

STATISTICS OF JEWS AND JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

An Historical Review of Ten Censuses, 1850-1937

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The 1937 Census of Jewish Congregations

Early in 1935, the writer was requested by the American Jewish Committee to prepare the ground work of the enumeration of the Jewish congregations and the subsidiary studies in connection with the United States Census of Religious Bodies: 1936, which was then being planned. Later the United States Government appointed the writer Special Census Agent to collect statistics of Jewish congregations and he has since received the whole-hearted and generous support of the Committee in this important work.¹ While it is not possible to give at the present time the results of this census, we may state here that the number of congregations that reported in this census exceeds the total number of congregations reported in 1926. The growth in the number of congregations has been as follows:

1,769 congregations in 1906
1,901 congregations in 1916
3,118 congregations in 1926

In fact, the complete census will show an increase in the number of congregations in 1936 over 1926, comparable to that of 1926 over 1916.

The number of communities having congregations, principal communities, compared with the small subordinate communities without congregations, has likewise increased. The growth of principal communities has been continuous, as follows:

426	principal communities	in 1906
580	"	" in 1916
817	"	" in 1926

The number of communities that reported in 1936 greatly exceeds the number that reported in 1926, showing that in spite of the depression the Jewish religious institutions continued to expand. Very important is the fact that in this census, reports were actually received from over 4,000 Jewish communities in cities and in villages in every state of the Union, nearly twice as many as ten years ago. The complete results, based partly on reports received and partly statistical estimates, will show that the spread of Jews from larger to smaller cities and villages has continued during the past ten years.

This decennial census of Jews will show the changes in the distribution of Jews that occurred during the past ten years, by States, and by urban and rural areas. The detailed statistics of the Jewish congregations will cover the number of synagogue buildings, their value and debt and, for the first time, the number of school buildings and their value; the expenditures of the congregations; their educational work; and the number of rabbis and other full-time workers employed by congregations. Here, it may be said that while there has been a great decrease in the value of the synagogue buildings, no doubt due to the depression, and an increase in mortgaged debt, the statistics for the Jewish congregations will show a considerable increase in the number of synagogue buildings in 1936 over 1926.

To understand the scope and meaning of this census of Jews of 1936, it will be well to recall at the outset that

the United States Government does not inquire into the religious beliefs of its citizens, and thus none of the questionnaires or schedules used in the population censuses of our country, ever included a question on religion. But, as far back as 1850, the Government began to show its interest in the collection and publication of statistics of religious bodies or churches, and since that time, it has conducted, at definite intervals, comparable censuses of religious bodies, including Jewish congregations. These Government censuses, as we shall see below, are closely tied up with the periodic census of Jews: congregations, non-congregations, and number of Jews and their distribution. In fact, all the periodic censuses of the Jews of our country during the twentieth century were made in the course of the respective United States censuses of religious bodies. These are the censuses of 1906-1907, 1916-1917, 1926-1927, and 1936-1937 (in progress). Beginning with the last census of religious bodies in the nineteenth century, that of 1890, the Government enumerated the Jewish congregations in each of these censuses of religious bodies through a Jewish agent.² Further, beginning with the census of 1916, these Government censuses received the cooperation and support of the American Jewish Committee, which, at the same time but separate from the censuses of congregations, conducted censuses of Jewish organizations other than congregations, and compiled statistics on the number of Jews and their distribution by states and cities. To avoid misunderstanding, it should be added here, that the term "census of Jewish congregations" or "statistics of Jewish congregations or religious bodies," signifies the numerical presentation of the status or work, or both, of Jewish organizations devoted primarily to public worship; "census of Jewish organizations" refers to Jewish organizations devoted to worship (congregations) as well as those devoted to Jewish education, charity and other Jewish communal causes (non-congregations); while the term "census of Jews" refers to the statistical presentation of both Jewish organizations and the number and distribution of the Jewish people of the country.

In fact the present census of 1937 is the tenth periodic census of Jews, and it is a direct outgrowth of those that preceded it, beginning in 1850. As stated above, it was in the seventh United States population census, taken in 1850, that the United States Census Office took for the first time a census of religious bodies of the country, including Jewish congregations. Barely four years after the first Government census, two Rabbis, Jacques J. Lyons of New York and Abraham de Sola of Montreal, published a directory of Jewish congregations and other organizations, arranged by city (Rp-12). This work, published in 1854, constitutes the first directory of Jewish organizations in the United States, and forms a valuable supplement to the Government census of 1850. This latter census was followed by similar censuses, so that with the present census drawing to a close, we have ten censuses, as follows:

- 1850 Government census of Jewish congregations, by states and counties, supplemented by the Lyons-de Sola directory of Jewish congregations and other organizations
- 1860 Government census of Jewish congregations, by states and counties
- 1870 Government census of Jewish congregations, by states and selected counties
- 1877 Census of Jewish congregations, a directory, and a census of Jews, by states and cities
- 1890 Government census of Jewish congregations, by states, counties and cities
- 1900 Census of Jewish organizations, by states, and a directory
- 1906 Government census of Jewish congregations, supplemented by a directory of Jewish organizations, and census of Jews, by states and cities
- 1916 Same

1926 Government census of Jewish congregations supplemented by a census of Jewish organizations, and a census of Jews, by states and cities and urban and rural distribution (but no directory)

1936 (in progress)

In this study, which is in the nature of a general introduction to the publication of the results of the census of 1936, two matters must be treated, namely, the scope of the census of 1936-1937, as an outgrowth of preceding censuses and comparable with these, and the findings of the censuses of the second half of the nineteenth century. The censuses of Jews prior to that of 1906 were never summed up adequately, and the earlier source-books are becoming rare and in many cases unavailable. If these are to be used for comparison, as they should, adequate summaries must first be prepared.

The 1850 Census of Jewish Organizations

The United States Census of Religious Bodies of 1850 was part of the United States population census, and it was taken by Government marshals. The scope of the inquiry was limited to the following: number of churches, seating capacity, and value of the church buildings including furnishings and land. These results, as stated above, were published by state and county (not cities) for each of the three inquiries. In that census only 37 congregations or synagogues were enumerated. These had a seating capacity of 18,371, and the value of the synagogue buildings was \$415,600. The total number of churches in that year was found to be 150,000.

As stated above, however, we have three directories of Jewish congregations, one of 1854, another one of 1877 and a third one of 1900. If we use these directories and other sources (Rp-9) to supplement the Government statistics so that we may have statistics comparable with later

censuses, we find that there were by 1850, at least 76 congregations.

The smallness of the number of Jewish congregations in the census of 1850 was due chiefly, it seems, to the definition of the term "church," which evidently excluded numerous congregations. "A church to deserve notice in the census," the Government report states, "must have something of the character of an institution. It must be known in the community in which it is located. There must be something permanent and tangible to substantiate its title to recognition. No one test, it is true, can be devised that will apply in all cases, yet, in the entire absence of tests, the statistics of the census will be overlaid with fictitious returns to such an extent as to produce the effect of absolute falsehood. It will not do to say that a church without a church building of its own, is, therefore, not a church; that a church without a pastor is not a church; nor even that a church without membership is not a church. There are churches properly cognizable in the census which are without edifices and pastors, and, in rare instances, without a professed membership. Something makes them churches in spite of all their professed deficiencies. They are known and recognized in the community as churches, and are properly to be returned as such in the census. . . the true definition of a church from the point of view of the census, viz., are institutions in the community known and recognized," (Rp-8.)

This definition of a church, used in the censuses of 1850, 1860 and 1870, must have affected unfavorably the census of the churches of religious bodies which had comparatively large numbers of small congregations newly organized, as did the Jewish. As a matter of fact, this definition was abandoned in the census of 1890.

Because of the historical importance of the 1850 census, this writer gives below for the first time a list of all the Jewish congregations that existed in 1850, indicating in each case state, county, city, and year of organization. The counties which reported congregations in the Government census of 1850 are indicated by a star. The list follows:

LIST OF JEWISH CONGREGATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES
 THAT EXISTED IN 1850, BY STATES, COUNTIES AND
 CITIES, AND DATE OF ORGANIZATION

- ALABAMA**
 Mobile Co. (Mobile)
 Shaara Shamayyim (1841)
 Montgomery Co. (Montgomery)
 Mevakker Holim (1847)
 Fell's Point Heb. Friendship
 Cong. (1838)
 First Baltimore Heb. (Nidhe
 Israel) (1830)
 Har Sinai (1842)
- CALIFORNIA**
 Eldorado Co. (Coloma)
 Cong. (1850)
 San Francisco Co. (S. Francisco)
 Emanu El (1850)
 Shearith Israel (1850)
- CONNECTICUT**
 *Hartford Co. (Hartford)
 Beth Israel (1843)
 New Haven Co. (New Haven)
 Mishkan Israel (1840)
- GEORGIA**
 Chatham Co. (Savannah)
 Mikveh Israel (1733)
 Richmond Co. (Augusta)
 B'nai Israel (1846)
- ILLINOIS**
 Cook Co. (Chicago)
 Kehillath Anshe Maarib
 (1847)
- INDIANA**
 Allen Co. (Fort Wayne)
 Achdut ve Shalom (1848)
 Tippecanoe Co. (Lafayette)
 Shebeth Achim (1842)
- KENTUCKY**
 *Jefferson Co. (Louisville)
 Adath Israel (1842)
- LOUISIANA**
 Ascension Co. (Donaldsonville)
 Bikkur Holim (1850)
 *Orleans Co. (New Orleans)
 Ahavath Ahim (1850)
 Gates of Prayer (LaFayette)
 (1849)
 Nefutsoth Judah (1845)
 Shaare Hesed (1828)
- MARYLAND**
 Baltimore Co. (Baltimore)
- MASSACHUSETTS**
 *Suffolk Co. (Boston)
 Ohave Shalom (1842)
- MICHIGAN**
 Wayne Co. (Detroit)
 Beth El (1850)
- MISSISSIPPI**
 Adams Co. (Natchez)
 B'nai Israel (1843)
 Warren Co. (Vicksburg)
 Anshe Hesed (1843)
- MISSOURI**
 *St. Louis Co. (St. Louis)
 United Hebrew (1838)
 B'nai El (1850)
- NEW JERSEY**
 Essex Co. (Newark)
 B'nai Jeshurun (1848)
 Passaic Co. (Paterson)
 B'nai Jeshurun (1847)
- NEW YORK**
 *Albany Co. (Albany)
 Anshe Emeth (1850)
 Beth El (1838)
 Beth Jacob (1847)
 Erie Co. (Buffalo)
 Beth El (1847)
 Beth Zion (1850)
 *Livingston Co. (place?)
 Congregation
 Congregation
 *New York Co. (New York City)
 Ahavath Hesed (1848)
 Anshe Hesed (1830)
 Beth Abraham (1850)
 Beth Israel (1846)
 Bikkur Holim (1849)
 B'nai Israel (1847)
 B'nai Jeshurun (1825)
 Emanuel (1845)

- Rodef Shalom (1842)
 Shaar Hashamayyim (1840)
 Shaare Rahamim (1849)
 Shaare Tefillah (1846)
 Shaare Zedek (1839)
 Sheerith Israel (1680)
 Monroe Co. (Rochester)
 Brith Kodesh (1848)
 *Onondaga Co. (Syracuse)
 Society of Concord (1846)
- OHIO
 *Cuyahoga Co. (Cleveland)
 Anshe Hesed (1839)
 Tifereth Israel (1850)
 *Hamilton Co. (Cincinnati)
 Adath Israel (1847)
 Ahavath Ahim (1848)
 B'nai Israel (1824)
 B'nai Jeshurun (1840)
- PENNSYLVANIA
 *Allegheny Co. (Pittsburgh)
 Shaare Shamayyim (1846)
 *Lancaster Co. (Lancaster)
 Congregation (1776(?))
 *Luzerne Co. (Wilkesbarre)
 B'nai Berith (1845)
 Montour Co. (Danville)
 B'nai Zion (1849)
 *Northampton Co. (Easton)
- B'rith Shalom (1839)
 *Philadelphia Co (Philadelphia)
 Beth Israel (1849)
 B'nai Israel (1847)
 Keneseth Israel (1847)
 Mikweh Israel (1782)
 Rodef Shalom (1802)
- RHODE ISLAND
 *Newport Co. (Newport)
 Jeshuath Israel (1658)
- SOUTH CAROLINA
 *Charleston Co. (Charleston)
 Beth Elohim (1750)
 Sheerith Israel (1843)
 *Richland Co. (Columbia)
 Columbia Heb. Cong. (1822)
- VIRGINIA
 Norfolk (Norfolk Co.)
 Ohev Shalom (1848)
 *Richmond (Henrico Co.)
 Beth Ahavah (1841)
 Beth Shalom (1791)
- WEST VIRGINIA (Virginia)
 Ohio Co. (Wheeling)
 Leshem Shamayyim (1849)
- WISCONSIN
 *Milwaukee Co. (Milwaukee)
 Congregation (1850(?))

The list given above enumerates 77 congregations. Probably there were in addition a few other congregations which, for one reason or another, failed to be included in the Government census or in the directories. Again, the names of the congregations with dates of organization given in the list under cities and counties, do not signify in every case that other congregations by other names did not precede the former in the localities given. As a matter of fact, the Lyons-de Sola directory shows that the process of merging of congregations and the process of moving from one part of a city to another, followed by leasing or selling of buildings to other congregations, were already in vogue in those days. In the City of New York, in the case of Temple Emanuel, in those days known as Congregation Imanuel, the directory states as follows: "Organized, 5605-1845. Synagogue, 56 Chrystie Street between Walker

and Hester Streets; soon to be removed to 12th Street between 3rd and 4th Avenues" (Rp-12, p. 163). The synagogue building on Chrystie Street was transferred to the Polish congregation Beth Israel which had its synagogue "over the New York Dispensary" (*Ibid.*). In St. Louis, Missouri, in the case of Congregation Bnai El, the directory writes as follows: "This is a union of two formerly existing congregations, viz.: The Imanuel, Bavarian *Minhag* (rite), and the B'nai Berith, Bohemian. Synagogue to be erected in Sixth Street, very near its intersection with Cierre Street" (Rp-12, p. 171). (The date of organization as 1853 is evidently that of the merged organization). Further, we must bear in mind the process of Jewish population movement, involving the decay of congregations even in those early days. Thus, the Lyons-de Sola directory of 1854 speaks of a congregation organized in 1850 in California at Columma on the Yuba river, presumably Coloma in Eldorado County, but later records do not seem to mention it. The Government census of 1850, another instance, enumerated two congregations in Livingston County, New York, but no mention of any congregation in that county is found in early Jewish records. As for Wisconsin, Jewish sources claim 1855 as the year of the organization of the first congregation in Milwaukee (see *Jewish Encyclopedia*, s. v. United States, p. 354a). As a matter of fact, a Jewish congregation with 46 members was enumerated in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in the Government census of 1850, and that congregation may have been organized before 1850.

The religious complexion of the United States in 1850 was quite different from that of later periods. Thus, there was only one Lutheran church in all the New England states. In Massachusetts, there were only 41 Roman Catholic churches of a total of 1,475; in Maryland, only 65 of a total of 909; and in Texas, only 13 of a total of 341. On the other hand, in California, 18 of the 28 churches enumerated were Roman Catholic, and in New Mexico, then a territory, all the 73 churches of the state were Roman Catholic. The territory of Oregon had only 5 churches, 4 of which were Roman Catholic, Minnesota had 3 churches, and Utah had none. The Jewish congregations

in 1850, while comparatively few, were widely distributed. By the end of 1850, the Union consisted of 31 states and 8 territories, including the District of Columbia (Rp-5, p. xxxiii), Wisconsin having been admitted into the Union in May, 1848, and California, in September, 1850. The 77 Jewish congregations in 1850 were located as shown in the list above in 21 of the 31 states, including California and Wisconsin. The Lyons-de Sola directory, published in 1854, speaks of one Jewish congregation in the District of Columbia, but it was evidently organized later than 1850. In the latter year, however, there was already one congregation at Wheeling, which later became one of the cities of the State of West Virginia.

The Jewish congregations in those days were divided according to rites or synagogue customs. In the Lyons-de Sola directory, 41 congregations reported the rite in use. Of these, 19 described themselves as of German *Minhag* (rite), 12 Polish *Minhag*, 7 Portugese *Minhag*, 1 Bohemian *Minhag*, and two are described as Netherland or Dutch congregations.

On the basis of the list given above and the Government census of 1850, the status of the Jewish congregations in that year was as follows:

TABLE 1
STATES AND COUNTIES HAVING JEWISH CONGREGATIONS,
AND CONGREGATIONS ENUMERATED, SEATING CAPACITY
AND VALUE OF PROPERTY, CENSUS OF 1850

	Number
1. States of the Union.....	31
2. Territories and the District of Columbia.....	8
3. States having Jewish Congregations.....	21
4. Counties having Jewish Congregations.....	43
5. Congregations.....	77
6. Congregations Reported in the Census of 1850.....	37
7. Seating Capacity Reported in the Census of 1850.....	22,471
8. Value of Property Reported in the Census of 1850.....	418,600

For a statement of the results of the 1850 census, by states and counties, the reader is referred to detailed table A.*

*This table will be given in a reprint of this article to appear later.

The Government Census of Jewish Congregations of 1860 and 1870

As in 1850, the census of religious bodies of 1860 and that of 1870 were taken by U. S. marshals in the course of the population census of those years; but in the census of 1870 the scope was enlarged to include the following: number of church bodies, number of church buildings or edifices, seating capacity, and value of church buildings. In other words, the inquiry on the number of "churches," was broken into two: one, dealing with the number of local religious bodies, and the other, with church buildings or edifices.³ This innovation in the census of 1870 was no doubt an improvement on the censuses that preceded it. The results of these two censuses were published, as stated above, by states and counties, except that, in the 1870 census, the county distribution for the Jewish congregations is incomplete (See detailed table B*).

The results of these censuses showed large increases in the number of Jewish congregations, synagogue buildings, seating capacity, and value of synagogue buildings, as shown in the table below:

TABLE 2
CONGREGATIONS, SYNAGOGUE BUILDINGS, SEATING
CAPACITY, VALUE OF SYNAGOGUE BUILDINGS
ENUMERATED IN 1850, 1860, AND 1870

Year	No. of Congregations	No. of Synagogue Buildings	Seating Capacity	Value of Synagogue Buildings
1850	37	—	18,371	\$ 418,600
1860	77	—	34,412	1,135,300
1870	189	152	73,265	5,155,234

If the term "church" as used in the censuses of 1860 and 1870 had been defined as it was in later enumerations, the figures for the Jewish congregations of 1860 and 1870 would undoubtedly have been larger. For a complete statement of the results of the United States census of Jewish bodies of 1860 and 1870, by states and counties, see detailed table B.*

*This table will be given in a reprint of this article to appear later.

The 1877 Census of Jews

Five years after the Government census of 1870, the then leading American Jewish organizations, the Board of delegates of American Israelites and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, began to lay plans for a census of the Jews of America. "For many years past," the introduction to the report on that census reads, "it has been desirable to collate statistical information for Israelites in the United States, not alone for an exhibit of material prosperity or status as a religious community, but for purposes that would be mutually beneficial to every section of the country, and enable them to act in greater concert in all that concerns them as children of the Abrahamic faith" (Rp-13). Wholly unaware were the directors of that census that their work would present the status of the young Jewish community in America, on the eve of a new and great wave of immigration from the old world, which was destined to give new aspects to Jewish life in the New World.

The scope of the work comprised statistics of congregations and other organizations, a directory, and the enumeration of the Jews by states and cities. The directory part of the work was done in a primitive manner, but the statistics of the Jewish organizations, were compiled, and the enumeration of the Jews was made, with great care and in an exhaustive manner.

Of the methods used in this important census the report states as follows: "The plan adopted to secure the desired information, was sending out blanks and circulars to almost every place in the Union. These were sent out in the years 1876, 1877, 1878. In towns where no congregations existed, the secretaries of the Lodges of the various Jewish orders were addressed, and influential citizens in sections where there were neither congregations nor societies. It was difficult, in some instances, to procure a response; but, notwithstanding many obstacles, it is believed that this — the first systematic attempt in this country to ascertain our strength, — it is as nearly accurate as we could expect, and will furnish a basis on which

future committees can work with a fair prospect of accomplishing yet more fully the desired object." (Rp-13).

The results of this important census are given in the following table (based on Rp-13 and Rp-22):

TABLE 3

STATES, COUNTIES AND CITIES REPORTING JEWISH CONGREGATIONS,
NUMBER OF JEWS, NUMBER OF CONGREGATIONS, VALUE OF
SYNAGOGUE BUILDINGS AND OTHER PROPERTY, AND NUM-
BER OF PUPILS AND TEACHERS IN CONGREGATIONAL
SCHOOLS, 1877

	Number
1. States of the Union ¹	38
2. Territories and the District of Columbia.....	9
3. States and the District of Columbia Reporting Jewish Congregations.....	37
4. Counties Reporting Jewish Congregations.....	170
5. Cities Having Congregations.....	174
6. Congregations Reported.....	277
7. Jews in Cities with Congregations.....	203,919
8. Pupils in Congregational Schools	
Number Reporting.....	173
Number Reported.....	11,501
9. Teachers in Congregational Schools	
Number Reporting.....	163
Number Reported.....	587
10. Value of Synagogue Buildings	
Number Reporting.....	145
Amount Reported.....	4,444,350
11. Value of Other Congregational Property ²	
Number Reporting.....	179
Amount Reported.....	360,135
12. Members and Seatholders.....	12,546 ³
13. Total Number of Jews of the United States, Estimated.....	250,000

¹ In 1880.

² Exclusive of cemeteries.

³ Including a number of non-congregational organizations.

For a statement of the results of the census of 1877 by states, counties, and cities, see detailed table C.*

The 1890 Census of Jewish Congregations

Unlike those of previous censuses, the data of the United States census of religious bodies of 1890 was not collected by the enumerators of the population census of that year. Instead, the investigation was conducted by

*This table will be given in a reprint of this article to appear later.

special agents, evidently in the manner of a special "census of churches," taken in the year of the population census; and the results of this census were superior to those of 1850, 1860 and 1870 censuses. In those censuses, as we have seen, only religious organizations that had "the character of an institution" and were "known in the community," were regarded as "churches" and were to be enumerated. This definition evidently left to the personal judgment of each United States marshal the decision as to whether a particular religious organization was to be included in the census. An attempt was made for the first time, in the census of 1890, to give an objective definition to the principal entry of the census. In that census the term "church" was substituted by the term "religious organization" or organization, defined as follows: "The term 'organizations' includes churches or congregations, and also missions and chapels, when they have members and a form of organization." (Rp-10.)

In addition, the scope of the census of 1890 was enlarged to include: first, the number of the members or communicants; second, the number of full-time ministers employed by the congregations; third, the number of meeting places and their seating capacity. The last addition was designed evidently to complete our knowledge of the country's facilities for public worship at any one time. "Halls, schoolhouses, and private houses," the report of the census reads, "are occupied as places of worship by organizations which have no church edifices of their own. The figures . . . represent the number of halls, schoolhouses, and private houses occupied by organizations and the seating capacity of the two former. For obvious reasons no returns are given for the accommodations furnished by private houses." (Rp-10, p. 238.)

The statistical significance of the last rubric was probably not great and the item was abandoned in subsequent censuses. For reasons left unexplained, the results of the inquiry on the number of ministers, introduced in the 1890 census, was published for the United States without distribution by states, counties or cities. The returns showed a total of 111,036 ministers, including 200 Jewish ministers. (Rp-10.)

The most important change in the scope of the 1890 census was, of course, the introduction of the item on the number of communicants or members. By the latter term was meant "all who are permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper in denominations observing that sacrament, and those having full privileges in denominations like the Friends, the Unitarians, and the Jewish temples." (Rp-10.) Just how this was understood in connection with the Jewish congregations in this census is not certain.

The results of the census were published by states, counties and, for the first time, by cities of 25,000 or over. In the case of the Jewish congregations, further, an attempt was made in that census, but never tried again, to group the returns into two: "orthodox" and "reformed" (sic). The latter term evidently designated all those congregations which were members of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and similar congregations, which go under the name of progressive or reform congregations; while all others were designated as orthodox.⁶

The results of this census (based on Rp-1 and Rp-24), follow:

TABLE 4

STATES AND COUNTIES REPORTING JEWISH CONGREGATIONS, CONGREGATIONS, ORTHODOX AND REFORM, REPORTED, COMMUNICANTS, SYNAGOGUE BUILDINGS, HALLS, SEATING CAPACITY, VALUE OF SYNAGOGUE BUILDINGS, AND MINISTERS, 1890

	Number
1. States of the Union	44
2. Continental Territories and the District of Columbia	5
3. States Reporting Jewish Congregations	37
4. Continental Territories and the District of Columbia Reporting Congregations	3
5. Counties Reporting Jewish Congregations	203
6. Jewish Congregations Reported	533
7. Communicants or Members	130,496
8. Synagogue Buildings	301
9. Halls, Schools and Private Houses Used for Worship	231
10. Seating Capacity	
In Synagogue Buildings Owned by Congregations	139,234
In Halls (exc. Private Houses)	28,477
11. Value of Synagogue Buildings Owned by Congregations	9,754,275
12. Ministers	200

For a statement of the results of the census of 1890, by states, counties, cities of 25,000 and over, and for the first time, other cities, see detailed Table D.*

The 1900 Census of Jewish Organizations

In spite of serious difficulties, the statistics of Jewish bodies and the directory compiled in 1900, set a new milestone in the compilation of periodic statistics of Jews of the United States. "The spread of Jews all over our vast country," wrote Doctor Adler in his preface to the first volume of the Year Book, "seemed to make it desirable that a Directory should form the principal feature of this Year Book. The difficulties in compiling it were very great . . . partly from the unwillingness of the officers of some Congregations and societies to fill out the blanks sent them." (Rp-15.) The Lyons-deSola directory of 1854 was compiled partly on the basis of private communications and partly on the basis of reports in the Jewish press. (Rp-12, p. 148.) The Adler directory and statistics of Jewish bodies of 1900, were prepared in the main on the basis of schedules or questionnaires, resulting in uniform information.⁷ The statistics and the directory are as of 1900, though in the absence of information for that year, the data for 1899 were used. (Rp-16, p. 185, and Rp-17, p. 126.)

The scope of the statistics of Jewish bodies was enlarged to include for the first time data on the amount of money received by the congregation during a particular year. In the case of the information relating to rabbis, a distinction was drawn, it would seem, between rabbis on the one hand and readers, hazanim, etc., on the other hand, resulting in an improvement in the data under that rubric over that of the Lyons-deSola directory. Finally, for the first time, an attempt was made to collect separate statistics for Sunday (one-day-a-week) schools and week-day (two or more days-a-week) schools. The directory part of the 1900 census gave, in addition, the names of the officers,

*This table will be given in a reprint of this article to appear later.

stated the time of public worship, and listed the societies affiliated with the congregations.

The statistical compilation of the 1900 census of Jewish bodies by states, published in the third volume of the Year Book (5662), although not free from errors, is remarkable in the skill of its presentation. For the first time, this census gave data on the "number reporting," a significant contribution.⁸

The results of the 1900 census of Jewish organizations, as far as congregations are concerned (based on Rp-16 and Rp-23), follows:

TABLE 5

STATES, COUNTIES AND CITIES REPORTING CONGREGATIONS, CONGREGATIONS REPORTED, MEMBERS AND SEATHOLDERS, INCOME, PUPILS AND TEACHERS IN CONGREGATIONAL SCHOOLS, AND RABBIS, 1900

	Number
1. States of the Union	45
2. Continental Territories and the District of Columbia	5
3. States Reporting Jewish Congregations	40
4. Continental Territories and the District of Columbia Reporting Jewish Congregations	2
5. Counties Reporting Jewish Congregations	301 ¹
6. Cities Reporting Jewish Congregations	336
7. Number of Congregations Reported	850
8. Members and Seatholders	
Number Reporting	560
Number Reported	54,302
9. Income	
Number Reporting	435
Amount Reported	1,375,816
10. Pupils in Congregational Schools	
Number Reporting	346
Number Reported	26,573
11. Teachers in Congregational Schools	
Number Reporting	269
Number Reported	1,075
12. Rabbis	
Number Reporting	467
Number Reported	526

¹ Including D. C. and independent cities in Virginia.

For a detailed statement of the results of the 1900 census by states and by counties and cities (for the first time), see detailed table E.*

*This table will be given in a reprint of this article to appear later.

The Three Censuses of the Twentieth Century and the Publication of the Results of the Census of 1937

Like other statistical inquiries, those on religious bodies, as we have seen, also show continuous development in their scope, the methods utilized, and the manner of publication of results of the inquiry. In the case of the periodic statistics of Jews, beginning with 1850, we find that the subject is treated under three headings: the numerical presentation of the status and of the work of the congregations and other organizations; directories of these; and finally, the number of Jews and their distribution. The 1850 census, together with the supplementary work of 1854, as shown above, compiled statistics of Jewish congregations and a directory of Jewish organizations. The Government census of 1860 was not followed by any supplementary private investigation, but five years following the census of 1870, the Board of Delegates of American Israelites and the then newly-organized Union of American Hebrew Congregations, as stated above, appointed a joint committee to conduct a census of Jews. The results of the census, conducted during 1876-1878 and published in 1880 under the auspices of the two organizations, represents the first complete census of Jews of our country, a remarkable piece of work. The Government census of Jewish religious bodies of 1890, conducted by a Jewish agent, no doubt represents a more complete census than those conducted previously, as far as congregations were concerned, but no supplementary publications appeared. Nine years later, the Jewish Publication Society began the publication of the American Jewish Year Book, and Dr. Cyrus Adler, editor, published in the first three volumes a directory of Jewish organizations and a statistical summary by states. This work represents a census of Jewish organizations and a directory of these, as of the close of the nineteenth century. From the points of view of scope, accuracy of detail and excellence of presentation, the Adler directory of Jewish organizations is superior to those issued before, and it compares well with the similar subsequent projects. Beginning with 1906-1907, these censuses are decennial, and each of the

first three covered the same scope, namely, statistics of organizations, directory of organizations (except the 1926-1927 census), and the number of Jews and their distribution.

The growth of the scope of these periodic censuses is especially far reaching in that phase which deals with the number of Jews and their distribution in our country. We have, as it is well known (Rp-18, p. 66), a number of decennial enumerations of the Jews of the United States, as follows:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Jews</i>	<i>Compiler</i>
1876-1877	250,000	William B. Hackenburg
1886-1887	400,000	Isaac Markens
1896-1897	938,000	David Sulzberger
1906-1907	1,777,000	Henrietta Szold
1916-1917	3,389,000	S. D. Oppenheim
1926-1927	4,228,000	H. S. Linfield

But even in the censuses of 1877, 1907, and 1917, which were prepared by state and city distribution, the enumeration of the cities and villages that had Jewish groups, was incomplete. It was in the census of 1926-1927 that an attempt was made for the first time to prepare a complete count of all the places in the United States having Jewish residents in that year; and the task of the enumeration of the Jewish population in that census was conceived as threefold: first, which cities and villages had Jewish populations and how large are these groups; second, which of the latter had congregations, how many, and what was the status of their work, and which localities have no congregations, (the former, which as a rule have large numbers of Jews, the writer called principal communities, while those without congregations were referred to as subordinate communities); third, what was the relation of the latter to the former, in particular the degree of the shifting of Jews from the large to the small communities. When the plans for the 1937 census were drawn, the scope was enlarged to include a sample study of the family composition of the Jews of America, by sex and age.⁹

In the case of the enumeration of the Jews of the country, it is one thing to prepare an estimate of the total number of Jews, and quite another thing to distribute the total by states and cities. For, the former can be accomplished by the use of statistical methods similar to those explained in the writer's monograph on the results of the census of Jews of 1927 (Rp-18, p. 69, 70, 74-82); while the latter purpose cannot be achieved in that way. The figures for the number of Jewish residents in the communities enumerated in these early censuses were based chiefly on local estimates or counts, and the total for the United States (and sometimes also the totals for the states), was made up on the basis of the totals of the localities reported plus an additional sum, often based on the estimates of the total number of Jews of the country. But in the enumeration of 1916-1917, for the first time, the Jewish population of New York City was estimated by means of a statistical formula. In 1926-1927, this writer used statistical formulas to estimate the Jewish population of New York City, seven other large cities, the small incorporated places, and unincorporated rural territory; and, for the first time, the totals for the states and for the United States, were made up solely on the basis of the sum totals of the figures for the localities. This procedure was adopted in the census of 1936-1937, except for the following: the small places located in the metropolitan areas of our country were singled out for a special canvass of Jews, and of the 3,000 counties of the country, over 1,000 were similarly canvassed. This procedure, followed for the first time, resulted in an increase of the number of small places reporting Jews, nearly twice as many as in the 1926-1927 census, leaving fewer small places to be determined by estimates.

The results of the present census will be published, it is hoped, as follows: a small monograph on the Jewish congregations of our country giving statistics of the number of congregations; synagogue buildings, value and debt; expenditures; educational and other work; and ministers. This monograph is to be issued by the United States Census Bureau, as one of a series on the work of the religious bodies of our country. This is to be supplemented

by a monograph giving the statistics of Jewish congregations, and of other organizations, both those that are affiliated with the former and those that are not, totaling over 20,000 organizations; a monograph on the number of Jews and their distribution by states, counties (for the first time) and cities, rural and urban distribution, and family composition by sex and age (for the first time); and finally two directories, one of Jewish organizations and another of rabbis. The scope and methods of the 1936-1937 census and its relation to the previous censuses will be taken up in the respective publications, and for the first time, comparisons will be made whenever necessary, not only with the censuses taken in the twentieth century, but also with those of the second half of the nineteenth century, the findings of which are summed up for the first time above, and in the detailed tables that follow.*

*These tables will be given in a reprint of this article to appear later.

Notes

¹ In the case of the 1936-1937 census, the American Jewish Committee appointed an Advisory Committee to work with the present writer who, as U. S. Special Agent, directed the compilation of the data on Jewish congregations in connection with the U. S. Census of Religious Bodies. This committee consisted of Professor Morris R. Cohen, chairman, Dr. Louis I. Dublin, Dr. Harry G. Friedman, and Dr. Alvin Johnson. The writer takes this opportunity to express his gratitude to the members of this committee for the technical aid and the support which they lent this writer. In this connection, the writer desires to express his gratitude to Dr. Cyrus Adler, without whose support the present census would not have been conducted as it was. It may be added that Dr. Adler has been the moving spirit in every periodic enumeration of Jewish organizations, since 1900 when he compiled a directory of Jewish organizations.

² The names of those that served as Government agents in the collection of statistics of Jewish religious bodies from the beginning to-date are herewith given, as follows: Philip Cowen, 1890; Henrietta Szold(?), 1906; Samson Oppenheim, 1916; and H. S. Linfield in 1926 and again in 1936 (in Progress).

³ An explanation for this change is given in the census report of 1870 as follows: "The principal inquiry, under the head of religion, in the schedule of the census law, viz: 'Number of churches,' is, unfortunately, ambiguous. As the censuses of 1850 and 1860 were taken, it is impossible to feel any assurance, in any particular case, whether church organizations or church edifices are returned in answer to the inquiry, 'Number of Churches.' In preparation for the Ninth Census, this inquiry was divided into 'Number of church organizations. Number of church edifices.'" (Rp-8.)

⁴ The report of the census of 1877 gives a summary table by states and cities (not counties). Some of the figures given are erroneous as to the number of congregations. For Alabama read 7 congregations instead of 8; for Georgia, read 8 instead of 7; Massachusetts, Boston, read 10 instead of 9; New York, read 33 instead of 32; Ohio, read 20 instead of 24; South Carolina, read 4 instead of 3; and the total number of congregations is 277 instead of 278. Detailed table C has been prepared on the basis of the returns by cities. The table gives county totals and especially information on the number of congregations reporting property values, children attending schools, and teachers.

⁵ For a discussion of the entry "members" in the census of 1890, 1906 and 1916, the reader is referred to the United States report of the census of 1926 (Rp-1, v. 1, p. 18, v. 2, p. 646, 656, 657, and more fully to the writer's monograph on the census of Jewish bodies of 1927 (Rp-14, p. 32). The reader will note there the reasons which led this writer to introduce a new definition of the term in the census of 1926-1927.

⁶ For a discussion of the classification of Jewish congregations, see this writer's statement in the Government's report on the census of 1926 (Rp-1, p. 655, 656).

⁷ For a discussion of this important matter, namely, uniformity, see the introduction to the report on the census of 1900, (Rp-17, p. 126-128). Uniformity at that time, it seems, was especially difficult to secure because of the forms of organizations then in vogue in the large cities, in the Russian congregations of recent origin, which are not so much congregations in the American sense of the term — the units of which the Jewish community is composed — as they are communities (Kehilloth) in the European sense. Each has its own *Chevrá Kadisha*, its *Chevrá Mishnais*, its *Chevrá Gemarah*, its *Gemiluth Chassodim*, sometimes its *Malbish Arumim*, or its *Lechem Lor'ebim*, or it may itself constitute a beneficial association." (Rp-17, p. 126.)

⁸ The following paragraph of the introduction to the statistical summary of this census will illustrate the importance of this innovation. "A blank space opposite to a question may not be interpreted as a negative answer. If, for instance, we find that sixteen out of a possible twenty-four congregations in a State report nothing on the subject of religious schools, we are not warranted in concluding that only one-third of the congregations maintain schools." (Rp-17, p. 126-128.) The United States Government introduced the term "number reporting" for the first time in its statistics of religious bodies of 1906.

⁹ The suggestion to study the family composition came from the chairman of the Advisory Committee on the Census, Dr. Cohen, who conceived of this addition to the scope of the census as one that will enhance the work of the Jewish communities and make the results of the census a more solid foundation for other religious, educational and social-economic studies.

Sources and Reference Codes

- Rp- 1 = U. S. Census. Statistics of Churches, 1890. 2 v. 1894
- Rp- 2 = Bureau of the census. Religious Bodies: 1906 2 v. 1910
- Rp- 3 = Bureau of the Census. Census of Religious Bodies: 1916 2 v.
- Rp- 4 = Bureau of the Census. Census of Religious Bodies: 1926, 2 v.
1929
- Rp- 5 = Census office. Seventh Census 1850. 1853.
- Rp- 6 = Census office. Statistical View of the United States 1850. 1854
- Rp- 7 = Census office. Statistics of the United States 1860. 1866
- Rp- 8 = Census Office. Ninth Census 1870. Compendium. 1872
- Rp- 9 = Private communications to this writer
- Rp-10 = Census Office. Abstract of the 11th census: 1890
- Rp-11 = Census office. Statistics of the Population of the United States
Ninth census [1870]. Volume 1. 1872
- Rp-12 = Jewish Calendar for fifty years. Edited by J. J. Lyons and
A. de Sola. Montreal 1854
- Rp-13 = Board of Delegates of American Israelites [and] Union of
American Hebrew Congregations. Statistics of the Jews of
the United States. [Philadelphia] 1880
- Rp-14 = H. S. Linfield. Communal Organization of the Jews of the
United States. American Jewish Committee. New York 1930
- Rp-15 = American Jewish Year Book. Vol 1, 5660, 1889
- Rp-16 = Same. Vol. 2, 5661, 1890
- Rp-17 = Same. Vol. 3, 5662, 1891
- Rp-18 = H. S. Linfield. The Jews of the United States; their Number
and Distribution. American Jewish Committee. New York
1929
- Rp-19 = American Jewish Year Book. 5668, 1907
- Rp-20 = American Jewish Year Book, 5678, 1917
- Rp-22 = Census Office. Statistics of the Population of the United
States at the Tenth Census 1880. 1883
- Rp-23 = Census Office. Twelfth Census Report 1900. Vol 1: Popula-
tion.
- Rp-24 = Census Office. Eleventh Census 1890 Part 1: Report on
Population.