Max Lilienthal and Isaac M. Wise: Architects of American Reform Judaism

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In Cincinnati's United Jewish Cemetery, situated near the entrance among grand old trees, stands an impressive obelisk that marks the resting place of the great Reform Jewish leader Rabbi Isaac M. Wise. Over twenty feet tall, it towers over all the other monuments. A short distance away, perhaps a third of its height, is the obelisk of his friend and colleague Rabbi Dr. Max Lilienthal. The size and situation of the two grave markers reflect the standard historical judgment as to the relative importance of these two leaders. Wise has dominated the story of the creation of Reform Judaism in America, whereas Lilienthal has been relegated to a footnote. Yet Lilienthal played a vital role in Cincinnati's emergence as the historical center of American Reform Judaism. This article will examine the New York period of these two rabbis, during which their relationship was formed and Lilienthal emerged as a moderate Reformer.

Wise has been the subject of several book-length biographies as well as many articles. Some barely mention Lilienthal, his colleague of thirty-six years.[1] In contrast, Lilienthal has been the subject of only one book-length biography, *Max Lilienthal, American Rabbi.* Written by David Philipson, Lilienthal's student and successor to his pulpit in Cincinnati, the book lacks critical analysis, footnotes, and bibliography. More than half of the volume presents English translations of Lilienthal's writings, again without any analysis. The treatment of the transitional New York period is especially weak.[2] Other historians have dealt with a particular period of his career, especially his years in Russia.[3] In New York Hyman Grinstein discusses Lilienthal's activities without offering any systematic assessment of his career.[4] Morton J. Merowitz assesses Lilienthal's contribution to American Jewish education.[5] Most discussions of the founding of Reform institutions in Cincinnati gloss over Lilienthal's role.[6] As the markers in the

United Jewish Cemetery so tellingly illustrate, in American Jewish historiography, Wise's long shadow obscures Lilienthal.

Wise had not always overshadowed his friend. When they met, Lilienthal was well known for his attempts to modernize Jewish education in Russia. After arriving in New York he was immediately made chief rabbi of three German synagogues (Anshe Chesed, Shaarey Hashamayim, and Rodeph Shalom). Wise, on the other hand, who had been a "Religionsweiser" (an instructor) in a small synagogue in Radnitz, Bohemia, arrived in America with no money or prospects to support his young wife and child.[7] Lilienthal surpassed Wise with regard to academic credentials as well. Lilienthal had studied at the prominent Fürth Yeshivah, earned a doctorate at the University of Munich (ranking in the top seven of his class), and completed his rabbinical studies under Hirsch Aub, chief rabbi of Munich.[8] Wise had attended the yeshivah at Goltsch-Jenikau and later spent two years at the University of Prague and one year at the University of Vienna. Though he attached a "D.D." to his name in later years, no university ever granted him this degree.[9] Lilienthal also compared favorably to the younger man with regard to appearance and personality. Contemporaries remembered him as handsome, tall, energetic, and vigorous, frank in the expression of his ideas, yet always courteous and good-natured.[10] Wise was short, sickly, and insecure, prone to impulsive, egotistical, and abrasive behavior.[11]

Wise's first impressions of New York so depressed him when he arrived in July 1846 he began to despair of his choice to emigrate. According to his account in *Reminiscences,* meeting Lilienthal decided his career in America. Insecure and timid, Wise introduced himself with a letter of reference from one of Lilienthal's university friends as well as with some of his own papers. After reading the letter and one of the documents, the chief rabbi welcomed him:

> Turning to me, he gave me a friendly and hearty *Shalom alekhem.* 'Hold up your head! Courage!' cried he. 'You are the man. We need you.' In short, Dr. Lilienthal was the first one to encourage me and inspire me with hope, and at that time this was of prime importance and significance to me… Within ten minutes I felt at home, and the impression which I received in the Lilienthal home, perhaps decided my career in America.[12]

Wise was smitten with Lilienthal's wife Pepi, whom he praises several times in *Reminiscences:*

> After a few minutes *she* came into the room; *she* whom later I had the frequent opportunity of admiring as the most lovable and amiable of wives and mothers; she who surpassed even Munich's daughters in charm; who with clear insight penetrated into the very heart of conditions and persons, and cast a glamour of love on all about her. I mean the sainted Peppie [*sic*] Lilienthal.[13]

Wise also became close with Lilienthal's extended family, his brother Samuel, and his sister-in-law Caroline. In the difficult years ahead, Wise would often return to their home for the friendship and love he found there.

Lilienthal gave the greenhorn Wise much more than support and encouragement. Though he and his family had arrived in America only eight months earlier, Lilienthal was already socially connected with influential members of the German-Jewish community. Wise met this New York cultural elite in Lilienthal's home, among them prominent attorneys, businessmen, and teachers. As these connections led to others, Wise's perceptions of America changed for the better.

Lilienthal also helped Wise find a pulpit. Wise and his young family were essentially living off the charity of relatives and friends. His landlord never demanded the rent and they got meat on credit. They also borrowed freely from Wise's brother-in-law Joseph Bloch and cousin Samuel Glueckauf, who were successful peddlers.[14] Wise tried his hand at tutoring and briefly considered an academic career. Lilienthal had been invited to dedicate a synagogue in New Haven and passed on the opportunity to Wise. Since Wise was successful there, Lilienthal next sent him to Syracuse for another dedication. On the way he stopped in Albany, where his preaching earned him an opportunity to officiate at High Holy Day services. Subsequently, he was offered the pulpit in Albany, and his American career was launched.

In October 1846, Lilienthal moved ahead with an important part of his rabbinic agenda: the formation of a *Beth Din* (religious court). He wanted a group of "learned, pious, and intelligent men" to consult and deliberate with him and to give legitimacy to his rulings. He invited Wise, Dr. Felsenheld (a teacher at Anshe Chesed, the largest

of the three New York German synagogues that Lilienthal led), and a rabbinical student named Kohlmayer to join him in the endeavor. As the elected head of the court, he presented the judges to his congregation and delivered a sermon explaining the court's functions. The group, which was to convene quarterly, would have only advisory powers. It is unlikely that American congregations, long used to setting their own individual course, would have accepted the court's rabbinical authority in any case.[15] But Lilienthal's agenda went far beyond that of a traditional court.

In his opening remarks he expressed the hope that the *Beth Din* would play a great role in the free development of young congregations in North America. The court would prepare a Jewish history text, a catechism, and a Hebrew grammar for the schools and work toward "the improvement of our divine service."[16] At this meeting Wise first proposed the goal of unifying the various liturgical traditions used in American congregations into a Minhag America, based on Halakah and the demands of modern times. The court discussed letters received from European rabbis concerning Jewish law, as well as questions from American congregations. Each member was given an assignment to prepare for the next meeting, one that unfortunately never took place. Wise, having worked all winter on his Minhag America, arrived in New York with his manuscript in hand, only to find that his colleagues had done nothing.[17]

Why did the group disband? Heller suggests that Wise's proposed liturgy was too radical for Lilienthal and Felsenheld, forcing them to find a method to postpone action on it.[18] Wise's *Reminiscences* gives us evidence of an ideological split within the group. He went into the enterprise leery of even the traditional name *Beth Din* and was seemingly frustrated with the lack of support he encountered for his reformist agenda at the first meeting:

> I began to comprehend, through the medium of interchange of views with my colleagues, that reform could be accomplished only by introducing reforms; that is, that the act must accompany the spoken word, because the general run of people understand the act better than the clearest word.[19]

Already frustrated with the group's "all talk, no action" approach, he was even more disgruntled after the cancellation of further

meetings. Returning to Albany he wrote two English lectures that presented his Reform position, which he delivered to a group of sympathetic friends.[20] Reacting to the *Beth Din,* the *Occident*'s editor and Philadelphia Orthodox leader Isaac Leeser[21] doubted that the Spanish-Portuguese congregations would be willing to change their prayers to the "crude and ill-digested system" of reforms by the few German rabbis now in America. Lilienthal apparently took offense at being lumped with Reformers and earned the following retraction from Leeser: "He [Lilienthal] has never done, or authorized anything to be done, since his arrival in this country, which could authorize us to suppose that he would sanction any departure from the strict standard of orthodoxy."[22] At this early stage in their relationship, Lilienthal and Wise were still far apart ideologically.

Present at Lilienthal's installation sermon as chief rabbi of the three German synagogues in January 1846, Rabbi James Gutheim reported in the *Occident* that Lilienthal showed himself to be no supporter of Reform:

> I am happy to state that the Chief Rabbi cherishes no sympathy with the so-called reforming Rabbis of Germany; but that he is adverse to their movements, and fully determined to uphold our religious institutions and be guided only by the law.[44]

In addition, there is the corroboration of Wise. In his first meeting with Lilienthal he describes a traditional Jew: "A man in a dressing-gown, with a black velvet cap on his head, opened the door."[45] In 1854 Wise commented in the *Israelite:*

> We have had many a confidential conversation with the doctor [Lilienthal], and we can testify that he used to be very conservative, that he struggled masterly, and that he finally arrived at a bright view of Judaism.[46]

David Philipson, Lilienthal's student and biographer, concurred, claiming that Lilienthal began his American career as a proponent of traditional Judaism.[47]

In the three German synagogues Lilienthal took positions that actually pushed his congregations in a more traditional direction. He established a *Chevrat Shas* (circle for the study of Talmud) as part of his program of adult education. He instituted traditional burial customs, including detailed directions for the washing, dressing, and

interring of the deceased. He attempted to crack down on the abuses perpetrated by the kosher butchers of New York, complaining that the meat was not properly washed or labeled, that kosher and non-kosher meat was occasionally mixed, and that inspection was lax, threatening to expose the butchers who refused to comply with his standards. He also pushed for stricter adherence to Jewish law with regard to the baking of matzah for Passover. Not satisfied with existing standards, he formulated a list of seventeen points for the baker to follow. Still not satisfied, he suggested that the synagogues buy their own equipment.[48]

In other ways he advocated modernizations, especially with regard to decorum in services. Yet the changes, including minimizing chaos, excessive movement in and out of the sanctuary, and noise, were supported by specific passages in the *Shulkhan Aruch*.[49] He was concerned that Hebrew be chanted with correct melodies and appropriate responses. In one way he broke from tradition when he replaced the traditional prayer *ha-Notein teshu'ah* (He who gives salvation) with his own *Ribon kol ha-olamim* (Master of all worlds). He considered the former suitable "only to humble subjects of monarchs," whereas his own was more appropriate for citizens of a republic. Other congregations in Albany, Syracuse, Boston, and Newark adopted this change.[50]

Lilienthal also instituted confirmation, an important element in his educational program. As early as January 14, 1846, he had prepared an extensive report proposing a class for post-bar mitzvah boys and for girls over the age of twelve. The children would meet with him for six months of study that would culminate in a public examination on the first day of Shavuot, a vow of faith, and a blessing. He defended the legal basis for this innovation to the boards of his three synagogues and again at the first ceremony that spring. The *Occident* reported that the rabbi "gave convincing evidence that the ceremony of confirmation is in accordance with the strictest rules of orthodoxy, as laid down in the Talmud and Schulchan-Aruoh [*sic*].[51]

Both on the basis of the views of contemporaries and on the evidence of his actions in the three German synagogues, it seems clear that Lilienthal was what would later be called a modern Orthodox rabbi in his first years in New York.


The Asmonean.

A Family Journal of Commerce, Politics, Religion, and Literature, Devoted to the Interests of the American Israelites.

PRICE DOLLARS PER ANNUM PAYABLE IN ADVANCE. | KNOWLEDGE IS POWER. | ROBERT LYON, 41 GOLD STREET.

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Nameplate of The Asmonean
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, there were no ordained rabbis in the United States. The few "ministers" had been both poorly trained and poorly paid. With little prestige or power, they were under the control of the lay leadership. When the first ordained rabbis arrived, the powerful *parnassim* (presidents) had no intention of relinquishing authority. Wise commented sarcastically:

> At that time the parnass [*sic*] was an autocrat in the congregation. He was president, *shamash, chazzan,* rabbi. He ruled the quick and the dead. He was the law and the revelation, the lord and the glory, the majesty and the spiritual guardian of the congregation. He suffered no rival; all were subject to him.[23]

Robert Lyon, editor of the *Asmonean,* an early New York Jewish publication, complained in 1850 that rabbis were "mere hirelings of a moment, the pliant tool of a Parnas."[24] Both Lilienthal and Wise suffered under these conditions.

The Union of New York's German synagogues required that Lilienthal receive special permission to visit a school, preach a sermon, or deliver a legal decision.[25] The Minute Book of Anshe Chesed (the largest of the German synagogues that Lilienthal served) reveals the constant effort of the leadership to dominate their rabbi. He was reprimanded for not announcing a wedding ahead of time and for not attending a funeral and criticized for an alleged lack of attention to Anshe Chesed's school. Responding to this incident, Lilienthal was annoyed: "If the board of trustees thought he did not do enough, he was ready and willing to resign, as he did not wish to have it thought that he gets his money for nothing."[26] Lilienthal, self-consciously proud of his stature as a university-trained and ordained professional, refused to accept being treated as a hireling. He confided his frustrations to his friend Wise, who was also struggling in Albany:

> During the course of our conversation, Lilienthal informed me of his mournful experiences, and imparted to me his purpose of renouncing the ministry altogether and devoting himself entirely to the education of the young. This loosened my tongue, and I told him my troubles. "There is no help for you," said my friend, who was really well-disposed towards me. "If you want to be the Christ, you must expect to be crucified." I will not. I shall do something else for a living.[27]

This shocking expression, especially for a rabbi, reveals the depth of his dissatisfaction. Wise noted the words in his diary and reread them often. Lilienthal would soon carry out his promise to leave the rabbinate, seizing on a minor incident in December 1847 to make a stand against board domination. He refused to leave a board meeting at one of the other synagogues to help make up a *minyan* (quorum of ten men) at Anshe Chesed. Brought up on charges, Lilienthal would not even meet with Anshe Chesed's board in their efforts to reconcile with him. Finally, at a general meeting held on February 12, 1848, the leadership concluded:

> On motion: Resolved to inform Dr. Lilienthal, by a letter from the Board of the Resolution passed at the General Meeting of this day concerning the refusal [of the members to give him any satisfaction and of the declaration of the vacancy] of the office of raby [*sic*] to this congregation.[28]

True to his word, Lilienthal left the rabbinate and in a short time established a very successful private Jewish school, soon hailed as one of the best in the country.[29]

Lilienthal and Wise tried to collaborate once more during this period. In early 1849, Wise and Leeser attempted to organize a national convention to promote unity among congregations in the United States, a direct continuation of those concerns raised by Lilienthal's *Beth Din.* Most scholars who have discussed these efforts, which never came to fruition, have failed to accurately portray Lilienthal's role as the behind-the-scenes facilitator.[30] Though he did not shrink from national leadership during this period, his failures in Russia and New York may have made him more reticent about stepping forward in a conspicuous manner. While Lilienthal strongly supported the goals of the proposed conference, he allowed Wise to take the lead, establishing a pattern in their relationship that would continue for the rest of

Lilienthal's life. Wise would be the outspoken crusader on the front lines; Lilienthal would stay in the background as an organizer and consensus builder.

Though ideological opponents, Leeser and Wise gained a grudging respect for each other after a meeting in the fall of 1847. They forged common ground in a plan to bring together representatives of the nation's synagogues in order to confront American Jewry's many problems. Using the *Occident* as a vehicle, Wise called a meeting of "Ministers and Other Israelites" at Philadelphia in May 1849. Leeser and Wise divided the task of contacting the various congregational leaders; Leeser was to champion the plan in Philadelphia, the West, and the South. Wise, responsible for the East and especially New York, immediately met with Lilienthal and Leo Merzbacher, rabbi of Temple Emanu-El, to plan a strategy. According to Wise's *Reminiscences,* Merzbacher opposed the plan, anticipating Orthodox recalcitrance, while Lilienthal endorsed it. Lilienthal assisted Wise by hosting a meeting with him and a contingent from Cincinnati in his home and offering Wise the opportunity to preach at Shaarey Hashamayim on February 1, 1849 to advance the plan.[31] The next day, at a gathering of the boards of all the German synagogues, Lilienthal urged support for the convention, and the group unanimously resolved to participate.

Meanwhile, representatives of all ideological positions expressed opinions in the pages of the *Occident.* Though Wise minimized his Reformist position, traditionalists used the radicalism of the Reform conferences in Germany as an excuse for not attending. Lilienthal and Wise countered in the March 1849 issue, downplaying Reform and reiterating the problems facing American Jewry that the proposed conference would address. To reawaken enthusiasm for the cause, Lilienthal arranged for Wise to speak again at Shaarey Hashamayim in New York on March 3. In this talk Wise drew an analogy between the light in the biblical tabernacle and the need for spiritual light in the congregations of Israel.[32] Inspired by Wise's words, a group of German-Jewish intellectuals formed a society called the Friends of Light *(Lichtfreunde).* Among them were new immigrants who had recently come to New York in the wake of the failed liberal revolutions of 1848. In the enclave of Little Germany, many such organizations appeared,

fueled by revolutionary agitation, especially in the social circles of the post-revolutionary refugees.[33] The Friends met once a week to hear lectures on such topics as the existence of God, the history of pagan worship, the immortality of the soul, and Jewish history.[34] Lilienthal became an ardent advocate of the society. His inaugural address to the group on April 20 echoed the words of Wise's sermon. "We have identified the purpose of our organization with the words to spread light and enlightenment."[35] His widely quoted statement, "We feel that we have broken with the past of Judaism, and that the bridge which would make a retreat possible is cut off," created quite a stir when the speech was published in the new liberal periodical *Israels Herold*.[36]

Lilienthal's rhetoric frightened traditionalists who had been considering a union, inadvertently helping to drive a wedge between Wise's and Leeser's fragile coalition. Wise, present and fully supportive of the group's efforts in the beginning, later came to believe that this group's existence was a deterrent to his own project. When he returned to New York to confer with the synagogue boards, all support for his conference had evaporated:

> As for New York, said one [board member], "progress will have to emanate from the Society of the Friends of Light. No other movement is advisable for the present." Another one said that if any one listened to the plans and purposes of the apostles of reform, as set forth in the Society of the Friends of Light, he would become very orthodox, and would strive earnestly to oppose every reform movement. A third said: "if the bridges are burnt behind us, and nothing can be effected with the Judaism of the past, as has been claimed in the Society of the Friends of Light, then let us attempt nothing, and leave everything as it has been."[37]

Anshe Chesed refused to allow Wise to speak. Unable to gain the cooperation of the New York congregations, he and Leeser concluded that nothing more could be done and gave up the project.

Before leaving New York, Lilienthal asked Wise what he would do next. Wise replied:

> I am going back to Albany… and as truly as I am the son of a Jewish mother, I shall divide this American Judaism into two inimical camps, and they shall overcome the abominable indifference, repair the damages, and achieve the triumph of a new life by fight and struggle.[38]

Deeply disappointed, Wise seemed for the moment to have given up on the idea of unity as the answer to the problems of American Jewry. His *Reminiscences* do not reflect any personal animosity toward Lilienthal, perhaps because, written years later, he was careful of his colleague's feelings. However, a letter to the *Occident* by Joseph Beckel, one of his avid supporters and a member of his German literary society in Albany, may have better represented Wise's frustration at the time. Beckel attacked Lilienthal and the *Lichtfreunde* for foiling the unity plan. Calling him "the first and greatest opponent to a convention," he also claimed that the group was not revolutionary at all, but rather part of a reactionary plot to sabotage Wise's efforts by digging "suitable channels to carry off the stream of enthusiasm."[39] It is impossible to know whether this represents Wise's view at the height of his disappointment or the overzealous support of a champion who misrepresented the situation. But Wise may have felt too indebted to Lilienthal to be able to confront him directly. Ironically, at the very moment that Lilienthal made his first step toward Wise ideologically, they found themselves working at cross-purposes.

In spite of the bad feelings surrounding the dissolution of the Union of German synagogues, Lilienthal continued to serve these congregations on an informal basis. He led High Holy Day services, continued to preach, issued rulings on Jewish law, and worked for their charitable causes. His break with Anshe Chesed was mended by early 1850, when they asked him to be on a committee to modernize their services in anticipation of the move to a new building. Hyman Grinstein suggests that the synagogue felt pressure to change, based on competition with Temple Emanu-El and the desire to make a good impression on the city at the opening ceremonies.[40] Lilienthal was subsequently asked to speak at the building's consecration and to superintend the examination of their school. A relationship was formalized when the board unanimously elected him to be their "honorary rabbi." Though Lilienthal gracefully accepted the *pro bono* position, he tactfully reminded the board members that his main professional duties were with his private school. Because of the success of this endeavor, he had the autonomy and financial independence he needed from the synagogue.

Rabbi Morris Raphall
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

Lilienthal's dramatic prophecy concerning Wise's rabbinate was fulfilled as Wise continued to polarize the Bethel congregation in Albany. The two sides came to blows at a congregational meeting in the spring of 1849 to discuss a renewal of his contract. As tensions continued, Wise's health deteriorated until February 1850, when his physician became alarmed by his severe cough, and the board gave him a leave of absence. Traveling south, he visited Lilienthal in New York, Leeser in Philadelphia, and William Seward, President Zachary Taylor, and Daniel Webster in Washington. His final destination was Charleston, where he would defend the Reform viewpoint against the attacks of Rabbi Morris Raphall, champion of the Orthodox cause. Speaking to a full house of Charleston's Jewish and Christian elite at the Reform temple, Wise entered into a series of sermonic duels with Raphall, each drawing large audiences. At a public debate Raphall demanded of Wise, "Do you believe in the personal Messiah? Do you believe in the bodily resurrection?" Wise answered "with a loud and decisive 'no!'" Raphall left in disgust, but the Reform congregation was very pleased and subsequently offered Wise a contract at a salary of one thousand dollars. Wise accepted the position and submitted his resignation to the polarized Albany congregation. Later, however, he changed his mind and stayed.[41]

The stage was set for the denouement of his dramatic years at Bethel. First, Louis Spanier was elected parnas after Wise's friend and supporter Moses Schloss moved to St. Louis. Originally supportive of Wise, Spanier may have turned on the rabbi after the *Occident* published Raphall's bull of excommunication:

> Since Wise declared publicly and decidedly in Charleston that he does not believe in the personal Messiah nor in the bodily resurrection, he is no longer fit to act as rabbi or religious teacher of a Jewish congregation, and hence he should be removed from his post in Albany as soon as possible.[42]

The animosity toward Wise grew until it culminated in an infamous Rosh Hashanah scandal in 1850. According to Wise's account, the president struck him, knocking off his hat, the signal for the start of a general brawl that even the sheriff and his posse had trouble stopping. Subsequently, Wise's supporters gathered around him and formed a Reform congregation, Anshe Emet. Lilienthal consecrated his friend's new synagogue the following year.

Both Lilienthal and Wise lost synagogue positions during this period, but how different were the circumstances and results! Lilienthal remained dignified and professional throughout his struggle with the Anshe Chesed leadership. Although there were bitter feelings, within a year or two he would be invited back to serve the same congregation. Wise's actions, in contrast, generated terrible polarization, culminating in a fight at a High Holy Day service. Throughout their careers, Wise would illicit powerful negative responses from his ideological enemies; Lilienthal kept the dialogue reasonable, earning the title "prince of peace." This combination of personalities would make for a potent team in the years to come, after Lilienthal embraced Reform.

Though there is no autobiographical material in which Lilienthal discusses the evolution of his religious thought, it seems clear from the evidence that he began his New York period as a "modern Orthodox" Jew.[43] What caused him to change his position? It may have been the case that temporarily leaving the rabbinate freed him to consider ideological issues outside the confines of service within a traditional community. As head of a private Jewish school he no longer had to be the leader and model for Orthodox belief and practice or be governed by the congregation's expectations. Indeed, his private school put less emphasis on religious practice than did similar Jewish schools in New York.[52] Morton Merowitz is correct when he suggested that the boarding school phase of Max Lilienthal's pedagogical career marked a transitional period: although not yet a spokesman for Reform Judaism, he was becoming less dependent on traditionalist modes and patterns of education and life.[53]

Freed from the confines of the traditional rabbinate, Lilienthal went through the intellectual struggle to which Wise had referred. Though Lilienthal did not directly address what led him to change, David Philipson believed that as Lilienthal became more aware of

American conditions, he recognized the need for Reform.[54] Lilienthal was concerned with the growing irrelevance of rabbinic texts to many American Jews, as well as widespread apathy and ignorance. He came to the conclusion that only Reform could save the religion he loved.

Lilienthal's inaugural address to the Friends of Light in 1849 marked his first public embrace of Reform ideology.[55] He argued that for a growing number of Jews, the Talmud was becoming more and more foreign; Jewish literature no longer offered courage and consolation. "This literature is dying for us. We are withdrawing more and more from it." The prayer service no longer elevated devotion, nor did the customs and laws bind many Jews. Some transgressed out of "the harsh exigencies of life," others out of conviction.[56] Traditional Judaism no longer was in harmony with the needs of life.

What had changed, in his view, to make Orthodoxy irrelevant to modern Jews? "It was life and science… that have broken the bridge, that have changed the old forms and opened our eyes."[57] By life he was referring to the vast political, social, and economic changes that had swept through Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Jews were no longer oppressed by exceptional laws, forced to wear special clothes, or limited to peddling. Secular education, the abandonment of Yiddish in favor of the vernacular, and the adoption of modern styles and mores had led a new, clean-shaven generation to reject the "old, scorned image."[58] Further, the French Revolution gave rise to a profound striving for freedom. According to Lilienthal, while the revolution went too far by trying to get rid of all religion, it influenced Jews to break with the past. In its aftermath, a calm, organic striving toward freedom and equality replaced radicalism. The feeling of exile was extinguished, replaced by the rights and dignity of man.

Yet in the midst of these revolutionary sentiments, Lilienthal was pulled back toward the traditions he said had become antiquated and the faith that had protected the Jewish people through eighteen centuries of violent storms. He remembered the martyrs who died for the principles that many were throwing away with disdainful indifference. "How far do you want to go? What do you want to throw away? What do you want to keep?" How many have "bent their

knee, if not their hearts, to the cross, and have denied the only single truth?"[59] Later, he asked:

> Has a frivolous rashness raged here which, for the sake of civil freedom, bartered away the spiritual… Should we regret this destruction and pulling down, just as we ashamedly saw the bloodletting of the guillotine during the French Revolution?[60]

Was there some higher principle that justified the sacrifice of the rich heritage of Jewish tradition? Lilienthal answered with a resounding "Yes." "Science [*Wissenschaft*] sanctions the break and calls it good: science excites the thirst for knowledge and stimulates our holiest interest in the All-powerful." Then Lilienthal launched into a detailed European intellectual history from the Protestant Reformation through the Enlightenment, Kant, the young Hegelians, and the growth of the natural sciences, all of which contributed to religious skepticism. Jews had their own Luther, Moses Mendelssohn, who opened the door to German literature through his translation of the Bible into German and encouraged the growth of Jewish science. That science would restore human dignity to Jews by modernizing Judaism, thereby making it once again "a light of religious truth to all peoples."[61]

This analysis of the collapse of the old Jewish world drew heavily upon Lilienthal's *Wissenschaft* training from the University of Munich. The obvious question emerges: If Lilienthal knew all of this from his student days, why was he only now moving away from his traditional position? Ismar Schorsch, discussing the relationship between *Wissenschaft* and Reform, argues that Jewish scholarship went through stages. At the earliest stage it served as the cutting edge of a concerted effort to revamp Judaism to harmonize with a new legal and social context. Yet within a few decades, a more conservative style of Jewish scholarship emerged that sought to bolster Jewish self-confidence while assessing traditional Judaism more favorably. This conservative approach allowed rabbis like Lilienthal to understand Judaism within its historical context as a dynamic, evolving religion, without adhering to the virulent antirabbinism of the early period or using its methodology as a destructive tool. Lilienthal could assert that Jewish *Wissenschaft* had done more for the exalting of the Jewish religion

in two decades in the eyes of the world than centuries of martyred brooding… Science has grasped its mission that it must teach and preach to Jewry, and Jewry cleansed, has to give it to the world.[62]

Lilienthal's position was further developed in a series of articles for the *Asmonean* in 1854, taking over for Wise after his departure for Cincinnati. Describing the various parties or factions within the Jewish world in relation to historical and philosophical scholarship, he noted *Wissenschaft* had concluded that rabbinic Judaism was not divinely ordained, but rather the product of a long evolution. Some scholars chose to retain the whole legal system in spite of their intellectual understanding, having been raised in strict observance of tradition. Others felt that it was necessary for the masses of Jews to mature intellectually, to demand reforms themselves, before changes were imposed. The Reformers, however, refused to wait for the masses to be ready and wanted to eliminate "a heap of observances and ceremonies" and develop new forms. They believed that purification was necessary, or Judaism would lose many adherents over time.[63]

Lilienthal probably began his career in America as one of those scholars who, in spite of intellectual understanding, wanted to retain the bulk of the tradition. He may have shared the fears of a traditional scholar who once remarked to him: "Do not touch these things, although they seem to be an immense palace, they are all but ashes; if you move them, the whole structure will tumble and crumble down."[64] However, his experiences in German New York convinced him that religious indifference and alienation could no longer be treated passively. Stanley Nadel, in his book *Little Germany,* asserts that this immigrant enclave was overwhelmingly secular. In 1856, the New York German newspaper *Staats-Zeitung* estimated that fewer than one in five German immigrants were regular churchgoers.[65] In both his *Lichtfreunde* address and his articles for the *Asmonean,* Lilienthal expressed concern about a growing materialism and indifference to spiritual values. He spoke movingly of those who were "numbed in the icy fields of indifference to everything higher and spiritual" and sensed a growing apathy associated with a "material self-interest, an inflated egotism" that had forgotten that world of the spirit.[66] Lilienthal feared that apathy would undermine the religion that he loved and that only Reform could save it.

Another factor sparked his concern for the Jewish community he was observing: the poverty of Jewish education in America. In a long article in the *Asmonean,* "Do we educate our children in our Religion," he noted sadly that most Jews in America knew little of their religion, were unable to read Hebrew, and had no knowledge of the history of their people. American Jews focused on the practical concern of preparing their children for a profession. If children learned enough to get through a bar mitzvah ceremony, the parents are satisfied. Lilienthal worried whether that was sufficient to pass the tradition on to the next generation.[67]

Improvement of worship aesthetics had long been one of his concerns. Services needed to be modernized to attract the younger generation and to make a good impression on non-Jewish neighbors. Both issues motivated Anshe Chesed to ask for Lilienthal's help in 1850. He introduced a mixed choir and liturgical changes based on the Viennese rite of Isaac Noah Mannheimer.[68] The leadership agreed to limit the number of prayers the congregation could sing loudly with the cantor, to ban children under the age of four from the sanctuary, and to forbid talking in the vestibule and among the women. Fines were established for violations of these rules.[69] He fought Anshe Chesed unsuccessfully on one issue: the selling of honors and blessings during services. When he heard the sexton crying out, "A dollar for Hagbah, two dollars," or "two schillings for Pesicha," Lilienthal had the impulse to help him by shouting, "going, going, gone," like an auctioneer. He calls it a desecration of God's name *(Chilul haShem),* which undermined the edifying dignity of the service.[70]

He also raised the problem of hypocrisy, which he understood as the disparity between principles and actual practice. Children were taught tradition at school but found little Jewish practice at home. Men called themselves Orthodox but violated the Sabbath to make a living. He derided those who blithely followed two kinds of *Shulkan Arukh:* keeping kosher at home and ignoring the rules at first-class hotels. [71] In a sharply worded response to an attack by Isaac Leeser on Reform, he asserted, "Reform tries to remove every humbug and every self-deceit from the arena of the Jewish religion."[72]

Reform offered the only solution to hypocrisy by resolving the tension between life's demands and religious practice and between God's command and the transient work of mortal men. According to Lilienthal, it was necessary to use historical research to decide what was essential to the tradition and what was an accidental accretion, developed to meet the needs of specific historical conditions. He believed that many of the onerous restrictions under which Jews labored were imitations of indigenous customs that had become out of tune with the spirit of the times. "The greatest part of our *minhagim* are copies of the manners and customs of the different nations, in whose midst we lived for two thousand years." He especially despised those customs inspired by *Kabbalah,* "that misfortune of the Jewish religion," to which we owe "the greatest part of nonsensical *Minhagim* and superstitious prejudice." Judaism had to purify itself of these antiquated *minhagim* so that it could "stand upon the solid rock of Mosaic Law."[73]

Lilienthal applied the *Wissenschaftlich* approach to Reform to the debate over the abolition of the second day of Jewish festivals in the Diaspora. He argued that the historical circumstances had changed, making the second day unnecessary as well as onerous for merchants.[74] He also justified the three-year cycle of Torah reading on the basis of Talmudic precedent and the research of historian Leopold Zunz. The many references to active *Wissenschaft* figures in his *Asmonean* articles show that Lilienthal attempted to keep abreast of current research. [75]

Lilienthal's articles also reflect an underlying philosophy of history, reminiscent of Hegel. He had come to believe that progress was necessary:

> The wheels of time do not need or adapt the advice of mortal man; ruled and moved by an external power, they pursue their onward march; and whatever has to give way to new forms and new ideas, they will inexorably remove. Man may remain behind; but the genius of humanity… knows but the motto: 'Onward!'[76]

Life itself was mightier than all systems, he proclaimed. We must, therefore, adjust religion to conform to the spirit of the age.

One other important theme emerges from these articles, consistent with Lilienthal's personality and lifelong role as conciliator in the pursuit of peace. He criticized Isaac Leeser for engaging in personal

Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise shortly after arriving in Cincinnati, 1854.
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

attacks rather than keeping to the issues. "Principles, not men," should be the true motto of all, especially for those involved in religious controversy. He also criticized a close associate of Dr. Frankel's positive-historical school, Dr. Beer of Dresden, who called the Orthodox party a "class of imbecile and idiotic pseudo-orthodox."[77] Bemoaning the rancor that divided the Jewish world, he urged the parties to discuss their differences philosophically, using history and reason to decide issues. He begged both sides to "keep peace and nothing but peace." Recalling the quarrels between the schools of Hillel and Shammai, Lilienthal pointed out that there was never perfect unity within Israel. The Talmud, he argued, allowed divergence of opinion on every page. What one rabbi called heresy, another embraced. For Lilienthal, both opinions were the words of the living God *(Elu v'elu divrei Elohim chayim).* He urged all sides to respect diversity and avoid arrogance. This is especially true in the United States, where, in contrast to Europe, the blessing of religious liberty allowed all points of view to flourish.[78]

In August 1853, Wise received a letter from Cincinnati's B'nai Yeshurun asking him under what conditions he would consider a call to become their rabbi. With three young children and burdened with debt, but satisfied that his Albany congregation, Anshe Emet, was firmly established on the road to Reform, Wise was intrigued by the opportunity that the new congregation offered. When the B'nai Yeshurun leadership unanimously agreed to his terms of a lifetime contract at a salary of one thousand five hundred dollars a year (five hundred dollars more than any other colleague in America), he

and his wife felt compelled to accept. Further, by hiring him, the congregational leadership expressed its commitment to Reform.[79] In April 1854, Wise and his family moved to Cincinnati.

A sequence of events was unfolding that would soon draw Lilienthal to Cincinnati. Wise's success in the younger German congregation B'nai Yeshurun was threatening the older and more prestigious synagogue Bene Israel. Hampered by a debt on a new building in a declining section of town and losing members to the more dynamic and reforming newcomer, the leadership of the more traditional Bene Israel knew they needed to act to maintain their synagogue.[80] The president called a general meeting of the congregation and proposed that Wise be elected as rabbi for life at both synagogues and that his salary be split equally. Carried by a vote of ninety-three to twelve, Wise saw it as a "victory for the cause of progress in Judaism" over "simon-pure orthodoxy." Overjoyed, he temporarily assumed all rabbinical functions at both congregations, preaching, opening a religious school, and planting seeds of Reform in the older congregation. However, B'nai Yeshurun's leadership refused to sanction the new arrangement due to the intense competition between English-immigrant Bene Israel and the German offshoot formed in opposition to it.[81] Knowing Wise would be forced to resign, the Bene Israel leadership began to look elsewhere for a rabbi. Their advertisement in the *Israelite* showed the leadership's commitment to moving in a more liberal direction:

> K.K. Benai Israel, Cincinnati, O. is desirous of engaging a lecturer (in English and German languages), and superintendent of their school. Salary $1000 per annum with a prospect of an increase to $1500. Candidates being endowed with the following qualifications:
>
> l. Good theological learning and a general scientific education.
>
> 2. Liberal principles, progressive and in just accordance with our age. (No radical reformer!)[82]

According to David Philipson, several members of the Cincinnati synagogue whose sons attended Lilienthal's private school in New York may have put forward his name to the leadership. Others believe that Wise suggested Lilienthal for the job.[83] Wise related that the president of Bene Israel "informed me that their congregation could secure Dr.

Lilienthal, and that it depended on me as to whether negotiations should begin." Wise heartily approved of the idea and agreed to submit his resignation.[84]

Lilienthal informed the board of Anshe Chesed by letter that he had been "elected for a lifetime as Rabbi of the congregation Bene Israel in Cincinnati, Ohio at the yearly salary of $1500 besides other incomes connected with the office." The board reacted by calling for a general meeting of the electors of the congregation on May 27 and set up a committee to meet with the reverend doctor to investigate under what conditions he would be willing "to remain as Rabbi of this congregation."[85] The minutes reveal neither the motivation for Lilienthal's letter (did he expect a counter offer?) nor the results of the deliberations. After the committee informed him of the electors' decision, he proceeded with his planned departure.

Well before the agreement was signed, Wise enthusiastically announced the appointment in the *Israelite* with the headline, "The Rev. Dr. Lilienthal Elected Rabbi of K.K. Benai [*sic*] Israel of Cincinnati:"

> It affords us no ordinary pleasure to have to-day the privilege of announcing [*sic*] to our readers, that our friend, Dr. Lilienthal, was elected, April 22, Rabbi of K.K.B.I. of this city for life, with a salary of $1500 per annum. There can be no doubt, that the congregation has chosen the best man they can obtain… We therefore heartily congragulate [*sic*] the doctor, the congregation and the Jews of the West in general.[86]

Later in the article Wise asserted that the reason Lilienthal was leaving was shoddy treatment at the hands of the German synagogues. Singling out the president, Henry Moses, for special derision, Wise claimed that the leadership of Anshe Chesed not only would not pay him for preaching, they also blocked his efforts to reform the congregation. Despite his fondness for his colleague, Lilienthal wrote a stern reply in which he reproached Wise for attacking Moses personally, asserting that such attacks hurt Wise's paper and his sacred cause. Lilienthal also set the record straight, asserting that Moses had in fact worked hard to help him institute changes at Anshe Chesed. [87] It was not the opposition of the lay leadership that led Lilienthal to become frustrated with the pace of changes as his Reform position

developed; rather, it was the cantor. In his letter of resignation to Anshe Chesed, Lilienthal stated that his grounds for leaving were "having estranged himself from the rest of the Jewish clergy by putting the values of clergical service under scorn."[88] Wise was wrong about the shoddy treatment as well. Though Lilienthal had not been paid for his services, this had been an arrangement of his own choosing. In any case, Anshe Chesed had given him a series of generous gifts to thank him for his efforts over the years.[89]

There were other reasons for the rabbi to leave New York. The *New York Times* reported at the time of his death that "his wife's poor health prompted him to accept a call to rabbi" of the congregation in Cincinnati.[90] In addition, by 1855 Jews had begun flocking to the new religiously neutral public schools in preference to the expensive private schools like Lilienthal's. Liberals such as newcomer Isador Busch spoke out forcefully for Jewish participation in public education and prophesied the downfall of the all-day Jewish school.[91] There were indications that Lilienthal was already feeling the financial difficulties of this new trend, since his successor, Reverend Henry, had to make repairs on the school building when he took it over. He succeeded in keeping it going only until 1857, when the school closed permanently. After 1857 a marked lethargy characterized the approach to parochial education in the New York Jewish community. Lilienthal and his wife may have left just in time to avoid economic hardship.

A number of factors made the Cincinnati job attractive for Lilienthal. It offered financial security at a time when his wife was ill and they had a growing family. He had had an ongoing relationship with the synagogue's leadership dating back to the late 1840s and he had educated some of the sons of their prominent members in New York. Further, Bene Israel was moving in a more liberal direction, giving Lilienthal the opportunity to freely speak his mind and put his new Reform ideology into practice. In addition, Cincinnati was becoming an important center of commerce to which many German immigrants were drawn. A "Little Germany" existed in Cincinnati as early as the 1830s and had already emerged as a cultural center for German-Americans. Called the "Queen City of the West," some felt it was only a matter of time before it became the greatest city in America.

The Jewish community, drawing on this optimistic vision, came to believe it had a divine mission. Echoing Joseph Jonas, the community's self-proclaimed founder, Wise stated enthusiastically,

> Cincinnati is the Zion of the West, from which 'the Law' shall go forth. Here is a large and pleasant field for the devout laborer in the field of Judaism and enlightenment, and Dr. L. has the ability to verify our ardent wishes.[92]

Wise was eager to work together with his friend to make Cincinnati the source from which would come an American Reform Judaism. This last prospect, more than any other, must have impelled Lilienthal to leave New York.

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Notes

[1]Among the biographies, only Max B. May's *Isaac Mayer Wise: The Founder of American Judaism* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1916) and James G. Heller's *Isaac Mayer Wise: His Life, Works and Thought* (New York: UAHC, 1965) discuss Lilienthal's role. However, Sefton D. Temkin's more recent *Isaac Mayer Wise: Shaping American Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) hardly mentions Lilienthal.

[2]David Philipson, *Max Lilienthal – American Rabbi: Life and Writings* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1915). Philipson also contributed articles including "Max Lilienthal," *Central Conference of American Rabbis Annual Convention* 25 (1915): 191-220; and "Max Lilienthal, 1815-1882," *Centenary Papers and Others* (Cincinnati: Ark Publishing Co., 1919), 149-90. There is also Bruce L. Ruben, "Max Lilienthal: Rabbi, Educator, and Reformer in Nineteenth-Century America" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1997), upon which this article is based. Lilienthal is discussed in the general histories of the Reform movement, including David Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1967) and Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). Naomi W. Cohen, in *Encounter with Emancipation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1984), also treats Lilienthal.

[3]Among them are Saul Ginsburg, "Max Lilienthal's Activities in Russia: New Documents," *Proceedings of the American Jewish Historical Society* XXV (1939): 39-51; David Philipson, "Max Lilienthal in Russia," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 12-13 (1937-8): 825-39; mentioned prominently in Michael Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas and the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1981); Michael A. Meyer, "The German Model of Religious Reform and Russian Jewry," in Isador Twersky, ed., *Danzig, Between East and West: Aspects of Modern Jewish History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 67-91.

[4]Hyman Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York, 1654-1860* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1945); and his "Studies in the History of Jewish Education in New York City," *Jewish Review* 2 (July-October, 1944): 187-201. See also Grinstein's "The Minute Book of Lilienthal's Union of German Synagogues in New York," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 18 (1943-4): 321-52. There is also Sefton D. Temkin, "Rabbi Max Lilienthal views American Jewry in 1847," in Bertram Wallace Korn, ed*., A Bicentennial Festschrift for Jacob Rader Marcus* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1976): 581-608.

[5]Morton J. Merowitz, "Max Lilienthal (1814-1882)–Jewish Educator in Nineteenth-Century America," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Studies* 15 (1974): 46-65.

[6]See David Philipson, "History of Hebrew Union College," *Hebrew Union College Jubilee Volume,* 1875-1925 (Cincinnati, 1925): 1-70; Samuel E. Karff, ed., *Hebrew Union College- Jewish Institute of Religion at One Hundred Years* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1976). See also Steven A. Fox, "On the Road to Unity: The Union of American Hebrew Congregations and American Jewry, 1873-1903," *American Jewish Archives* 32 (November 1980): 145-93, and Bertram Wallace Korn, ed., *Retrospect and Prospect: Essays in Commemoration of the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1889-1964* (New York: CCAR, 1965).

[7]Temkin suggests that he preached, taught, and acted as ritual slaughterer. Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, 23ff. Wise later called it a large and highly respectable position. Heller, *Isaac M. Wise*, 80ff. But Temkin notes that the community claimed sixty-nine members in 1838.

[8]Ruben, "Max Lilienthal," 35.

[9]Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, 22ff. Wise never was able to produce proof of rabbinic ordination either.

[10]Jonathan D. Sarna and Nancy H. Klein, *The Jews of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: Center for the Study of the American Jewish Experience, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1989), 50. See also Max B. May, "The Jews of Cincinnati," in Charles Theodore Greve, ed., *Centennial History of Cincinnati and Representative Citizens*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Biographical Publication Co., 1904), vol. 1: 939-49.

[11]Heller, *Isaac M. Wise,* 56, 58; Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, 122ff.

[12]Isaac M. Wise, *Reminiscences,* trans. David Philipson, 2nd ed. (New York: Central Synagogue of New York, 1945), 19-20.

[13]Ibid., 20, 128, 177.

[14]Ibid., 26.

[15]For a discussion of the chaotic scene among American synagogues of the period, see Leon Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue, 1820-1870* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1976). He contrasts the situation with the centralized, hierarchical Roman Catholic Church, whose immigrants were also adjusting to American society. In the Jewish community, he notes on page 58, "since there was no ecclesiastical authority existing in this country, matters were allowed to shape their own course–each congregation doing as it saw fit; without referring its action to any other but its own minister and even he at times was overruled by the laymen who composed the membership of the Board of Trustees."

[16]*Occident* 3 (March 1846): 588, 590; *Occident* 5 (May 1857): 107-10. See also Ruben, "Max Lilienthal," 110f.

[17]Wise, *Reminiscences*, 55. Though unsuccessful, Lilienthal's *Beth Din* gave Wise the impetus to create his *Minhag America*, which would later become an important moderate Reform liturgy in ninteenth-century America.

[18]Heller, *Isaac M. Wise*, 137.

[19]Wise, *Reminiscences,* 51.

[20]Ibid., 55.

[21]Isaac Leeser (1806-1868) was an Orthodox spokesman who served as a *hazan* in Philadelphia. See Lance J. Sussman, "The Life and Career of Isaac Leeser (1806-1868): A Study of American Judaism in its Formative Period" (Ph.D diss., HUC-JIR, Cincinnati, 1987).

[22]*Occident* 5 (June 1847): 163; (August 1847): 259.

[23]Wise, *Reminiscences*, 51.

[24]*Asmonean* 2 (May 16, 1850): 29.

[25]See Hyman Grinstein, "The Minute Book of Lilienthal's Union of German Synagogues in New York," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 18 (1943-4): 323.

[26]Ruben, "Max Lilienthal," 113ff.

[27]Wise, *Reminiscences*, 129.

[28]*Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes*, February 13. The entire incident is discussed in Ruben, "Max Lilienthal," 115-17. Lilienthal and Wise were not alone in their negative experiences at the pulpit. Isaac Leeser had recently lost his position after many years of service. Rabbi Abraham Rice had left his congregation and opened a dry goods store.

[29]For a discussion of the school, see Ruben, "Max Lilienthal," 121ff.

[30]Bertram W. Korn incorrectly claimed that Lilienthal opposed the convention out of fear "that the numerically superior traditionalist groups would outvote the Reformers and outlaw modernization." *Eventful Years and Experiences* (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1954), 35-38. See also Moshe Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism: The Historical School in 19th Century America* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1963), 125-30; Heller, *Isaac M. Wise*, 150-6; and Lance J. Sussman, "The Life and Career of Isaac Leeser (1806-1868): A Study of American Judaism in its Formative Period" (Ph.D. diss., HUC-JIR, Cincinnati, 1987), 275-8. Sussman also inaccurately claims that Lilienthal and the three Orthodox congregations opposed the plan.

[31]Wise, *Reminiscences*, 78, 86ff. Also Heller, *Isaac M. Wise*, 138ff. That Lilienthal had access to the pulpit at Shaarey Hashamayim so soon after his dismissal is puzzling. According to Grinstein, though, he may have continued to serve the synagogues Rodeph Shalom and Shaarey Hashamayim. Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community*, 398.

[32]Ibid., 7 (April 1849): 12ff. Heller mistakenly claimed that this address was given in Albany. See Heller, *Isaac M. Wise*, 165. Leeser published the speech in an English translation in the *Occident* after editorially distancing himself from Wise's Reform-oriented ideas.

[33]Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany: Ethnicity, Religion, and Class in New York City, 1845-80* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 123.

[34]*Occident* 7 (August 1849): 271.

[35]Max Lilienthal, "Erster Vortrag im Vereine der Freunde," *Israels Herold* 4 (April 20, 1849): 25.

[36]Ibid., 26. See another account in Reform Rabbi David Einhorn's periodical *Sinai* 1 (August 1856): 203ff. Grinstein also discusses the incident in *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, 202. For a discussion of the periodical *Israels Herold,* see Guido Kisch, "Israels Herold: The First Jewish Weekly in New York," *Historia Judaica* 2 (October 1940): 65-84.

[37]Wise, *Reminiscences*, 91. His earlier expression of support is found in the *Occident* 7 (August 1849): 274.

[38]Ibid., 92.

[39]*Occident* 7 (June 1849): 141. Leeser originally believed Beckel's account and accused Lilienthal of abandoning the cause. Ibid., 146f. The editor retracted his accusation after he had the opportunity to speak to Lilienthal, who assured Leeser that he supported and would attend a conference. Ibid., 7 (August 1849): 275.

[40]Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York,* 364. See also *Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes*, December 2, 1849, and January 20, 1850.

[41]The entire Charleston incident is discussed in Wise, *Reminiscences*, 141-52.

[42]Ibid., 152f.

[43]We know this indirectly from remarks Wise made in an article in the *Israelite* 1 (August 11, 1854): 37f.

[44]*Occident* 3 (February 1846): 574-5.

[45]Wise*, Reminiscences*, 19.

[46]*Israelite* 1 (August 11, 1854): 37f.

[47]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, 52.

[48]Ruben, "Max Lilienthal," 106ff.

[49]*Occident* 4 (February 1847): 552f.

[50]Ruben, "Max Lilienthal," 99.

[51]*Occident* 4 (August 1846): 552. Although some sources claim it was the first confirmation ceremony to be celebrated in America, for example *Occident* 4 (August 1846): 259; and Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, 249, there is evidence of earlier celebrations. Dr. Barnet A. Elzas described a confirmation service in the prayer book of the Charleston congregation K. K. Beth Elohim, printed in 1830. The author claims that confirmation was conducted in Charleston in 1825. *Jewish Tribune* 7 (May 18, 1906): 17. For a general discussion of the prayer book, see Gary P. Zola, "The First Reform Prayer Book in America: The Liturgy of the Reformed Society of Israelites," in Dana Evan Kaplan, ed., *Platforms and Prayer Books: Theological and Liturgical Perspectives on Reform Judaism* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002): 99-117.

[52]See Ruben, "Max Lilienthal," 156.

[53]Merowitz, "Max Lilienthal," 52.

[54]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, 52.

[55]Max Lilienthal, "Erster Vortrag im Vereine der Freunde," *Israels Herold* 4 (April 20, 1849), 26. See another account in Reform Rabbi David Einhorn's periodical *Sinai* 1 (August 1856): 203ff. Grinstein also discusses the incident in *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, 202. For a discussion of the periodical *Israels Herold*, see Guido Kisch, "Israels Herold: The First Jewish Weekly in New York," *Historia Judaica* 2 (October 1940): 65-84.

[56]*Israels Herold* 4 (April 20, 1849): 26.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Ibid., 27.

[59]Ibid., 26.

[60]Ibid., 27.

[61]Ibid.

[62]Ibid., 35. For a discussion of the relationship between Reform and *Wissenschaft*, see Ismar Schorsch's "Scholarship in the Service of Reform" and "The Emergence of Historical Consciousness," in *From Text to Context*: *The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1994).

[63]*Asmonean* 10 (August 4, 1854): 125.

[64]Ibid., 10 (June 1, 1854): 53.

[65]Nadel, *Little Germany,* 99.

[66]*Israels Herold* 4 (April 20, 1849): 26.

[67]*Asmonean* 10 (August 11, 1854): 132f.

[68]Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, 364. Also *Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes*, August 19, 1849; October 14, 1849; December 2, 1849.

[69]Ibid., December 2 and 25, 1849.

[70]*Asmonean* 10 (June 23, 1854): 77. As late as April 1, 1855, Lilienthal complained about the ritual of *misheberachs* (blessings) in the *Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes*.

[71]Ibid., 10 (August 4, 1854): 125.

[72]Ibid., 10 (June 30, 1854): 85.

[73]Ibid., 10 (June 9, 1854): 62f; and 10 (June 23, 1854): 77.

[74]Ibid., 10 (June 1, 1854): 53.

[75]Ibid., 10 (July 21, 1854): 108. See also 10 (June 1, 1854): 54; 10 (June 9, 1854): 63; 10 (June 30, 1854): 94 for examples.

[76]Ibid., 10 (June 1, 1854): 53.

[77]For critique of Leeser, see 10 (June 30, 1854): 85. For critique of Dr. Beer of Dresden, see 10 (August 4, 1854): 125.

[78]Ibid., 10(August 25, 1854): 149f.

[79]Wise, *Reminiscences*, 233ff.

[80]Jonathan Sarna and Karla Goldman, "From Synagogue-Community to Citadel of Reform: The History of K.K. Bene Israel (Rockdale Temple) in Cincinnati, Ohio," in James P. Wind and James W. Lewis, eds., *American Congregations*, vol. 1 *Portraits of Twelve Religious Communities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 173. Wise, *Reminiscences*, 276f.

[81]Sarna and Goldman, "From Synagogue-Community to Citadel of Reform," 168ff; and Wise*, Reminiscenses*, 278.

[82]*Israelite* 1 (April 20, 1855): 323.

[83]Sarna and Goldman, "From Synagogue-Community to Citadel of Reform," 214, 149f.

[84]Wise, *Reminiscences*, 283.

[85]*Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes*, May 13, 1855.

[86]*Israelite* 1 (April 27, 1855): 335.

[87]Ibid., 1 (May 11, 1855): 349.

[88]*Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes*, July 1, 1855.

[89]Ibid., April 15, 1855. The last gift, three dozen silver tablespoons, two dozen teaspoons, a silver ladle, and a silver cup (valued at two hundred dollars and fifty-three cents), was presented to the rabbi before the June 24 meeting as a farewell present.

[90]*New York Times*, April 6, 1882, 2. Pepi had been actively involved in running his private school.

[91]Busch argued that "as good republicans we ought to be in favor of public schools." *Israelite* 1 (December 8, 22, 29, 1854).

[92]*Israelite* 1 (April 27, 1855): 335.