Biblical and Semitic archeology. Since 1924, the College has published an *Annual* (vol. 17:1943) which contains contributions by American and foreign scholars.

The Jewish Theological Seminary after Schechter's death elected Cyrus Adler as acting president and later as president. At first Dr. Adler filled vacancies with visiting professors but later he made permanent appointments. Louis Finkelstein was appointed Lecturer in Theology in 1925 and thus began a brilliant career which was crowned by his appointment as president. Finkelstein published several volumes of original contributions to the evolution of early post-biblical religion. In the same year, Boaz Cohen became associated with the faculty, pursuing his studies in bibliography and in the history of Jewish law. In recent years Alexander Sperber, H. Louis Ginsberg and Robert Gordis were appointed to the Department of Bible and Simon Greenberg to that of Education. The Seminary undertook the great serial publication *Ginze Schechter*, to which Louis Ginzberg contributed two volumes of studies in Haggadah and Halakah, and Israel Davidson, who had already made interesting contributions to the subject of Saadia Gaon and his religious opponents, contributed a work dealing with hitherto unknown Hebrew poetry. At that time Davidson was already engaged in his monumental *Thesaurus of Medieval Hebrew Poetry*, which in four volumes and two supplements lists approximately 40,000 poetical compositions in the Hebrew language written before 1740. Louis Ginzberg has been for many years at work on his *Commentary to the Palestinian Talmud* of which three volumes appeared in 1941.

The American Academy for Jewish Research had been organized as early as 1920 but it did not begin its activities until a number of years later. Most of the contemporary scholars mentioned above were its Fellows. Among the charter members were David S. Blondheim, a student of the Romance languages who investigated the influence of ancient Hebrew culture on the evolution of these languages and their influence in turn on medieval Jewish studies; also Hyman G. Enelow, an ardent lover of rabbinic literature and ethics. To the older men were added younger scholars, such as Israel Efros, who specialized in medieval philosophy; Solomon Gandz, a student of ancient mathematics; and Michael Higger, who devoted his energies to critical publications of talmudic texts. The *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research* (vol. 13: 1943) and a new series of *Texts and Studies* offered new media for scholarly publication.

Characteristic of the period of expansion is the Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation which the Kohut family endowed in order to enable Jewish scholars who had not the necessary means to publish their contributions. It was George Alexander Kohut, the "devoted servant of Judaism, and dauntless protagonist of the universal power of enlightenment," who suggested the publication of the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, which after years of labor and trial is now nearing completion.

X

THE economic collapse of 1929 halted the expansion. But not for long. For the Nazi racial laws brought a number of scholars to this country, among them Guido Kisch, a pioneer in the study of "Jewry Law" (decrees and laws passed by governments relating to Jews — as distinguished from Jewish law) and the influence of Jewish culture on medieval legal codes; and Julius Lewy, the Assyriologist who has recently taken up biblical study. Soon Nazi brutality in Central and Western Europe compelled a goodly number of Jewish scholars to seek refuge in the United States. Their knowledge, expertness and scientific method will, given an opportunity, become real assets to American

Jewish scholarship. The transfer of the Yiddish Scientific Institute to New York City is of considerable interest. The linguistic isolation in which its researches are conducted is open to question. Be that as it may, the Institute is equipped with an extensive library, a staff of collaborators and an efficient organization, and will no doubt contribute substantially to historical and sociological research.

We are at the end. Our survey shows from what small beginnings Jewish scholarship in America has developed. The growth has been rapid, even great. But it was not an organic growth; it did not spring in the main from America's own soil and environment. For until recently American Jewry has had a constant influx of intellectual forces from Europe. This reservoir is now destroyed. American Jewry will henceforth have to produce native scholars of its own.

We shall not prophesy what America's distinctive contribution will be. But let us hope that the next hundred years will be no less creative than were the last.

In Memoriam

Dr. Ismar Elbogen died on August 1, 1943, at the age of 68. Our loss is as keen as it is fresh.

Superlatives are a common idiom of the necrologist's vocabulary. But they would be no exaggeration if applied to the deceased scholar. Dr. Elbogen carried high the banner of Jewish learning and Jewish loyalty. He belonged to the school of thought known as "Historic Judaism," which holds a position midway between traditional Orthodoxy and modern Reform. But the great scholar was beloved by all schools. The variously oriented learned institutions — the Jewish Theological Seminary, the Hebrew Union College, the Jewish Institute of Religion, Dropsie College — all vied in honoring him.

His chief life-work was done in Germany, with the *Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* as the seat and not scope of his activity. We shall not here sum up his accomplishment, but merely record that he published a succession of books and essays, foremost of which is his work on the Jewish liturgy. There is no better account of the subject; nor is there likely to be in a generation.

His life since World War I was an allegory of the transformation of the man of learning into the man of true goodness. His interests in the welfare of his fellow-Jews became also his responsibilities. In him, feeling and reason, act and thought were one. The ethical purity of the man, too, was a message.

ז' צ' ל'

A. S. O.