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Series II: Subject Files, 1956-1993, undated.

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National Foundation for Jewish Culture, grant proposals,
1975-1985.

FOOTNOTES

¹The basic work on the history of Synagogue Architecture in the United States is Rachel Wischnitzer, Synagogue Architecture in the United States: History and Interpretation (Philadelphia, 1955). More broadly, see Brian de Breffny, The Synagogue (New York, 1978) and Richard Meier, "Synagogue--Architecture--Contemporary Period," Encyclopaedia Judaica (Jerusalem, 1971), Vol. 15, cols. 620-629. See also Linda Perlis Black, Synagogue Architecture and Planning: An Annotated Bibliography (Council of Planning Librarians, Exchange Bibliography #1469, February, 1978), 24 pp. and Hannah R. Kuhn, Synagogue Architecture: Primarily in the United States: A Selective [Annotated] Bibliography (typescript, 1977, copy in Klau Library, HUC-JIR, Cincinnati), 16 pp.

²The scope of the synagogue building program was massive. However, the exact number of synagogues built from 1945 to 1975 is unknown. Estimates of the capital invested in new synagogue construction tend to be conservative. For example, Lloyd Gardner has suggested that less than \$200,000,000 was spent on building synagogues from 1945 to 1962; see his "United States, 1945-1790," Encyclopaedia Judaica, Vol. 15, col. 1643. But even low estimates combined with subsequent operational and maintenance costs has led Daniel Elazar to conclude "that the total of all funds raised by individual synagogues approximately equals the amount raised by federations," quoted from his Community and Polity: The Organiza-

tional Dynamics of American Jewry (Philadelphia, 1976), pp. 305-6.

³Peter Berger, The Sacred Canopy (Garden City, New York, 1967, 1969), p. 170.

⁴Marshall Sklare, "The Sociology of the American Synagogue," Social Campus XVIII, 1971, No. 3, pp. 375-384; reprinted in his America's Jews (New York, 1973) and in Understanding American Judaism, Jacob Neusner, ed. (New York, 1975), Vol. 1, pp. 91-102.

⁵On the relationship of universalism and particularism in Jewish thought, see Benny Kraut's excellent article "Judaism Triumphant: Isaac Mayer Wise on Unitarianism and Liberal Christianity" AJS Review 7-8 (1982-83), pp. 179-230.

⁶No study of synagogue "annexes" has been made. The absence of classrooms in early American synagogues can be explained partly by the reliance of synagogue design on church architecture and the fact that Jewish education before the Civil War was not exclusively the responsibility of individual congregations. Even the original Sunday schools were independent operations; see David Uriah Todes, "The History of Jewish Education in Philadelphia: 1782-1873" (Ph.D. diss., Dropsie College, 1952), pp. 57-71, and Joseph R. Rosenbloom, "Rebecca Graetz and the Jewish Sunday School Movement in Philadelphia," Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society 43 (1958) pp. 71 ff.

⁷Lewis Mumford, "Toward a Modern Synagogue Architecture," Menorah Journal (June, 1925), pp. 225-252. See also Albert S. Gottlieb, Synagogue and Sunday School Architecture (New York, 1919?) 22 pp.

⁸Gerald Bernstein, "Two Centuries of American Architecture" in Two Hundred Years of American Synagogue Architecture (American

Jewish Historical Society, 1970), p. 17 and Charles Butler, "The Temple Emanu-El, New York," Architectural Forum 52 (February, 1930), pp. 151-154.

⁹On the historical development of the European synagogue, see Rachel Wischnitzer, The Architecture of the European Synagogue (Philadelphia, 1964), pp. 218-247. See also Harold Hammer-Schenk, *Unterstellungen*

¹⁰On the Jewish Center Movement, see Benjamin Rabinowitz, The Young Men's Hebrew Associations: 1854-1913 (New York, 1943) pp. 79-81, passim (reprinted from Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society, Number 37, 1947) and Deborah Dash Moore, At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews (New York, 1981), pp. 129-147. On Reconstructionism, see Charles S. Liebman, "Reconstructionism in American Jewish Life," American Jewish Yearbook 71 (1970), pp. 3-99. *gesellschaftlich zum Synagogenbau in Deutschland, Geschichte einer Baugattung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen 1972), 2 vols. (Hamburg, 1981).

¹¹Will Herberg, Protestant-Catholic-Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology (New York, revised edition, 1960), p. 56 and his "The Postwar Revival of the Synagogue" Commentary 9 (April, 1950), pp. 315-325.

¹²Herberg, Protestant-Catholic-Jew, pp. 195-198; Nathan Glazer, American Judaism (Chicago, 1957, 1972), pp. 106-128; and Rachel Wischnitzer-Bernstein, "The Problem of Synagogue Architecture: Creating a Style Expressive of America" Commentary 3 (March, 1947), p. 241.

¹³Although the UAHC was more ^{involved} ~~proactive~~ than the United Synagogue in promoting innovations in synagogue architecture, more Conservative than Reform synagogues were built. The role of the Conservative synagogue as a model to both Reform and Orthodox congregations is discussed by Marshall Sklare, "Recent Developments

in Conservative Judaism," Midstream 18 (January, 1972), p. 3. On the UAHC, see Sefton D. Temkin, "A Century of Reform Judaism in America," American Jewish Yearbook 74 (1973), pp. 3-75.

¹⁴"[UAHC] Eastern Conference on Synagogue Building: An American Synagogue for Today and Tomorrow" (June 22-3, 1947, New York), copy at American Jewish Archives, n.p. See also "Creating a Modern Synagogue Style: A Discussion" in Commentary 3 (June, 1947), pp. 537-544. Rabbi Jacob D. Schwartz was succeeded by Rabbi Eugene Lipman as UAHC Director of Synagogue Activities.

¹⁵Maurice D. Eisendrath, "The State of Our Union," November 14, 1948, p. 12. For a comprehensive view of Eisendrath's career, see the forthcoming senior rabbinic thesis by Avi Schulman at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati. On the UAHC Architects' Advisory Panel, see William Robbins, "Architects' Panel Helps to Shape Synagogue Evolution," New York Times, Sunday, October 8, 1967, 8:1.

¹⁶UAHC pamphlets on synagogue construction include Accredited List of Synagogue Artists and Craftsmen, n.d.; Architects Advisory Panel of the UAHC, n.d.; Check Lists For The Development of a Synagogue Building Program, n.d.; Guide to Planning Your Synagogue Building, n.d.; and How to Select an Architect, reprinted from "Facts About Your Architect and His work" (American Institute of Architects), n.d. See also Eugene Mihaly, The Implications of the Jewish Concept of Prayer for Synagogue Architecture, delivered at the Second National [UAHC] Conference on Synagogue Architecture and Art, 1957 (mimeograph copy at Klau Library, MC-JIR, Cincinnati).

¹⁷Peter Blake, ed., An American Synagogue for Today and Tomorrow: A Guide Book to Synagogue Design and Construction (New

York, 1954), p. vii. See also his Form Follows Fiasco: Why Modern Architecture Hasn't Worked (Boston, 1977).

¹⁸Abraham Erlik, "Eric Mendelsohn," Encyclopaedia Judaica, Vol. 11, cols. 1323-1324.

¹⁹"Percival Goodman," ed., Encyclopaedia Judaica, Vol. 7, col. 782.

²⁰Avram Kampf, Contemporary Synagogue Art: Developments in the United States, 1945-1965 (New York, 1966), p. 37. For Gropius' views on Oheb Shalom, see Architectural Record (June, 1964) p. 140 and Charles Jencks, Modern Movements in Architecture (New York, 1973) pp. 110 and 121, who points out architectural similarities between Oheb Shalom and Gropius' design for an auditorium at Baghdad University (Iraq, 1958).

²¹Samuel S. Cohon, Judaism: A Way of Life (New York, 1948). On the social hall, see Stanley Feldstein, The Land That I Show You: Three Centuries of Jewish Life in America, (Garden City, New York, 1979), pp. 595-607.

²²Stephen S. Kayser, "Book Review--Synagogue Architecture," Publication of the American Jewish Historical Society 46 (1956), pp. 64-66. See also Franz Landsberger in American Jewish Archives 8 (1956), pp. 143-144.

²³On "privatism," see Sam Bass Warner, Jr., The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth (Philadelphia, 1968) pp. 3-4. See also Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations (New York, 1979).

²⁴Jacob Neusner and Ira Eisenstein, The Havurah Idea (New York, n.d.); Gerald Bubis and Harry Wasserman, Synagogue Havurot:

A Comparative Study (Philadelphia, 1973); Bernard Reisman "The Havurah: An Approach to Humanizing Jewish Organizational Life," in Human Relations: Practicum for Senior Students, Robert C. Katz, ed. (typescript, Cincinnati, 1980?), pp. 123-136; and Harold M. Schulweiss, "Restructuring the Synagogue," Conservative Judaism 27 (Summer, 1973). See also Paul Cowan, An Orphan in History: Retrieving a Jewish Legacy (New York, 1982), passim.

²⁵ Synagogue Architecture in America (Spertus Museum, 1975), 12 pp.; Faith and Form (Spertus Museum, 1976), 101 pp.; and Two Hundred Years of American Synagogue Architecture (Rose Art Museum, American Jewish Historical Society, Brandeis University, 1976), 63 pp.

²⁶ William A. Rosenthal, "The American Synagogue in the 19th Century: Unfettered and Unintimidated," in The American Synagogue in the Nineteenth Century (American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, 1982), p. 3.

²⁷ Richard Meier, "Introduction," Recent American Synagogue Architecture (Jewish Museum, New York, 1963), p. 8.

²⁹ ~~28~~ Gerald Bubis, "The Synagogue and the Seventies: What Will Its Leaders Need to Know," Reconstructionist 37 (October, 1971), pp. 7-14 and Eric C. Friedland, "The Synagogue and Liturgical Developments," in Movements and Issues in American Judaism: An Analysis and Sourcebook of Developments Since 1945, Bernard Martin, ed., (Westport, Connecticut, 1978), pp. 217-232 and passim.

→ ²⁸ Fred Natkin, "Hebrew Union College Chapel" (typescript, American Jewish Archives, 1969); HUC-JIR Bulletin, February, 1949, II, 1; and Cincinnati Enquirer (June 6, 1975), p. 51.

A Comparative Study (Philadelphia, 1973); Bernard Reisman "The Havurah: An Approach to Humanizing Jewish Organizational Life," in Human Relations: Practicum for Senior Students, Robert C. Katz, ed. (typescript, Cincinnati, 1980?), pp. 123-136; and Harold M. Schulweiss, "Restructuring the Synagogue," Conservative Judaism 27 (Summer, 1973). See also Paul Cowan, An Orphan in History: Retrieving a Jewish Legacy (New York, 1982), passim.

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²⁷Richard Meier, "Introduction," Recent American Synagogue Architecture (Jewish Museum, New York, 1963), p. 8.

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January 14, 1985.

Rabbi Lance Sussman
Temple Beth Sholom
Middletown, Ohio

Dear Lance:

I am very pleased to inform you that we will publish your paper on "Isaac Leeser and the Protestantization of American Judaism."

Both Dr. Marcus and I have made a number of suggestions and corrections which I hope you will incorporate in your manuscript. Since you are here it will certainly be easier to discuss the final polishing of the piece and I look forward to working with you.

With all good wishes, I am

Very cordially yours,



Abraham J. Peck

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ISAAC LEESER AND THE PROTESTANTIZATION OF AMERICAN JUDAISM

Rabbi Lance J. Sussman

In attempting to understand Judaism in America during the nineteenth century, historians have largely focused on the development of the Reform movement and on the origins of Conservative Judaism. Significantly less attention has been paid to the history of traditional Judaism in America prior to 1880.¹ Yet, ^{one can argue} ~~it is a fact~~ ^(+ traditional Judaism?) that Orthodoxy dominated American Jewish religious life during most of the nineteenth century. In 1861, according to Leon Jick, whose ^{own} book, The Americanization of the Synagogue, 1820-1870 ~~(Hanover, NH, 1976)~~, emphasizes the centrality of the Reform movement in nineteenth-century American Judaism, there were more than 200 Orthodox synagogues in the United States and only eight Reform congregations. "Among the eight," Jick added, "were a number that would be considered, by twentieth-century standards, Conservative."²

[Orthodox Judaism in ante-bellum America was a relatively large and unquestionably complex phenomenon. A core of five Sephardic synagogues were established during the eighteenth century. Although they followed the Sephardic rite, by 1720, the majority of their members were of Central European descent. Beginning in 1802, with the founding of the Rodef Sholom congregation in Philadelphia, Ashkenasic Jews began organizing synagogues of their own. As immigration swelled their ranks, new synagogues, particularly in larger cities, were increasingly

organized along sub-ethnic lines. By the 1840s, highly Americanized Orthodox Ashkenazic congregations, such as New York's B'nai Jeshurun, successfully competed with the Sephardic synagogues for the leadership of the Jewish community.

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1840* Lay domination of the early American synagogue, widespread ignorance of Jewish law, the absence of ordained rabbis until 1840, and the need to conform to the mores of American society combined to make religious accommodationism a normative part of Orthodox Jewish life in America prior to the Civil War.

Although this trend was most pronounced among reformers, it also broadly existed among traditionalists. In fact, many of the most important accommodative strategies of American Jews during the first half of the nineteenth century were first developed within the context of the native Orthodox community. The main thrust of the movement to accommodate traditional Judaism to American society involved the adaptaticn of select features of American Protestantism, which allowed Jews to maintain their own distinctive identity and yet be a part of mainstream religious life in nineteenth-century America.

The Protestantization of American Judaism actually began at the start of the nineteenth century with the break-up of the original kehilloth (synagogue-communities) and the rise of radical Jewish congregationalism. Subsequently, beginning in the 1830s, a movement to imitate specific practices and theological emphases of American Protestantism, which did not violate either traditional Jewish law or doctrine, started among Orthodox Jews in America. By the 1850s, a clear trend toward

Jewish denominationalism also developed, which neither the accommodative traditionalists nor the moderate reformers could avert. Thus, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a profoundly transformed American Judaism had become, sui generis, a unique expression of the Jewish heritage.³ (perhaps cite quote in Korn article in rabb. bond.)

The most important spokesman of traditional Judaism in the United States who selectively advocated the Protestantization of American Judaism was Isaac Leeser (1806-68).⁴ Four of his Protestantizing activities were eventually taken over by the American Jewish community as a whole. These included regular vernacular preaching, the transformation of the traditional office of hazzan into a Jewish ministry, the establishment of the Jewish Sunday School, and the widespread use of an English-language Jewish Bible translated by Leeser himself. Leeser also developed an eclectic theology that stressed the themes of man's sinfulness, the coming of a Messiah, and the restoration of the Jewish people to the land of Israel. Although a full-scale treatment of his theology is beyond the scope of this paper, it is interesting to note that a radical reformer, Samuel Hirsch, contemptuously--but, in part, correctly--called Leeser's theology an "Abklatsch" (poor imitation) of English-Christian Methodism.⁵

Leeser was a ubiquitous figure in American Jewish life from 1830 to 1868. "Practically every form of Jewish activity which supports American Jewish life today," wrote historian and Reform Rabbi Bertram W. Korn, "was established or envisaged by this one man" and "almost every kind of publication which is

essential to Jewish survival was written, translated or fostered by him." Indeed, it is no exaggeration to call the ante-bellum period in American Jewish history, the "Age of Leeser."⁶

Included among his firsts are: the first volumes of sermons delivered and published by an American Jewish religious leader (1837-68); the first complete American translation of the Sephardic prayerbook (1837); the first Hebrew primer for children (1838); the first successful American Jewish magazine-newspaper, The Occident and American Jewish Advocate (1843-69); the first American Jewish publication society (1845); the first complete English translation of the Ashkenazic prayerbook (1848); the first Hebrew "high school" (1849); the first English translation of the entire Bible by an American Jew (1853); [the first Jewish defense organization--the Board of Delegates of American Israelites (1859)]; and the first American Jewish theological seminary--^{the short-lived} Maimonides College (1867). *He also served as a vice president of the*

Leeser's role as the leading Protestantizer of American Judaism in the first half of the nineteenth century is ^{best understood in} actually part of the general history of religion in America during that period.⁷ ^{Following} In the aftermath of the "Second Great Awakening," resurgent Protestant churches sought to make America a godly nation. Missionary activity was increased at home and abroad with impressive results. Between 1800 and 1830, church membership in the United States nearly doubled. Various Protestant denominations supported the American Bible Society (1816) and the American Tract Society (1825), which succeeded in broadly disseminating religious literature in all sectors of

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Fortunately, Protestants were generally inclined to look benevolently on the Jews. First, they were the children of Abraham, living representatives of the Israelites of the Bible. As such, even the foreignness of Jewish immigrants was forgivable. Moreover, Jews played an important role in God's ultimate plan for humanity. The presence of a remnant of the House of Israel in America was perceived as proof that the Almighty had not forgotten His promise of redemption. On the other hand, Catholics, not Jews, received the brunt of religious animus during the ante-bellum period as a result of nativist suspicions about the purpose of the Catholic ecclesiastical hierarchy and fear that the growing Catholic population would eventually achieve a majority in the American electorate.¹⁰

Moreover, a high degree of social contact existed between ante-bellum Jews and their gentile neighbors. Jews frequently attended church as guests or curious on-lookers and became familiar with many Christian practices. Likewise, Christians occasionally attended synagogues, creating a need among Jews to showcase Judaism in its best possible light.¹¹

Finally, American Judaism during the Early National Period was both institutionally and intellectually weak. American Jewry, whose population was only 3,000 as late as 1815, suffered from an "orthodoxy of salutary neglect" that had prevailed in American Jewish religious life since the seventeenth century. *A high rate of* rampant intermarriage, apostasy, and indigenous calls for reform, all testified to the precarious condition of the religious life of American Jewry. Innovators and traditionalists alike agreed that if Judaism was to survive in America, a new vision of Judaism would be needed to inspire its adherents, redefine its goals, and, ultimately, provide it with a viable institutional infrastructure.

It is possible that Leeser was more deeply influenced by the Episcopalian Church than by other Protestant denominations. In both Richmond, Virginia, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania--the two cities where Leeser lived--the Protestant-Episcopal Church was particularly strong, especially among the cities' social and intellectual elite.¹² Leeser shared their "High Church" liturgical sensibilities and probably looked favorably on their form of church government. The problem among Episcopalians of re-establishing a Bishopric in America after the Revolution is

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 even analogous to Leaser's lifelong concern with organizing a national ecclesiastical structure, including a *Bet* Beit Din (Jewish religious court), among Jews. In his own life, he had good personal relations with several Episcopalian clergymen, especially Dr. Joseph Jaquett, a scholarly Episcopalian minister in Philadelphia, with whom Leaser co-edited a Biblia Hebraica (1848).¹³ Lastly, there is little question that Leaser was an Anglophile and corresponded regularly with such notable English Jews as Grace Aguilar and Sir Moses Montefiore, as well as with British rabbis.¹⁴

From the very beginning of his public career as a Jewish religious leader, Isaac Leaser clearly understood that to save American Judaism from extinction it would be necessary to adapt it more completely to the American scene. ^{about} ~~More~~ enthusiastic ~~by~~ the industriousness of his age and ~~being~~ devoted to the religion of his ancestors, Leaser systematically attempted to lay the foundations for a new, vital Judaism in America during the ante-bellum period. Leaser believed, ^{according to one historian,} ~~writes Joseph Blau,~~ "that there should be a conscious and selective acceptance of American cultural elements into Jewish life, lest the unconscious, unthinking and unselective espousal of Americanism go too far."¹⁵

Leaser
 Leaser arrived in the United States in the spring of 1824 at the age of ^{eighteen} 18. He was born in the little village of Neuenkirchen in Prussian Westphalia on December 12, 1806, and moved to nearby Duellen in 1814 after the death of his mother. In Duellen, Leaser received a traditional but limited formal

Jewish education in a local heder. In 1820, after his father's death, Leaser resettled in the provincial capital, Muenster, and enrolled at a local Catholic academy to begin his secular education. The Muenster Academy, which had attained full university status in 1717, had been reduced to a gymnasium after Prussia's reabsorption of the Kingdom of Westphalia in 1818.¹⁶ Nevertheless, Leaser was able to pursue a broad course of studies, including mathematics and Latin.¹⁷

While studying at the Academy, Leaser also attended the Jewish Institute of Muenster, where he came under the influence of the Landrabbiner, Abraham Sutro (1784-1869). "Sutro," ^{according to a biographer,} ~~writes~~ ~~Lawrence Grossman~~, "was part of the first generation of German rabbis who combined strict traditionalism with certain innovations. ... He wore an old-fashioned beard and was one of the earliest rabbis to deliver German sermons."¹⁸ However, Leaser's education in Germany did not include advanced halachic training. Later in life, he frequently pointed out to friends and foes alike that he never prepared for rabbinic ordination and always deferred in matters of Jewish law to those of greater learning.

In 1824, orphaned, penniless, and with few prospects for improving his situation, Leaser accepted the invitation of his prosperous maternal uncle, Zalma Rehine, to resettle in Richmond, Virginia. Association with the Jews of Richmond and the cultural environment of tidewater Virginia had a decisive impact on Leaser. In just five years, he not only mastered English but was also able to synthesize his traditional Jewish

upbringing in Germany with his new life in America. When Leeser left Richmond in 1829 to become the hazzan of Congregation Mickveh Israel in Philadelphia, he had already formulated a Protestantized bibliocentric approach to Judaism, which became the backbone of his program for American Jewry.¹⁹

In a manuscript written in Richmond but not published until 1834, Leeser outlined his belief in a historical revelation at Sinai and concluded that the only source of religious truth was the Bible. Faith in the veracity of the biblical account and in the truth of biblical doctrines was, according to Leeser, the exclusive basis of Judaism. He further maintained that neither human reason nor intuition could ever discover eternal truth without the benefit of historical revelation. Moreover, in his opinion, no later Jewish teaching could possibly contradict the Bible. He maintained that Judaism was fully developed prior to the Babylonian exile in 586 B.C.E. and that the rabbis correctly applied biblical teachings in post-biblical times.²⁰

Leeser further developed his bibliocentric approach to Judaism in the hundreds of sermons and lectures he delivered from 1830 to 1867.²¹ Of all his accomplishments, his role as the pioneer Jewish preacher in the United States was closest to his heart. On being honored by friends in March 1861, Leeser responded to the tribute by saying, "You have spoken of my sermons; and indeed, if I have any merit, it is to these that I point."²² Yet, up till 1830, when he gave his first sermon, Leeser had heard but a dozen addresses, either from the pulpit or elsewhere.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, formal preaching in the synagogue in both Europe and America was generally limited to two Sabbaths per year and at special events that were often connected to official government requests for public demonstrations of religious concern. In Germany, reformers were the first to preach in the vernacular on a regular basis. They consciously modelled their sermons on the pattern of Christian homiletics and even used Christian guides to the art of preaching.²³ In England, on the other hand, a Committee of Elders at the Orthodox Bevis Marks Sephardic Synagogue in London, recommended in 1828 that "approved" sermons be given on a Scriptural text every Saturday afternoon.²⁴

Although Leeser was aware of developments in Germany and England, he was more directly influenced by the strong American Protestant tradition of preaching, which extended back to the Puritans. "Sermons," he wrote in 1845, could "exercise an influence over the mind of society, which we now can hardly have any idea of. What does any one think would be the fate of protestant Christianity without the constant appeal to the fear and reason of its professors from the ten thousand pulpits which scatter information and admonition many times during every week?"²⁵ Similarly, he believed the fate of Judaism greatly depended on the establishment of the sermon as a permanent part of synagogue life in the United States.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the American pulpit was filled with many fine preachers, including Henry Ward Beecher (Congregationalist), Peter Cartwright

(Methodist), and Charles G. Finney (Revivalist).²⁶ In Philadelphia, Leeser and many of his congregants had direct contact with William Henry Furness (1802-96), a Unitarian minister who was a popular speaker with Christians and Jews alike.²⁷ Moreover, between 1826 and 1834, more than 3,000 lyceums were established in the United States as forums for adult education.²⁸ Thus, it is not surprising that a group of women from Mickveh Israel approached Leeser and asked him to give "popular discourses" on the Jewish religion.²⁹

The influence of Protestantism on Leeser's religious thinking was particularly strong during his early years as a preacher. For example, during the course of 1830--the first year he preached--Leeser's sermon titles included, "Confidence in God," "Want of Faith," and "Pious Reflections."³⁰ In his sermons, Leeser frequently talked about the truth and permanence of biblical teachings, discussing man's battle with sin and irreligion and, most of all, emphasizing Judaism's eschatological doctrines, including the belief in a Messiah, Restoration, and the promise of eternal life. Later in his career, Leeser continued to discuss the same topics. However, during the 1840s and 1850s, he not only differentiated between his religious views and Christian theology but also polemicized against the non-Orthodox beliefs espoused by Jewish reformers in America.

Although Leeser did not experience any resistance to introducing the sermon into the synagogue, and eventually received official sanctioning from the Board of Mickveh Israel to preach (1843), neither did he receive much encouragement

beyond the close circle of friends who had originally prevailed upon him to assume the role of a Jewish preacher.³¹ He probably did not become a popular preacher because of the staidness of his public presentations. According to the fashion of the day, each of his discourses lasted approximately 45 minutes. He began with an original prayer and then developed a single theological theme around a biblical verse selected from the weekly portion. He rarely told stories or used other illustrative materials and consciously chose not to appeal to his congregants' emotions. Most often, his only illustrations were additional biblical references.

Despite the literary shortcomings of his own work, Leeser made the sermon an integral part of the Jewish worship service in the United States. He published a ten-volume collection of his sermons, traveled around the country as a guest preacher, and reproduced a broad sampling of American and European sermons in his monthly journal, The Occident and American Jewish Advocate. Almost singlehandedly, Leeser made sermons a form of devotional literature widely read by American Jews during his times. Most importantly, he viewed preaching as the central activity of the Jewish religious leader in America and advocated the transformation of the office of hazzan into a Jewish ministry based on the Protestant model.

In the absence of ordained rabbis in America until the 1840s, the hazzan, a semi-trained religious officiant, had already become the principal Jewish religious specialist in the American synagogue prior to the Revolution.³² However, in the

Colonial synagogue, the hazzan served as a religious functionary under the direct control and strict supervision of the congregational board of trustees. In addition to chanting the service, his duties included teaching the children Hebrew along with the rudiments of the Jewish religion. In small congregations and remote locations, the hazzan also served as the shochet, mohel, and shamas. Salaries were very low, and the individual hazzan was not held in high esteem by the congregation.

To some extent, however, the eighteenth-century American hazzan was already considered as a "minister." Several factors contributed to this early evolution of the American Jewish ministry. First, Jews frequently had to be represented to the general public by a minister, and the hazzan was the only official who could serve in that role. The second factor was that early American Jews had very little Jewish knowledge and their hazzanim, however poorly trained, were still the only available resident experts in Jewish law. Third, already by 1654, New York had authorized only two officials, a minister of religion or a justice of the peace, to perform the marriage ceremony. Likewise, state laws of incorporation for religious societies often specified particular ministerial functions.³³

Gershom M. Seixas (1746-1816), by virtue of his exceptional personality, was the first to demonstrate the full potential of the office of hazzan in America.³⁴ He was respected by the two congregations he served, Shearith Israel (New York, 1768-76 and 1784-1816) and Mickveh Israel (Philadelphia, 1780-84), and was

considered a colleague by many Christian clergymen. ~~He~~ ^{no!}
~~represented the Jewish community of New York at the first~~
~~inauguration of George Washington~~ and also served as a trustee
 of Columbia College. ⁽⁴⁸⁾ However, Seixas was an exception. Most of
 the early American hazzanim were intellectually and socially
 unable to match his achievements and simply performed their
 limited tasks without distinction.

Thus, the board of Mickveh Israel certainly did not expect
 a 22-year-old Isaac Leiser to promote actively the
 professionalization of the office of hazzan when they hired him
 in the fall of 1829. However, a series of degrading incidents
 early in Leiser's career quickly led him to the conclusion that
 only a trained, adequately paid, contractually secure, native
 American Jewish ministry could properly serve the religious
 needs of Jews in the United States. In an editorial article in
 the Occident in 1846, he wrote:

Let it then be a first step in the reforma-
 tion of the personnel of our ministry to place
 its members above want, and then demand that
 every incumbent should be fit to grace the
 station which he fills.³⁵

Leiser clearly viewed the Protestant clergy as a model for
 the American Jewish ministry. In an article, "The Demands of
 the Times," published in October 1844, Leiser noted that "there
 is hardly any Christian society which does not strain every
 nerve to have an intelligent and virtuous ministry, composed of
 men who would honour any calling by their acquisition and

general good conduct."³⁶ "Jews," he wrote subsequently, "have hitherto been neglectful in the greatest duty they owe themselves, to rear up from among themselves persons to fill the important office of minister of religion."³⁷

Unfortunately, few members of Mickveh Israel liked Leeser as a person or fully understood his efforts on behalf of Judaism. They simply expected him to behave as a paid functionary and be obedient to the officers of the congregation. After twenty-one stormy years as hazzan at Mickveh Israel, Leeser left his post in anger and disappointment.³⁸ However, in numerous editorials in the Occident, Leeser continued to make the question of the role of the Jewish ministry in the United States an important issue of the day.³⁹ Equally important is that, through his vast personal contacts as well as in the Advertising Supplement to the Occident, Leeser played a crucial role in the placement of scores of hazzanim in the country for more than a quarter of a century.⁴⁰

For more than 25 years, Leeser also urged the establishment of a "College for the Education of Youth for the Ministry" to create an American Jewish ministry.⁴¹ Again, he used Christian theological schools as his model and appealed to affluent Jews for material support.

1/10/54

taught - no graduations
graduated four students

Wagner!!

English.

in all the casuistry of Judaism, and for this purpose we are perfectly willing to depend on Europe, or Asia, or Africa for some considerable time, till the period when Jewish literature and learning shall have pitched their tent on the western Hemisphere.⁴³

need to emphasize institutional aspect and not theological -

Not only did Leeser seek to Protestantize Jewish religious leadership in America, he also hoped to create a new type of Jewish congregant whose piety and religious education was modelled after those of his Christian neighbors. "We want ministers," Leeser wrote in the Occident, "so also do we want an enlightened community."⁴⁴

Jewish education, Leeser believed, was the way to attain this goal. After several unsuccessful attempts at creating a Jewish day school, Leeser, ^{gave his full support to} ~~along with~~ Rebecca Gratz, ^{who} opened ~~a~~ ^{the} ~~first~~ ^{first} Jewish Sunday School in Philadelphia in 1838. Two years after its opening, Leeser wrote the following:

Sunday schools are nothing new among our Christian neighbours, as many sects of them have had such establishments for shorter or longer periods. Among our people, however, the case is very different, as far as the knowledge of the writer extends. ... As may easily be imagined, some prejudice was at first manifested by various persons, who fancied that they

can you know
about the
importance of
Sunday
School

[Hebrew]

discovered an objectionable imitation of gentile practices in this undertaking, forgetting that it is the first duty of Israel to instil knowledge of divine things in the hearts of the young, and this institution was eminently calculated to bestow this necessary blessing alike upon rich and poor without fee or price. It is but seldom that so noble an aim has been sought after, begun solely for the glorification of our Maker and the well-being of his people; it is therefore gratifying to record, that this unfounded prejudice has nearly died away, and one cannot give a better evidence of the fact, than that now fully one hundred children are enrolled, and what is more, that nearly all attend whenever the weather is at all favorable, and this despite the great distance which many of the scholars and teachers have to walk, living as they do in almost every part of the city and suburbs.⁴⁵

While still in Richmond, Leaser had already helped Isaac B. Seixas, a nephew of Gershom Seixas and the hazzan of Beth Shalome, ^{Sabb. & Sun day} to run a Sabbath and ~~the first~~ day school. However, this early experiment proved to be ephemeral. The Philadelphia Sunday School, on the other hand, succeeded for several reasons. First, the Protestant Sunday School by 1830 had ceased to

Conf quite

Not the same day school
any Sabbath m / 175-05

function as a general school for poor and frontier children and had fully embraced a religion-oriented curriculum.⁴⁶ Second, the public school movement was beginning to strike deep roots in the general community and often left Jewish parents with few options as to when they could arrange lessons for their children's Jewish education. Third, the ~~Leeser-Gratz~~ ^{Sunday School} school was supported by the women of the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society, many of whom served as teachers.⁴⁷ Lastly, Leeser, now a mature individual and an established author, was in a position to help supply the school with appropriate children's religious literature.

Leeser's Catechism, an expansion of Eduard Kley's Catechismus Der Mosaischen Religion (Berlin, 1814), as well as several works written by some of the Sunday-School teachers under Leeser's supervision, quickly became the standard text of Jewish Sunday Schools in the United States.⁴⁸ Initially the Sunday School had to rely on Christian educational materials in which religiously objectionable passages were either pasted over or torn out by Gratz's staff.⁴⁹ Although Leeser preferred Jewish parochial schools and advocated their establishment throughout his career, his efforts to develop Jewish Sunday Schools proved more enduring.

Leeser's literary magnum opus and most lasting contribution to the Protestantization of Judaism in America was his English translation of the Bible (1853-54).⁵⁰ He drew on a wide variety of Jewish sources, especially the German-language Bible edited by Leopold Zunz (1838) and the one annotated by Ludwig Philipson

(185⁴X). Leaser's Bible was neither a translation of a translation nor an entirely original work. Rather, using his own religious views as criteria, he pieced together an English-language Bible based on Jewish exegetical traditions. With regard to style, however, Leaser endeavored "to adhere closely to the ordinary English version," which, he maintained, "for simplicity cannot be surpassed."⁵¹ In fact, Leaser viewed his Bible as the Jewish successor to the King James version. "It would be a species of mental slavery," he wrote his readers, "to rely for ever upon the arbitrary decree of a deceased King of England, who certainly was no prophet, for the correct understanding of Scripture."⁵² "Though the slight verbal changes grated upon the ears of us the older generation," a sympathetic Rosa Mordecai recollected in 1901, "the constant reading and reciting from it in Sunday School made it familiar to the young."⁵³

The "Leaser Bible" originally was complemented by a very modest commentary that mainly reported variant translations from German-Jewish Bibles. Subsequently, with the second edition, the commentary was reduced to a few notes placed at the end. Thus, like other "Protestant" Bibles, the Leaser version emphasized the "Word" itself and not the commentaries. In its appearance, the "Leaser Bible" also functioned as a Protestantizing instrument. Initially, it appeared in a quarto size, appropriate for use on a pulpit. Later, it was also bound in white leather and used for sacramental-like purposes at weddings and confirmation services.⁵⁴ Thus, Leaser's rendition

of the Holy Scriptures clearly identified American Jewry with its biblical past and even drew high praise from many Christians, including Charles Hodge, the leading "Old-School Presbyterian" theologian who called for a similar work by a Protestant scholar.⁵⁵

The legacy of Leeser's Protestantizing activities was both rich and enduring. His Bible won wide acceptance among both the Sephardim and the German Jews. Later, in the early part of the twentieth century, it was widely distributed among East European Jews by the Hebrew Publishing Company. Similarly, the Leeser-inspired Sunday School movement was first accepted among the Sephardim. With the decline of Jewish parochial schools after 1855, Sunday Schools also found acceptance in German congregations and thus became the dominant form of Jewish education in the United States. During the 1850s, vernacular preaching in the American synagogue also won broad acceptance. Besides Leeser, Samuel M. Isaacs, Max Lilienthal, and, most importantly, Morris J. Raphall, all contributed to the popularization of the Jewish sermon in America.

The creation of a Jewish ministry in the United States, however, proved to be a highly problematic undertaking. "In the emerging American-Jewish pattern," writes Leon Jick, "congregational life continued to be dominated by laymen, and rabbis were frequently reminded of the precariousness of their position."⁵⁶ Thus, at the beginning of the 1850s virtually every religious leader of standing was repudiated by his congregation. Lilienthal, Wise, and Leeser lost their

positions, Leo Merzbacher's post at Emanu-El was in serious jeopardy, and Abraham Rice resigned and went into the dry goods business. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, Leiser's vision of a professionalized Jewish ministry became the norm for Jewish religious leaders in the United States and still broadly serves as the basis for the American rabbinate, except in the most sectarian areas of Orthodox Jewish life.

Remarkably, as the spectrum of Jewish religious life in America broadened during the 1840s and 1850s with the rise of Reform Judaism and the arrival of ordained Orthodox rabbis in the United States, Leiser did not abandon his efforts to adapt traditional Judaism to American culture. Until the end of his life, he remained convinced that he could create a context wherein a Protestantized Orthodoxy could serve as a unifying force among American Jews and even attempted on several occasions to organize national ecclesiastical bodies to regulate Jewish religious life in the United States.⁵⁷ His contributions to the Protestantization of mid-nineteenth-century American Judaism had an affect on the development of modern Orthodoxy as well as Reform and, ultimately, Conservative Judaism in America. Thus, in effect, he played an important role in the transformation and perpetuation of the Jewish heritage in America.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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NOTES

¹Jeffrey S. Gurock, American Jewish History: A Bibliographical Guide (New York, 1983), pp. 33-39.

²Leon Jick, The Americanization of the Synagogue, 1820-1870 (Hanover, NH, 1976), p. 173.

³Joseph L. Blau, Judaism in America: From Curiosity to Mind Faith (Chicago, 1976), pp. xi, 8, 9, 51-53. Also, see Sidney E. Mead, Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America (New York, 1963) and his "Denominationalism: Protestantism in America," Church History 23 (1954), pp. 291ff.

⁴There is no standard biography of Leeser. For the first account of his life, see Mayer Sulzberger, "The Late Rev. Isaac Leeser," Occident 25 (1868), pp. 593-611, republished in American Jewish Archives 21 (1969), pp. 140-148 (hereafter, AJA). Book-length studies of Leeser include: Lance J. Sussman, "Confidence in God:" The Life and Preaching of Isaac Leeser (1806-1868) (ordination thesis, Hebrew Union College, 1980); E. Bennett, An Evaluation of the Life of Isaac Leeser (Ph.D. Dissertation, Yeshiva University, 1959); Maxine Seller, Isaac

Leeser: Architect of the American Jewish Community (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1965). Also see Bertram W. Korn, "Isaac Leeser: Centennial Reflections," AJA 19 (1967), pp. 127-141. On Leeser's opposition to Reform Judaism, see Henry Englander, "Isaac Leeser," Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook 28 (1918), pp. 213-252. On Leeser in the context of the Philadelphia Jewish community, see Maxwell Whiteman, "Isaac Leeser and the Jews of Philadelphia," Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society 48 (1959), pp. 207-244, (hereafter, PAJHS). Whiteman's article complements E. Digby Baltzell, Philadelphia Gentlemen, The Making of a National Upper Class (Glencoe, IL, 1958). Also, see his "The Legacy of Isaac Leeser," in Jewish Life in Philadelphia, 1830-1940 (Philadelphia, 1983), Murray Friedman, ed., pp. 26-47.

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⁶Maxwell Whiteman and Edwin Wolff, The History of the Jews of Philadelphia from Colonial Times to the Age of Jackson (Philadelphia, 1957), pp. 372-373.

⁷William G. McLoughlin, Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform (Chicago, 1978), pp. 98-140. Also see Donald G. Matthews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis," American Quarterly 21 (1969), pp. 23-43.

⁸Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America (New York, 1945), vol. I, Phillips Bradley, ed., p. 303.

⁹Jonathan D. Sarna, Jacksonian Jew: The Two Worlds of Mordecai Noah (New York, 1931), p. 1.

¹⁰Bertram W. Korn, "The Know Nothing Movement and the Jews," in his Eventful Years and Experiences (Cincinnati, 1954), pp. 58-78. Also see Ray A. Billington, The Protestant Crusade 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism (New York, 1938) and Thomas T. McAvoy, A History of the Catholic Church in the United States (Notre Dame, IN, 1969).

¹¹The concept of "showcasing" Judaism was suggested to me by Prof. Jonathan D. Sarna.

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✓ 14 On Grace Aguilar (1816-47) and Sir Moses Montefiore (1784-1885), see Henry Samuel Montias, Eminent Israelites of the Nineteenth Century (Philadelphia, 1980), pp. 12-15, 236-240.

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15 Joseph C. Blau, Modern Varieties of Judaism (New York, 1964, 1966), p. 83.

16 W. Engel Kemper, "University of Muenster," Catholic Encyclopedia (New York, 1911), vol. 10, p. 639.

17 When he immigrated to America, Leeser brought his student notebooks with him. Original manuscripts are housed at Dropsie College, Leeser Papers.

18 Lawrence Grossman, "Isaac Leeser's Mentor: Rabbi Abraham Sutro, 1784-1869," in Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein Memorial Volume (New York, 1980), Leo Landman, ed., p. 156; and Bernhard Brilling, "Abraham Sutro (1784-1869)," Westfälische Zeitschrift 123 (1973), pp. 51-64, and "Beifrage zur Biographie des letzten Landrabbiners von Muenster, Abraham Sutro (1784-1869)," Uchim

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20 Jews and the Mosaic Law, pp. 7-9, 13, 15-21. Also see Isaac Leeser, "The Jews and their Religion," in The Paja Kuulesis, I (Philadelphia, 1844), Daniel Rupp, ed., pp. 362-366, and Discourses 6, p. 195; 7, p. 157, 262; 8, p. 103; and 9, p. 21.

21 Leeser's sermons have been virtually ignored by historians. An annotated selection from his first sermon, "Confidence in God," appears in Joseph L. Blau and Salo W. Baron, The Jews of the United States, 1790-1840 (New York,

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Sept 1983?
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28 Carl Bode, American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind (New York, 1956), and Vern Wagner, "Lecture Lyceum and Problem

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of Controversy," Journal of the History of Ideas 15 (1954), p. 119.

²⁹Discourses 1, p. 2, see note.

³⁰Discourses 1, p. v-vi.

³¹M. Whiteman, "Isaac Leeser and the Jews of Philadelphia," p. 213, n. 34.

³²No study of the office of hazzan, 1654-1840, has been conducted. See Jonathan D. Sarna, "Introduction," American Jewish Archives 35 (November, 1983), pp. 90, 97-98, as well as bibliographies in Jewish Communal Services in the United States: 1760-1970 (New York, 1972), Norman Linzer, ed., pp. 128-248; and Rabbinic Authority: Papers Presented Before the Ninety-First Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (New York, 1982), Elliot C. Stevens, ed., pp. 111-118.

³³Hyman Grinstein, The Rise of the Jewish Community at New York, 1654-1860 (Philadelphia, 1947), pp. 84-36.

³⁴Jacob R. Marcus, The Handsome Young Priest in the Black Gown: The Personal World of Gershom Seixas (Cincinnati, 1970).

³⁵Occident 3, p. 582.

³⁶Occident 2, pp. 313-314.

³⁷Occident 3, p. 577.

³⁸On Leeser's relation to Mickveh Israel, see Isaac Leeser, "To the Parness and Members of the Congregation Mikveh Israel of Philadelphia," May 15, 1840 (typescript, Dropsie College Library), 15 pp.; A Review of the Late Controversies Between the Rev. Isaac Leeser and the Congregation Mikveh Israel (pamphlet, Philadelphia, 1850), 18 pp.; A Review of "The Review"

(pamphlet, New York, 1850), 11 pp., copy in Korn Papers, American Jewish Archives.

³⁹On Leeser's view of the "Jewish Ministry," see Occident 3 (1845-46), pp. 218-221, pp. 577-83; 9 (1851), pp. 385-94, 433-43; 10 (1852), pp. 177-187, 225-238; 15 (1857-58), pp. 493-496; and 18 (1860-61), p. 304. More broadly, see Burton S. Bledstein, The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in the United States (New York, 1976); Thomas C. Haskell, The Emergence of Professional Social Science and the American Social Science Association and the Nineteenth Century Crisis of Authority (Urbana, 1977); Donald M. Scott, From Office to Profession: The New England Ministry, 1750-1850 (Philadelphia, 1978).

⁴⁰Prof. A. Karp of Rochester, NY, directed me to the Occident's Advertising Supplement as an important but neglected source of data about the American Jewish experience, 1843-69. For example, see Advertising Supplement to the Occident 24, no. 7 (1866), p. 3, which includes five notices by congregations looking for hazzanim/teachers:

HAZAN WANTED

The congregation B'nai Israel, Augusta, GA, is desirous of engaging the services of a gentleman competent to officiate as Hazan and Preacher, at a fixed salary of

\$1500 per annum and perquisites. An additional income may be expected by teaching a Hebrew school. Applicants, stating qualifications, should address either

LEWIS LEVY, President,

WILLIAM M. JACOBS, Secretary

WANTED

By the Hebrew Congregation Amunath Abothenu, of Fort Wayne, Indiana, a competent man to act as Chasan, Shochet, Mohel, and Teacher in German and Hebrew. Salary, \$600 and perquisites. Applicants will please address at once the under-signed. None but those fully competent need apply. References required.

L. FALK, Secretary

WANTED

At St. Paul, Minnesota, a competent person to act as Teacher and Shochet. Salary, about \$700 per annum. Applicants address

I. MENDELSON,

St. Paul, Minnesota

WANTED

By the congregation Shaaray Shamayim of Mobile, Ala., a Rabbi and Lecturer, competent to preach in the German and English languages, and superintend a Hebrew School. None need to apply but those fully qualified, and with the best of references as to character and abilities. Salary \$4000 and perquisites. Applicants will address

S. RICHARD, Chairman,
Mobile, Ala.

WANTED

A Hebrew Teacher, officiating at the same time as Chasan and Shochet, for the Kahal in Montgomery, Ala., on the 1st of August. Salary per annum, \$2000 to \$2500. Communications will be received by the undersigned, and the necessary information and all particulars given. Single men preferred.

H. WEIL, President,
~~Montgomery~~, Ala.

⁴¹Bertram W. Korn, "The First American Jewish Theological Seminary: Maimonides College, 1867-1873," in his Eventful Years and Experiences: Studies in Nineteenth Century American Jewish History (Cincinnati, 1954), p. 164.

⁴²Quoted in Solomon Solis Cohen, "The Jewish Theological Seminary: Past and Future--Address Delivered at the Twenty-Fifth Annual Commencement, New York, June 2, 1918" (New York, 1919), p. 44.

⁴³Occident 24, p. 200.

⁴⁴Occident 2, pp. 320-321.

⁴⁵Isaac Leeser, "Memorial on Sunday Schools (1840)," in Blau and Baron, Jews in America, vol. 2, pp. 447-449. Also see Joseph R. Rosenbloom, "Rebecca Gratz and the Jewish Sunday School Movement in Philadelphia," PAJHS 48 (1958), pp. 71ff, and David Uriah Todes, The History of Jewish Education in Philadelphia (Ph.D. Dissertation, Dropsie College, 1952), pp. 43-56.

⁴⁶Jack L. Seymour, From Sunday School to Church School: Continuities in Protestant Church Education, 1860-1929 (Washington, 1982), and Edwin W. Rice, The Sunday School Movement and the American Sunday School Union (Philadelphia, 1917). Also see Frank Freidel, Harvard Guide to American History (Cambridge, 1974), section 24.6.5, pp. 520-521.

⁴⁷On the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society, see Henry Samuel Morais, The Jews of Philadelphia: Their History from the Earliest Settlements to the Present Time (Philadelphia, 1894), pp. 127-129, 143.

⁴⁸Isaac Leeser, Catechism for Young Children (Philadelphia, 1839); Simha Cohen Peixotto, Elementary Introduction to the Scriptures (Philadelphia, 1840); and Eleaza Pyue, Scriptural Questions (Philadelphia, 1857).

⁴⁹Jacob R. Marcus, The American Jewish Woman: A Documentary History (New York, 1981), pp. 135-143.

Isaac Leeser

⁵⁰Isaac Leeser, The Twenty-Four Books of the Holy Scriptures (Philadelphia, 1853). Also see his The Law of God (Philadelphia, 1845), 5 vols.

⁵¹Leeser, Holy Scriptures, p. iv.

⁵²Isaac Leeser, The Twenty-Four Books of Holy Scripture (Philadelphia, 1856, 2nd ed.), pp. iii-iv.

⁵³Rosa Mordecai, "Personal Recollections of Rev. Isaac Leeser" (American Jewish Archives, Englander Papers, 1901), n.p.

⁵⁴The Klau Library (HUC-JIR) has Block Publishing and Printing Company editions of the Leeser Bible from 1888, 1891 (fourth edition), 1894, 1897, 1899, 1901, 1905, 1907, 1912, and 1914.

⁵⁵Occident 12, p. 360. Also see Alexander A. Hodge, The Life of Charles Hodge (New York, 1880, 1969), and Winthrop S. Hudson, Religion in America: An Historical Account of the Development of American Religious Life (New York, 1973), 2nd ed., pp. 162-168.

⁵⁶Leon Jick, The Americanization of the Synagogue: 1820-1870, p. 130.

⁵⁷Joseph Buchler, "The Struggle for Unity: Attempts at Union in American Jewish Life, 1654-1868," American Jewish Archives 2 (1949), pp. 21-46, and Maxwell Whiteman, "Isaac Leeser and the Jews of Philadelphia," pp. 207ff.

Lance J. Sussman

ANOTHER LOOK AT ISAAC LEESER AND
THE FIRST JEWISH TRANSLATION
OF THE BIBLE IN THE UNITED STATES

Isaac Leeser (1806-68) was the most important Jewish religious leader in the United States during the Ante-bellum Period.¹ Leeser's lengthy list of accomplishments include the establishing of the vernacular sermon as a permanent feature in the American synagogue, the editing and publishing of the first successful Jewish "newspaper" in the United States (*The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, 1843-69), and the founding of the first American rabbinical school (Maimonides College, 1867). "Practically every form of Jewish activity which supports American Jewish life today," observed Bertram W. Korn, "was either established or envisaged by this one man," and "almost every kind of publication which is essential to Jewish survival was written, translated or fostered by him."² Indeed, Maxwell Whiteman and Edwin Wolf did not exaggerate when they concluded that "the years of American Jewish history from 1830 until the close of the Civil War are, in fact, the 'Age of Leeser.'"³

Leeser's literary *magnum opus* and most lasting contribution to Judaism in America was an English translation of the Hebrew Bible (1853-54), complete with "short explanatory notes." According to Harry Orlinsky, Leeser's Bible, as it has come to be known, quickly became "the standard Bible for English-speaking Jews, especially in America . . . [and] were it not for the appearance of the Jewish Publication Society's translation in 1917, would have retained much of its popularity to this day."⁴ Unfortunately, contemporary scholarly attention has focused rather narrowly on Leeser's skill as a translator and, more subjectively, on the literary quality of his work.⁵ Other aspects of the Leeser Bible have virtually been ignored. A close reading of the Leeser Bible and exegetical notes reveals that both are representative of his modern Orthodox understanding of Judaism. Moreover, as an *apologia* for modern Orthodoxy, the Leeser Bible also typifies the religious viewpoint of traditional Judaism in America from the time of the Revolution until the Civil War.

LEESER'S EDUCATION

Born in the little village of Neuenkirchen in Prussian Westphalia on December 12, 1806, Leeser moved to nearby Dulmen at the age of eight after the death of his mother. In Dulmen, Leeser received a traditional but limited formal Jewish education. He studied with several *melamdim* (traditional Hebrew instructors) including Rabbi Benjamin Cohen, a student of Ezekiel Landau. Even the provincial *chadarim* (traditional Jewish elementary schools) where Leeser studied were affected by the sweeping reforms in Jewish education promoted by Israel Jacobsohn in the Consistory of Westphalia. Thus, at an early age, Leeser had probably already become familiar with the new catechetical literature used in the modern Jewish schools of the period, examples of which he would later translate into English.⁶

In 1820, shortly after his father's death, Leeser moved to the provincial capital, Muenster, and enrolled at a local Academy to begin his secular education. The Muenster Academy, a Catholic institution, had attained full university status in 1771. But in 1813, following Prussia's reabsorption of the Kingdom of Westphalia, the school's status was reduced to that of the gymnasium. Nevertheless, Leeser was able to pursue

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a broad course of studies including mathematics and Latin. Some of the classes were taught by Jesuit priests. Their warm acceptance of a young Jewish student helped to create in Leeser a broader hope for mutual understanding between Christians and Jews.⁷

While studying at the Academy, Leeser also attended the Jewish Institute of Muenster where he came under the influence of the *Land-rabbiner*, Abraham Sutro (1784-1869). Leeser greatly admired the man and remained in contact with Sutro until his own death in 1868. Sutro, writes Lawrence Gressman, "was part of the first generation of German rabbis who combined strict traditionalism with certain innovations. . . . He wore an old-fashioned beard and was one of the earliest rabbis to deliver German sermons." Sutro published numerous responsa in Jacob Ettlinger's *Shomer Zion Hane'eman* and wrote an important polemic against Reform Judaism, *Milhamot Adonai* (1836). His accommodation to the multifaceted changes in German-Jewish society, can be seen in his counter-polemic and defense of Judaism, *Des Land-Rabbiners Sutro der Schrift des Herrn H.E.H. Cleve* (1824), in which, among other things, he endorses the modernization of Jewish religious pedagogy. In 1826, Professor Alexander Haendorf, with Sutro's approval, founded a Jewish normal and vocational school in Muenster. As District Rabbi, Sutro also acted in behalf of Jewish Civil Rights, inspiring his young disciple to do likewise.⁸

Leeser's education in Germany did not include advanced halachic (Jewish legal) training. He probably left the Muenster academy when he was seventeen years old. Later in life, he forthrightly pointed out to friends and foes alike that he never prepared for rabbinic ordination and always deferred in matters of Jewish law to those of greater learning. However, what Leeser did acquire in Germany was the ability to be "progressive in everything that did not touch the ritual or traditional doctrines of Judaism."⁹

Early in 1824, having left school and with few prospects for making a living, Leeser accepted (with Sutro's approval) the invitation of his prosperous maternal uncle, Zalma Rehine, to resettle in Richmond, Virginia. Hoping to continue his nephew's general education, Rehine arranged for Leeser to study with a private tutor. However, the instructor left Richmond after a brief ten-week engagement. Undaunted, Leeser continued to read broadly on his own, frequently seeking intellectual stimulation from Richmond's more learned Jews.¹⁰

One of the most important influences on Leeser during this period was a scholarly, semi-retired schoolmaster, Jacob Mordecai (1762-1838) who resettled in Richmond in 1818 after selling his well-known private academy for girls, which he had owned and operated in Warrenton, North Carolina, since 1809.¹¹ Mordecai took Leeser under his wing, introduced the young, eager student to contemporary, English-language Christian theological literature, and discussed grammatical problems in biblical Hebrew with him. In 1825, shortly after Leeser's arrival in America, Mordecai prepared a reply to an address delivered by Isaac Harby at the first annual meeting of the Reformed Society of Israelites. "We thought then, inexperienced though we were," Leeser wrote in the *Occident* in 1851, "that Mr. M had the best of the argument."¹²

Association with learned Jews in Richmond and the cultural environment of tidewater Virginia had a decisive impact on Isaac Leeser. Between 1824 and 1829, when he left Richmond, Leeser, tutored by Mordecai and others in the field of polemics, clearly recognized the role of religion and the Bible in America. The beginning of the nineteenth century saw the start of a period of mass evangelization that not only revitalized religion at the grass roots level, but also transformed America in its wake. The "Second Great Awakening (1800-1830)," according to William G. McLoughlin, created a cultural consensus and "out of it came the new democratic faith in the common man that made Jacksonian democracy possible."¹³ Alexis de Tocqueville observed upon his arrival in the United States (1831) that "there is no country in the world in which the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America."¹⁴

The core of religion in Protestant America was the Bible. In less than four years, the American Bible Society (est. 1816), itself a product of the "Second Great Awakening," distributed nearly one hundred thousand

Bibles in the United States. Since the time of Luther and the Reformation, reading the Bible had been central to the religious life of Protestants. In America, this tradition was firmly established by the Puritans; Jewish religious life, on the other hand, was basically shaped by the Talmud and medieval rabbinic codes. As early as 1739, Abigail Franks wrote, "I cant help Condemning the Many Superstitions wee are Clog'd with & heartily wish a Calvin or Lather would rise amongst Us."¹⁵

While still living in Virginia and studying under the tutelage of Mordecai, Leeser came to believe that Judaism had to be adapted to the Bibliocentrism of religious life in America. It would be essential, therefore, for American Jews to have an English translation of Hebrew Scripture, based on Jewish tradition. Even though Leeser's education had hardly prepared him for the ministry, let alone for the translating of the Bible and reinterpreting its role in Jewish tradition, he considered these tasks to be paramount for Judaism in America, and completely dedicated himself to accomplishing them.

THE STORY OF THE LEESER BIBLE

Leeser's career as a religious leader and writer began in 1828, when an unknown party in Richmond called his attention to an article in the *London Quarterly Review* "in which our nation [the Jews] were very much abused, and their moral and religious character shamefully vilified." Believing discretion to be the better part of valor, Leeser deferred noticing it publicly, until the article in question was republished in a New York newspaper. At this point he was no longer able to hold his peace and "without being solicited by any one [undertook] the task of refuting accusations." Leeser wrote two letters that were printed in the *Richmond Whig* before the local publishers "closed their columns against further continuation of the controversy."¹⁶

However, the matter did not end there. Baruch Hillel Judah, librarian of the Richmond Library Company, strongly urged Leeser to continue his research and controversial writing. Something deep inside Leeser's being responded to Judah's encouragement, and with a fervor he had never experienced previously, he began to prepare a broad defense of the Jewish idea of revelation. Before he left Richmond to become the *chazan* (cantor) at Philadelphia's Mickveh Israel — an appointment based in part on the merit of his literary debut — Leeser had completed an impassioned book-length manuscript in which he stated his now fully developed theological position.¹⁷

Leeser's book contained selections from the Old Testament. "In some places I have followed the English version of the Bible [i.e., King James]," Leeser wrote early in 1829, "in others again I have attempted to translate the original myself, either because I did not consult the English at all, or because the common translation seemed to me incorrect."¹⁸ Later in life, Leeser recalled that his interest in translating the entire Hebrew Bible was "a desire entertained for more than a quarter of a century, since the day he quitted school in his native land to come to this country, to present to his fellow Israelites an English version, made by one of themselves, of the Holy Word of God."¹⁹

Leeser's translation of the Bible actually developed in stages. Although nearly all of his literary activity involved translating passages from the Bible, his translations of the Pentateuch did not appear until 1845. This was followed by a *Biblia Hebraica* (1848), the first vocalized Bible printed in America, and, finally, his complete *Twenty-Four Books of the Holy Scriptures* (1853-54).

He accomplished all this with virtually no assistance. "Properly speaking," Leeser wrote in the preface to his Pentateuch, "the labour of reading, which a correct Hebrew text requires, ought to be performed by at least two competent persons; but in the absence of an associate of this kind, I had to do all this myself."²⁰ Several years earlier, while working on a translation of the Sephardic liturgy, he imported Hebrew types and "was obliged to teach the Sacred language to the printers in order that they might set up the pages with tolerable correctness."²¹ Lastly, with regard to editing his English text, Leeser noted, "We did not obtain the

assistance of the various literary gentlemen in the country . . . we thought it best to assume the whole responsibility, grave as this confessedly is."²²

The members of Mickveh Israel, a prestigious Sephardic congregation in Philadelphia founded in 1740, elected Leeser, then twenty-two years old, as their *chazan* on September 6, 1829, by a narrow margin. Unfortunately, the opposition did not relent after the elections and made the inexperienced Leeser uncomfortable in his new role.²³ Not surprisingly, he all but forgot about his grand idea to translate the Bible. More immediate concerns held his attention. First, he attempted to find a way to upgrade Jewish education. He experimented with a variety of small day schools; some of the classes even met where he boarded. But all these efforts quickly ended in failure. Furthermore, his first published book, a translation of Joseph Johnson's, *Die Lehren der Mosaichen Religion* (1819), proved unappealing to students and did little to alleviate the pressing need for Jewish school books.²⁴

He also invested considerable time and energy in the preparation of his "discourses." Of all his accomplishments, his role as the pioneer Jewish preacher in the United States was closest to his heart. Leeser was totally enamored with the idea of Jewish preaching. Remarkably, until 1830, when he gave his first sermon, "Confidence in God," he "had heard but about a dozen addresses, either from the pulpit or elsewhere."²⁵ By 1867, however, Leeser had published a broad and representative sample of his sermons and public addresses, which filled ten volumes of *Discourses on the Jewish Religion*.²⁶

Preaching made Leeser a devoted student of the Bible. According to the fashion of the day, his discourses were always delivered without notes and lasted nearly an hour. He rarely told stories or appealed to his congregants' emotions. Instead, he lavished an elaborate, doctrinal eisegesis on a chosen biblical text, usually from the weekly portion or *haftara* (prophetic reading). Most often, his only illustrations were additional biblical texts. Thus, Leeser's interest in and pursuit of homiletics made him thoroughly familiar with the Bible.²⁷

His early years at Mickveh Israel were also marred by personal hardships. Late in 1833, he was stricken with smallpox. A sympathetic observer noted that although "his life and eye sight have been spared, I am told his countenance will bear many marks of its ravages . . . and unless some Desdemona shall arise to see his visage in her mind—all future expectations must be confined to solitary studies."²⁸ Leeser's brother Jacob, recently arrived from Europe, immediately went to Philadelphia to help, caught the disease, and died within a few weeks.²⁹

Nor was this the least of Leeser's difficulties. After a slow recovery, Leeser was forced to muster all his strength to fight for his job at Mickveh Israel. Jacques Judah Lyons (1813-77), a native of Surinam, arrived in Philadelphia in 1836 and was invited to run in July against Leeser in the elections for the position of *chazan*. Leeser won, but was only given a one-year contract at a greatly reduced income. Lyons made a second unsuccessful bid for Leeser's job in September 1837, before leaving for a position at Beth Shalom in Richmond, Virginia. A greatly relieved Leeser is reported to have written to his Uncle Zalma that "the Lyon is subdued."³⁰

Leeser maintained that he actually began working on his translation of the Pentateuch, *The Law of God*, in 1838.³¹ Three factors were involved in his decision to begin systematically working on a translation at this time. First, Leeser had recently completed his six-volume rendition of *The Form of Prayers According to the Custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews* (1838) and felt encouraged by his English version of the Psalms in the Sephardic liturgy.³² Second, Rebecca Gratz's Sunday School met for the first time in March 1838, in Philadelphia, and was desperately in need of appropriate study material. The American Sunday School Union, a Protestant organization, provided copies of *Child's Bible Questions*. Religiously objectionable passages were either pasted over or torn out by Gratz's staff, and students were compelled to use the King James Bible and Protestant Hymnals for want of alternatives. Leeser, who supported the Sunday School and was its chief academic resource person, felt compelled to find more suitable texts for the students.³³ Third, the Zunz Bible, the most popular German-Jewish translation of the Old Testament during the nineteenth century, was published in 1837-38. Leeser was par-

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ticularly satisfied with Zunz's choice of Heymann Arnheim's (1796-1869) translation of the Five Books of Moses, and adopted it as the prototype for his own work.³⁴ The achievements of the broader world of Jewish scholarship and his own personal agenda for American Jewry seemed perfectly synchronized.

The Law of God is best understood as part of Leeser's plan to provide American Jewry, in Korn's words, "with every kind of publication essential to Jewish survival."³⁵ "My intention," Leeser wrote in the preface, "was to furnish a book for the service of the Synagogue, both German and Portuguese." Therefore, the final work included a vocalized Hebrew text, notes, and the *haftarot* (prophetic readings) "given according to the various customs, with the necessary directions."³⁶ Each of the Five Books of Moses was published in a separate volume. Perhaps, when Leeser explained to his readers that "however much a revised translation may be desired by all believers in the Word of God, there is no probability that the gentiles will encourage any publication of this nature, emanating from a Jewish writer," he was referring as much to the work's essentially liturgical arrangement as he was to the state of Jewish-Christian relations in the America of 1845.³⁷

The publication of *The Law of God* in 1845 was a clear indication of the growing role Leeser was playing in the American Jewish community.³⁸ By 1840, he had already gained national prominence for his role in organizing American Jewish opinion during the Damascus Affair. However, an attempt to found a national Jewish ecclesiastical body with Louis Salomon the following year went unheeded. Since 1843, his monthly journal, the *Occident*, had carried his name and opinions to every Jewish community in North America, the Caribbean, and, to a lesser extent, England and Europe. It remained the only Anglo-Jewish paper in the United States until 1849. By contrast, few of the other American *chazanim* were known beyond their local communities, and Isaac M. Wise, Leeser's principal rival during the 1850s, was still a "schoolmaster" in Europe.

No sooner had Leeser announced his intention to complete a translation of the entire Bible in the final volume of *The Law of God* than he decided to suspend the project temporarily. Six years earlier, he had written to Rev. Nathaniel Hewit in Bridgeport, Connecticut, to explore the possibility of printing a vocalized Hebrew Bible. Leeser had obtained a Van der Hooght Bible and came to the conclusion that "if there is a demand for 1,000 copies I see no reason why Americans should depend upon Europe for a supply of the holy word, which they can and ought to have in their own hands." Apparently, Hewit declined. Leeser then turned to Dr. Joseph Jaquett, a scholarly Episcopalian minister in Philadelphia, and began to work on a *Biblia Hebraica*, according to the Masorah.³⁹

Jaquett's role was limited to comparing several polyglot Bibles to help Leeser determine the best Hebrew text. However, their partnership was not without significance. Whereas no translation of the Bible could "ever succeed in meeting the needs of all biblically-based faiths," Leeser and his associate, in fact, did issue an interfaith Old Testament by leaving the text in the original Hebrew.⁴⁰ The Leeser-Jaquett *Biblia Hebraica* was first published in September 1848, and, as one scholar observed, "is a fine piece of printing as well as a careful edition of the text."⁴¹ It quickly superseded an unvocalized Hebrew Bible published by Thomas Dobson in Philadelphia in 1814.⁴²

However, for all of its merits, the Leeser-Jaquett *Biblia Hebraica* was overshadowed by another, more controversial collaboration. In 1852, just four years later, the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) issued a vocalized Hebrew Old Testament under the editorship of Hebrew poet and *Maskil* (follower of the Jewish Enlightenment), Meier Letteris (1800-71). Both Leeser and Letteris based their works on the masoretic studies of Dutch Protestant scholar, Everardus van der Hooght (fl. 1686). The Letteris Bible (1852), with the tremendous resources of the BFBS behind it, instantly became the standard Hebrew text of the Old Testament throughout much of the world. The BFBS continued to use it until 1922. However, Letteris' reputation among Jews suffered because of his association with a missionary group. Ironically, early in the twentieth century,

the Hebrew Publishing Company of New York produced a Hebrew-English Bible using Letteris' Hebrew text and Leeser's translation.⁴³

Considering Leeser's many other activities while he worked on the *Biblia Hebraica*, his achievement seems even more remarkable. He preached frequently during this period and devoted a significant amount of time to editing and publishing the *Occident*. He was also involved in a variety of additional literary pursuits, including the founding of the first American Jewish Publication Society in 1845. In 1848, the same year he published the *Biblia Hebraica*, he also translated *The Book of Daily Prayers for Every Day in the Year according to the Custom of the German and Polish Jews*.

Jewish immigration from Central Europe was also on the rise. Leeser worked diligently to assist the newcomers and took an active role in nearly all aspects of Jewish philanthropy, particularly in Philadelphia. His friends, however, reminded him of the task at hand. As late as May 1849, Abraham Rice, the first ordained rabbi to settle in America, wrote to Leeser: "If you, my dear friend, could make up your mind definitely that an English Bible be printed for us Jews, you should do everything possible, even though you desire no benefit from it. For in this way, you will be able to gain eternal life for your soul."⁴⁴

The biggest obstacle preventing Leeser from working on a translation of the Bible was close to home: he never developed a harmonious relationship with his congregation. Few members of Mickveh Israel liked Leeser as a person or fully understood his monumental efforts on behalf of Judaism in America. Above all, they expected him to behave as a paid functionary and, at all times, be obedient to the Board and Officers of the congregation.⁴⁵ "I fear they (or some of them)" Gershom Kursheedt wrote to Leeser, "will not appreciate you until they lose you."⁴⁶

Leeser, on the other hand, had fought long and hard to upgrade the "Jewish Ministry" in the United States. He believed that the office of *chazan* was a profession and merited respectable remuneration.⁴⁷ Nor did he refrain from expressing his opinions to his congregation. The situation continued to deteriorate until on March 24, 1850, the members of Mickveh Israel censured Leeser for having printed a public notice in the *Occident* which was highly critical of their refusal to pass "some wholesome legislation with respect to the office of Hazzan."⁴⁸ He immediately submitted a letter of resignation, effective September 1850, the end of his contractual period. Thereafter, he severed all ties to the congregation after twenty-one years of service.

The break with Mickveh Israel was a shattering experience for Leeser. His opponents had openly engaged in *ad hominem* attacks. They publicly questioned his character and suitability as a religious leader.⁴⁹ He was also deprived of both the emotional and financial security of permanent employment. However, in retrospect, it seems clear that Leeser eventually coped with this great moment of personal crisis by immersing himself in work on an English language Bible. The results were outstanding. In less than three years, he published a wide variety of items, including his translation of the Bible.⁵⁰

First, during the summer of 1850, while in the uncomfortable position of being a lame-duck *chazan*, Leeser completed and published a translation of Rabbi Joseph Schwarz's *A Descriptive Geography and Brief Historical Sketch of Palestine*, based on "a printed Hebrew copy and a German translation in manuscript."⁵¹ He agreed with Schwarz that the *Geography* was to be "viewed as a commentary on the geographical passages of the Bible, and by no means as a description of a journey of three or four months' duration."⁵² Whiteman called Leeser's elegant version of Schwarz's *Geography* "the most important Jewish book that appeared in America up to that time," with respect to the high quality of the publication and, especially, because everything in it, maps and all, had been prepared by American Jews.⁵³

Having thoroughly reviewed biblical history, geography, and the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, Leeser was now ready to begin his *magnum opus* in earnest. He no longer had to contend with the exigencies of congregational life nor did he have any desire for a quick return to the pulpit. "I have refused advantageous positions besides Charleston [i.e., Shearith Israel], which could have been mine by the mere asking for them," Leeser wrote in the *Occident*, and "it is true, that the Rev. Dr.

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N. M. Adler, of London, the Grand Rabbi of England, wished me, in April, 1850, to accept the situation of Assistant Rabbi of Australia, which I twice declined."⁵¹

Leeser, however, was also aware that he was in no position to finance the Bible translation project alone. He decided to appeal directly to his large body of supporters scattered throughout the United States by taking a railroad tour of the eastern half of the nation. Travel would also allow the wounds from his fight with Mickveh Israel to heal and enable him to promote the *Occident*, now his chief source of income. "We set out on the 9th of November [1851], and returned on the 27th of February [1852], after an absence of nearly sixteen weeks during which we travelled upwards of five thousand two hundred miles, and visited at least twenty-five settlements or congregations of Israelites, from the shores of Lake Erie to the Gulf of Mexico, and were about forty-one entire or parts of days actually in motion."⁵² In April, 1852, he announced that "we have received a fair portion of public support, so that we hope soon to commence the proposed NEW TRANSLATION of the Scriptures."⁵³

During the next nineteen months, Leeser worked diligently on the translation. He carefully edited his earlier work on the Pentateuch, *haf-tarot*, and Psalms. Obtruse passages were subjected to substantial revisions and the "explanatory notes" were greatly expanded.⁵⁴ In September 1853, Leeser wrote with satisfaction that "the translator surrenders a labour in which he has been engaged, occasionally, for more than fifteen years" and sent his finished manuscript to the printer."⁵⁵ The January issue of the *Occident* included a "Literary Notice" that *The Twenty-Four Books of Holy Scriptures* "which has been so long announced, is at length completed . . . [and] we may be permitted to state, that as far as a mechanical execution is concerned, it may freely challenge comparison with any work of the kind ever issued in America."⁵⁶

The original quarto edition of the Leeser Bible, although it probably made a handsome pulpit Bible, was basically "intended to supply families with a plain version of the Word of God" for home study. It also included "four pages of FAMILY RECORD, printed in a neat manner on very strong paper . . . at the end of the canon, in which marriages, births, and deaths can be recorded."⁵⁷ American Jews finally had a Bible they could call their own.

The Leeser Bible marked the ascension of American Jewry to a new level of cultural activity. By 1854, America's Jewish population was larger than that of England, and there were more than one hundred synagogues scattered throughout the land. Well-known rabbis such as David Einhorn and Samuel Hirsch now chose to settle in what had heretofore been considered a Jewish wilderness. In 1855, the first national conference of rabbis and religious leaders was held in Cleveland. Four years later, the Board of Delegates of American Israelites was organized to work for Jewish civil and religious rights in the United States and abroad. The Jewish press, previously the exclusive domain of Isaac Leeser, had become fiercely competitive with numerous papers, English and German, struggling for a share of the readers' market.⁵⁸

However, the ultimate success of the Leeser Bible was not just a matter of good advance work. "Throughout the millennia," writes Matitiah Tsevat, "prominent versions of the Bible have often been distinguished or properly appraised not by the linguistic accuracy with which they rendered difficult passages, but by their achievement of a specific synthesis between the ancient book and the genius of their times."⁵⁹ In many ways, Leeser, and, by extension, his Bible, represented the "specific synthesis" of the American Jewish experience during the middle decades of the nineteenth century. He was at once an American, Sephardic, and German Jew. The Bible was the centerpiece of his religion, an orientation few people of his time or place would have contested. His Orthodoxy was also an asset. Reform was still in its infancy and, in any event, it might be assumed that most American Jews would have wanted the translation of the Bible to be entrusted to a staunch guardian of tradition.

LEESER'S THEOLOGICAL VIEWS

In attempting to understand the Leeser Bible, it is also necessary to explore the weltanschauung which, a priori, determined the nature of

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the translation. Leeser is best identified as a modern Orthodox Jew. His modern Orthodoxy is distinct from Neo-Orthodoxy in that Leeser emphasized the credal aspects of Judaism to a much greater extent than he stressed the observance of the *mitzvot* (commandments). In this sense, Leeser advocated a true orthodoxy as opposed to an orthopraxy. However, he did not question the authority of the *Halacha* as stated in the *Shulchan Aruch*. Both Leeser's brand of modern Orthodoxy and Neo-Orthodoxy promoted the idea of combining Jewish religious education with secular studies with the hope of creating a dynamic symbiosis of contemporary culture and Jewish tradition.⁶³

Many assessments of Leeser maintain that he was guided by a twofold credo: traditionalism and rationalism.⁶⁴ Without question, he was a traditionalist who believed in both a supernaturalistic monotheism and the rabbinical view of the "chain of tradition." In the mind of Isaac Leeser, not only was the Bible true but no later Jewish religious teaching could possibly contradict it. To Leeser, Judaism, from the time of Moses to his own day, was absolutely monolithic.⁶⁵

Rationalism, on the other hand, is a protean term and is applicable to Leeser only in a highly qualified sense. In light of his view of Jewish intellectual history, it would be more accurate to call Leeser a rationalizer than a rationalist in any philosophical sense of the word. In his mind, neither human reason nor intuition could ever independently discover eternal truth without the benefit of historical revelation. Thus, he had little connection to the Rationalism of Descartes, Spinoza, or Leibnitz. He also took great exception to both Deism and the *Philosophie* tradition of the Enlightenment. To Leeser, the only source of religious truth was the Bible.⁶⁶ Its proper explication was a function of faith and not philosophical training. The radical reformer, Samuel Hirsch, contemptuously, but in part correctly, called Leeser's Bibliocentric theology an "Abklatsch" (poor imitation) of English-Christian Methodism.⁶⁷

To Leeser, the Bible was a correct account, written in plain language, of extraordinary events that actually happened and were witnessed by the ancient Israelites. Behind these "extraordinary events," especially the Sinaitic revelation, was a merciful Deity Who sought to teach man the path to eternal happiness. In order that everyone should clearly understand the biblical message, Leeser deemed it necessary to state explicitly and tersely the Bible's teaching in the form of dogma. As a preacher in a Sephardic congregation, he naturally turned to Maimonides and Albo to find both a model and an authoritative basis for his creed.

On many occasions, Leeser attempted to articulate the credal elements of his modern Orthodoxy. In his final sermon of 1847, "Judaism and Its Doctrines," he listed five basic dogmas.

The main principles of our belief, then, are first, the existence of God, including his unity, eternity; unchangeability, incorporeality, and sole claim to worship; secondly, the existence of revelation from the God of all nature, including the confidence in the truth of the prophets, especially the great teacher of Israel, Moses, the son of Amram, and the certainty that this revelation is yet in our possession, and that it will not be exchanged for any other by the Power who bestowed it on us; thirdly, the existence of rewards and punishments, including the inherent power of God to know all that is done in any part of his world by beings whom He has created; fourthly, the coming of a messenger to be specifically deputed by God to fulfill all the promises which have ever been made, respecting the regeneration of mankind, and their being ultimately brought to a true knowledge of the God-head, by which means much happiness is to accrue to the people of Israel; and fifthly, the resurrection of the dead, embracing the spiritual perfection of all the intelligent beings that ever emanated from the creative hand of God, and the perpetual abolition of all imperfections, sufferings, sinful inclinations, and death, from the face of the earth, a state in which righteousness shall be supremely rewarded, and guilt be exhibited in its fullest and most hideous complexion.⁶⁸

Leeser's emphasis on, and understanding of, eschatological matters, made him view Jewish unity as a historical necessity. Ultimately, the

Jewish nation would be restored to the land of Israel, and unity was essential to its preservation until that time. Even his translation was meant, in part, to help promote Jewish unity for restorationist purposes. However, Leeser's devotion to *Kelal Yisrael* (pan-Jewish unity) should not be mistaken as a form of Zecharias Frankel's positive-historical Judaism. Without question, Leeser believed the true Jewish religion to be immutable both in practice and doctrine.⁶⁹

Leeser's belief in Restorationism constitutes a major organizing principle in his personal religion. As early as 1829, he wrote, "I would only remind my brethren, that their abode in any country, other than Judea, is *against their will*."⁷⁰ His close friend and disciple, Judge Mayer Sulzberger, even maintained:

For him, Palestine was still the country to which the Jews had a divine right, which God, in his own good time, would assert—it might be in a day or in a millenium. He believed it necessary to hold one's self in readiness for the call, and this belief doubtless influenced the determination, to which he inflexibly adhered, never to become a citizen of the United States.⁷¹

In the meantime, Leeser was equally convinced that America was the best possible place of domicile for Jews. On a special "Thanksgiving Day," December 21, 1843, Leeser spoke at Mickveh Israel and extolled America's virtues. "If ever a country," he told his congregants, "other than the blessed commonwealth of Israel, had especial cause for glorifying the most holy Name, it is surely the republic of the United States."⁷² America's greatness, according to Leeser, lay in the fact that it approximated the ancient biblical polity more than any other government in modern history. "It has been intimated," he wrote in *Jews and the Mosaic Law*, "that the institutions of the republic of the North American confederacy are of modern invention; but this cannot be admitted as altogether founded on fact, for the Mosaic code was evidently intended to form a republic of freemen, who were all equally entitled to protection from the government."⁷³

Leeser's belief in "the existence of revelation from the God of all nature" is particularly relevant to an accurate understanding of his Bible translation. Without revelation, Leeser argued, man would be eternally confined to the chaos resultant from moral relativism. "Our own reason is not sufficient to show us the path," he maintained, "for what is called conscience does not, cannot, influence all alike, and consequently cannot be the universal standard of right, since it leads different persons to different conclusions." Therefore, "unless there be a revelation, that is to say, a declared and known law proceeding from God, the world is left without knowledge of right and wrong." God, according to Leeser, would not abandon man to the fate of "a ship, tossed upon the billows of the tempestuous ocean, without rudder or compass."⁷⁴

The record of revelation was faithfully recorded by Moses in the Pentateuch. "The Holy Spirit," Leeser maintained, "was Moses' instructor, which would have prevented him from committing any error."⁷⁵ He defined "holy spirit" or "inspiration" as "the endowment of superior knowledge; proceeding from God as a special gift."⁷⁶ Likewise, he believed that his own work as a Bible translator was carefully guarded over by Heaven. In the preface to the *Pentateuch*, he wrote that "together with the little knowledge I have myself of the Sacred Tongue, I thought, in all due humility, that I might safely do the task, confidently relying upon that superior aid which is never withheld from the inquirer after truth."⁷⁷

He also minimally endorsed the idea that the Pentateuch was of multiple authorship. "Moses," he wrote, "was the *bona fide* author of the last four books of the Pentateuch, comprising the history of the Israelites during his lifetime." However, "it is nevertheless more than probable that the Book of Genesis was in existence before Moses, and if not in its present form, at least it may be presumed that he had ample materials in his possession, from which he compiled it." On the other hand, Leeser vigorously argued against the existence of anachronisms in the biblical text.⁷⁸

ANALYSIS OF THE LEESER BIBLE

To Leeser, the only correct understanding of Scripture was a Jewish one. He openly declared (in the preface to his Bible) that "he always studied

the Scripture to find a confirmation for his faith and hope . . . [and] no perversion or forced rendering of any text was needed to bear out his opinions or those of other Israelites."⁷⁹ Like other literalists, Leeser was basically concerned with theological correctness. "Most often," writes one historian, "calls for 'literalism,' or movements 'back to the Bible,' really seek to cloak with legitimacy efforts aimed at replacing one mode of interpretation with another."⁸⁰ So Isaac Leeser in his translation of the Bible sought to provide American Jews with an authentic Jewish version of Scripture and free them from their reliance on the Authorized Version.

Under the guise of literalism, Leeser used different methods to introduce rabbinic exegesis into his translation. For example, he used parentheses to indicate words he added to elliptical verses "to make the sense clear."⁸¹ Instead of having Samuel "lying down in the temple of the Lord," he had him "sleep in [the hall of] the temple" (1 Samuel 3:3), a correction that brought the translation into agreement with a rabbinic understanding of priestly protocol but, nevertheless, was a non-literal addendum.

In some instances, Leeser went significantly beyond literalism and actually sought to harmonize conflicting passages. Such bold emendations of the text are not without precedent in the history of Bible translations. Even in a recent Orthodox English-language version of the Pentateuch, the translator forthrightly states that "we have consistently translated passages so that they reflect the final decision in Jewish law."⁸² Leeser translated the end of Exodus 21:6 as "he [i.e., the servant] shall serve him till the Jubilee," although the Hebrew reads "forever," in order to have the verse agree with Leviticus 25:10. In modifying Exodus 21:6 in his Bible, however, Leeser was also influenced by the Ante-bellum debate over slavery. Although discretely pro-South, he believed that ancient Hebrew slavery differed from its practice in the United States. Like other like-minded *chazanim* of the period, Leeser believed that biblical legislation mandated the humane treatment of slaves and provided liberal terms for manumission, whereas the American system of slavery was harsh by comparison.⁸³

With regard to style, Leeser endeavoured "to adhere closely to the ordinary English version, which for simplicity cannot be surpassed."⁸⁴ "Though the slight verbal changes grated upon the ears of us the older generation," a sympathetic Rosa Mordecai recollected in 1901, "the constant reading/reciting from it in Sunday Schools made it familiar to the young."⁸⁵ Some changes were easily accepted, such as his version of Psalm 90:3, "Thou turnest man to contrition" instead of the Authorized Version's "Thou turnest man to destruction." However, his modification of other familiar passages (for example, Psalm 23:2, "In pastures of tender grass he causeth me to lie down: beside still waters he leadeth me") proved less than successful.⁸⁶

In preparing the translation of the Bible, Leeser made extensive comparative studies of a wide variety of other Jewish versions of the Bible and, where available, traditional commentaries as well. While working on the Pentateuch, he also maintained that he had "not looked at a single work issued by the English Jews," and hence had "not borrowed a single idea or suggestion from any of them, living or dead."⁸⁷ Actually, there was little material to consult. David Levi's Pentateuch with *hastarot*, published in London in 1787, was the best known Anglo-Jewish translation, but it closely followed the King James version. In 1844, David de Sola and Morris J. Raphael, then headmaster of the Hebrew National School at Eirmingham, England, published a new translation of Genesis with extensive annotations. Finally, Leeser probably did not have immediate access to the *Jewish School and Family Bible* (1851-61) prepared by Dr. Abraham Benisch and officially approved of by the chief rabbi of the United Congregations of the British Empire. In any event, Leeser had finished a significant amount of his own work before the Benisch Bible appeared.⁸⁸

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In general, it appears that Leeser was better versed in Christian biblical translations and exegetical literature than he cared to acknowledge in public. He was familiar with the Vulgate and Luther's Bible.⁹⁰ On occasion, he also referred to the biblical commentaries of the English Non-Conformist, Matthew Henry.⁹⁰ From the British firm of Samuel Bagster and Sons, he obtained Hebrew Bibles, Polyglots, and various reprints of the Authorized Version. In one instance, he even incorporated "a few notes" from an uncited Bagster Bible into his own commentary.⁹¹

The Jewish prototype for the Leeser Bible was Zunz's *Die vier und zwanzig Bücher der Heiligen Schrift* (1838). Leeser even used the English equivalent, *The Twenty-Four Books of the Holy Scriptures*, for his Bible.⁹² "As respects the translation," Leeser wrote in the postscript to his Pentateuch, "he feels it his duty to acknowledge that he has received the greatest aid from the Pentateuch of Arnheim, and the Bible of Zunz, even to a greater degree than from the works of Mendelssohn, Hochstatter, Johnson, Heineman, and several anonymous contributors to our biblical literature."⁹³ Where Leeser did not follow the Zunz Bible, he frequently cited the "Zunz" rendition in his notes.

Leeser's use of the Mendelssohn Bible (1783-91) and its commentaries (*Be-ur*) was much more complex. He primarily viewed Mendelssohn as a symbol and the leading proponent of Jewish emancipation. "Moses Mendelssohn," Leeser wrote in 1829, "has done more than any other individual who has lived since the days of Maimonides and Yarchi (i.e., Rashi), for the improvement of his fellow believers."⁹⁴ Nine years later, in 1838, Leeser made an independent translation of Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* merely "to give a friend some idea of what M. thought on certain points."⁹⁵ However, when Leeser later published his version of *Jerusalem* as a supplement to the *Occident* in 1852, he did so to refute claims by Reform Jews that Mendelssohn was one of their own. "Our philosopher is often invoked in defence of reform, so-called, and, at times, of absolute infidelity," Leeser contended, "when, in point of fact, nothing can be farther from the truth, than that he coincided with the wild schemes of our moderns, who reject rabbinical authority and tradition, not to mention that he had the fullest faith in the absolute inspiration of the Scriptures." However, in his zeal to defend Mendelssohn, Leeser also failed to understand him. "He only wanted to advance the idea," Leeser concluded, "which, for one at least, I also share, that the whole Bible is fundamental."⁹⁶

Although he admired Mendelssohn as the champion *par excellence* of Jewish civil rights and diligently defended his "Orthodoxy," Leeser was unsatisfied with Mendelssohn's Bible translation because it sought "to avoid difficulties and to improve the style" at the expense of "a close, literal rendering."⁹⁷ Of course, Leeser understood the magnitude of Mendelssohn's contribution. "Mendelssohn, though he has since been excelled by others, who have built on his foundation," Leeser wrote in the *Occident*, "paved the way which has been made comparatively easy by his pious labours. So, no one will be apt to pay more homage to his genius than myself; but, as a rule of faith, he cannot be regarded."⁹⁸ Occasionally, however, Mendelssohnian influences are apparent, especially where the tetragrammaton is translated as "the Eternal."⁹⁹

Even more surprising is the fact that Leeser made liberal use of the translation and commentary of the moderate German reformer, Ludwig Philipson (1811-89). Isaac M. Wise claimed credit for persuading Leeser to look at the Philipson Bible. "The year before he published his translation of the Bible," Wise recalled at the time of Leeser's death, "we saw him in his house. He informed us of his enterprise and of the German translations which he consulted. . . . Why do you not use Philipson's? we asked; because he is a reformer, was his reply. We convinced him, however, to the contrary in regard to that Bible and he bought a copy. With admirable skill, he used Philipson without betraying with one word that this was his main authority, in the notes especially."¹⁰⁰

Wise, however, greatly overstated his case. Leeser openly acknowledged his use of Philipson both in the preface to his Bible and throughout his notes. In the *Occident*, Leeser also mentioned his indebtedness to "the Rabbi of Magdeburg, in Prussia, whose work I only for the first time read last summer (1852), and it is up to this date, not quite finished."¹⁰¹ Moreover, Leeser and Philipson corresponded. Philipson wrote a favorable review of Leeser's *Discourses* and *Jews and the Mosaic Law* in his news-

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paper, the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, in 1839. Leeser, in turn, announced his plans to publish the *Occident* in Philipson's journal in October 1842.¹⁰² As late as 1866, Leeser arranged for the private publication of M. Meyer's English translation of Philipson's *The Crucifixion and the Jews*.

Leeser studied "the ancient versions, also, of Onkelos, Jonathan, and the Jerusalem Targumist . . . and wherever accessible, the comments of the great expounders Rashi (Rabbi Shelomoh Yitzchaki), Redak (Rabbi David Kimchi), Aben Ezra (Rabbi Abraham ben Meir ben Ezra), Rashbam (Rabbi Shelomoh ben Meir, the grandson of Rashi), Ralbag (Rabbi Levi ben Gershom) and Rabbenu Sa'adyah (Saadiah) Gaon."¹⁰³ A lengthy and somewhat heated discussion on the value of a literal translation of Exodus 3:14 in the *Occident* suggests that Leeser did, in fact, consult a wide spectrum of rabbinic literature in connection with his Bible translation.¹⁰⁴ "The commentary of Rashi has been of the utmost service in this work, as it has been to all previous ones," Leeser wrote of his *Law of God*, "and the authority of the Neginoth (the musical accents) were also adhered to wherever practicable, it being the oldest and best among us."¹⁰⁵ However, with the exception of Rashi, Leeser's knowledge of medieval commentaries was largely based on secondary sources.

While the Authorized Version and the Zunz Bible provided Leeser with literary models, Rashi, in the words of Jakob Petuchowski, was his "link to the event at Sinai."¹⁰⁶ Not only did Leeser translate many of Rashi's comments and include them, or parts of them, in his own "short explanatory notes," he would frequently use Rashi's perspective as a guide to a revised rendering of a given text. Thus, Leeser interprets Ezekiel 20:25 as "And also I let them follow statutes that were not good . . .," instead of the Authorized Version's more literal "Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good. . . ." In this manner he solved theological problems in a traditional Jewish fashion but at the expense of an accurate translation. In other cases, the Rashi-based Leeser version corrects non-literal interpolations of the Authorized Version. For example, Leeser renders Exodus 25:17 as "And thou shalt make a cover . . .," whereas the King James reads "And thou shalt make a mercy seat. . . ." Most often, however, he would simply use Rashi to give a traditional Jewish perspective on a selected verse. The Authorized Version renders the end of Jeremiah 52:13 as "and all the houses of the great men, burned he with fire." Leeser retains the translation, drops the emphasis on "men," and adds a comment after the word "great." "The Rabbins [i.e., Rashi]," he reports, "take this to mean either the synagogues where the prayers were offered, or the schools where the law was taught."

Most of Leeser's notes, however, simply reported variant translations that he did not use in his version but, nonetheless, considered significant.¹⁰⁷ These selections from German/Jewish sources were familiar to many readers of the Leeser Bible who had recently emigrated from Central Europe and, therefore, those passages were welcome additions.¹⁰⁸ Like Mendelssohn, Leeser believed in linguistic assimilation and, thus, viewed his Bible as an instrument in teaching recent immigrants English. Later editions of the Leeser Bible, however, were greatly reduced in the number of "notes" containing translations from Zunz, Philipson, and others, and retained mainly the substantive comments.

A close reading of Leeser's notes confirms that his Bible was meant to be, above all, an *Apoligia Judaica*. Leeser frequently explained biblical passages that might have appeared objectionable to a modern person in a way that made them more acceptable. Likewise, he defended the actions of ancient Israelites whenever their honor was at stake. "The Law knows of no distinction between the Israelite and the foreigner," Leeser says of Deuteronomy 1:16, "all are alike before the Supreme Judge of the world." Concerning Deuteronomy 14:21, "Ye shall not eat anything that dieth of itself: unto the stranger that is in thy gates canst thou give it, (that) he may eat it . . ." Leeser maintained that "these things [were] not being interdicted for their unhealthiness, but because God chose to forbid them to Israel, they may be eaten by others, if they will." Likewise, he explains that Jeremiah 37:16 ("when Jeremiah had been placed in the dungeon, within the traders' shops . . .") shows that ancient Israel was virtually a crime-free society because "there were probably no regular prison-buildings in Palestine." A note to Esther 9:5 ("And the Jews smote all their enemies . . .") asserts that "it must not be supposed that this was indiscriminate slaughter of all against whom the Jews had conceived hatred, but it only says that those perished who had actually been prepared to extermi-

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nate the Jews."¹⁰⁹ He also listed the talmudic explanation of an "eye for an eye" (Exodus 21:24), and even claimed that Isaac blessed Jacob because he recognized the superior merit of his younger son (Genesis 28:1). Likewise, he often softened the tone of a biblical text. For example, he rendered Leviticus 25:14 as "ye shall not overreach one another" (after Onkelos), whereas the Authorized Version reads "ye shall not oppress one another."

Apologetics and polemics are, of course, different sides of the same coin. Just as the Leeser Bible sought to give an authentic Jewish rendition of Scripture, so it actively refuted Christian exegetical traditions.¹¹⁰ The first alleged christological reference in Scripture, "until Shiloh come" (Genesis 49:10), received, perhaps, the longest comment in Leeser's notes.¹¹¹ "Since Judah had no rule during the second temple, and with the blinding of Zedekiah, in the year of the world 3402, prior to the common era 586 years, the kingdom or sceptre of David became extinct," he argued, "the alleged fulfillment came five hundred and eighty-six years too late." The true fulfillment, however, was still to come. "But believing Israelites, who confide in prophecy," Leeser added, "do not think the sceptre totally departed from Judah, . . . the sceptre will return when the Shiloh, the King Messiah, shall come." Likewise, Leeser translates Isaiah 7:14 as "this young woman shall conceive" and explains that "Immanu-el" (Isaiah 8:8) is a symbolic name "for the land of Judah, which notwithstanding the danger predicted, should still be delivered."¹¹² In some cases, he even admits to giving a nonliteral translation of a verse to distance the text from Christian interpretation. Thus, he renders Deuteronomy 10:16 as "Remove therefore the obdurancy of your heart," instead of the Authorized Version's more literal, "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart" and appends the note that "whatever is odious among the Israelites is called 'uncircumcised.'"¹¹³

Leeser also sought to distinguish between what he considered a legitimate explanation of biblical miracles and Christianity's misunderstanding of the same. In a comment on false prophets (Deuteronomy 13:2-4), he wrote, "the Divine legislation is the standard of truth; consequently no miracle, should such be wrought, can be considered as an evidence of Divine mission if it contradict the law. The will of God is expressed in his revelation, and he is no man, that he should change."¹¹⁴ In other places, however, Leeser was content to give a naturalistic explanation of miracles.¹¹⁵ Similarly, he frequently referred to reports of ancient and contemporary travelers in the Middle East to confirm the accuracy of Scriptures.¹¹⁶

In conformity with his brand of modern Orthodoxy, Leeser offered only a few "notes" on Jewish practice. About Joshua 24:19, "Ye will not be able to serve the Lord," he explained that "it is not an easy thing to comply with the demands of religion," an idea frequently taken up in his *Discourses*.¹¹⁷ He linked Leviticus 23:27 with the practice of fasting on the Day of Atonement. In a note to Esther 9:22, he pointed out that "the poor should of right therefore be remembered on this day [i.e., Purim] especially by their more wealthy neighbors, so that they too may bless the Lord in joy and plenty," perhaps as a criticism of the extravagant Purim Balls popular in his own day. However, the most poignant remark was directed at Reform Judaism. In an otherwise obscure discussion of a special dispensation given to the princes so that they could individually offer incense at the consecration of the Tabernacle (Numbers 7:86), Leeser concluded that "it will always be seen that there were weighty reasons for the suspensions,—that they were sanctioned or ordained by the Holy Spirit; and that consequently we are from such premises not authorized to suspend any precept by our own authority, except there be an absolute necessity which compels us to disobey."

POST-PUBLICATION HISTORY OF LEESER BIBLE

Both Leeser and his opponents knew that the success of his Bible primarily depended on its acceptance among Jews, although he warmly welcomed praise from Christian scholars. An attempt was made to discredit the Leeser Bible by several Reform rabbis. Writing in Wise's

newly founded *Israelite* in 1854, Isidor Kalisch concluded that he would have to "write as thick a book as Mr. Leeser's biblical translation is, if I should point out all the gross errors and mistakes."¹¹⁸ Leeser, however, was not easily intimidated. "The best of this transaction," he replied in the *Occident*, "is that Mr. Kalisch pretends to judge the English style of the work, when he is confessedly unable to write his own thoughts in this language."¹¹⁹ Furthermore, Leeser invited Rev. Dr. I. Mayer of Cincinnati to refute Kalisch's "groundless and illogical censures" point by point.¹²⁰

Fortunately, Wise decided not to sustain the controversy, although he might have wanted to do so. Leeser's Bible and Wise's *History of the Israelitish Nation* (1854) were published simultaneously. After promoting Wise's book in the *Occident*, Leeser found the finished work unacceptable. Shocked at the non-Orthodox character of Wise's *History*, Leeser immediately warned the readers of his newspaper of its heterodoxy. "Dr. W. has spoken out so plainly against the inspiration of the Bible and the truth of the miracles, or even the facts as there plainly recorded," Leeser asserted in the *Occident*, "that no one who believes in the ancient method can be deceived."¹²¹

This and other disputes between Wise and Leeser early in the 1850s permanently damaged their personal relationship. When Wise first arrived in America, he quickly befriended Leeser and became a contributor to the *Occident*, whose editorial policy allowed for divergent theological views. Both men were deeply committed to promoting unity in American Jewish life and even worked on several projects together toward that end. Catholicity of intent, however, was not enough to hold the two together. Ambition, distance, and, finally, theology, drove them apart. But Wise was also pragmatic. He knew he had no choice but to accept the Leeser Bible as the standard version among American Jews. Later, as we have already seen, he even tried to claim partial credit for its success.

The Leeser Bible drew high praise from important people in the broader American community. Reverend Charles Hodge, a leading "Old School Presbyterian" theologian at Princeton Theological Seminary, applauded Leeser in his *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* (July 1854) and called for "a work on a similar plan, from a competent Christian scholar."¹²² Similarly, Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell (1829-1914), a physician and author of *Hugh Wynne, Free Quaker* (1898), is reported to have stated publicly that "when I want to get at the true meaning of the Psalms and Prophets—I go to my friend Rev'd Isaac Leeser's translation as the most satisfying."¹²³

Two years after the Bible first appeared, Leeser admitted that "the translator cannot flatter himself that it has met with such a reception as would have gratified his ambition."¹²⁴ He decided to work on a revised edition, which he completed early in 1856. Several changes were made. First, he decided to use a smaller format because the quarto proved too expensive for mass distribution. Second, the new size demanded an abridgement of his notes and their reproduction at the end of the book instead of at the bottom of each page.¹²⁵ Last and most importantly, the Leeser Bible would not be explicitly promoted as the Jewish successor to the King James version.

The new preface sounded the battlecry. "It would be", Leeser told his readers, "a species of mental slavery to rely for ever upon the arbitrary decree of a deceased King of England, who certainly was no prophet for the correct understanding of the Scriptures." He also noted that "although those who assisted in furnishing the common version may have been as honest as men writing for their sect are ever likely to be," they still colored the work to "confirm their peculiar views." Worse, "most of the editions in use are disfigured by chapter and page headings . . . and the merest inspection will at once show that these expositions are perfectly arbitrary. Finally, Leeser observed that "since the time of King James the world has likewise progressed in biblical knowledge no less than in all other branches of science."¹²⁶ In an "Advertisement to the London Edition of his Bible, Leeser even maintains that the need for a new English translation "has long been recognized by the highest dignitaries and most accomplished scholars in the Anglican Church itself."¹²⁷

By the time Leeser died, on February 1, 1868, his Bible had won wide acceptance among American Jews. Subsequently, much of the promo-

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tional work was done by the Reform movement. In fact, "the only literary work which the Union of American Hebrew Congregations published between the years 1873-1903 was the 'Leeser' Bible." On February 10, 1874, a UAHC committee was appointed "to determine how cheaply the Union could obtain an English Bible for Jewish homes and Sabbath-Schools." After looking into the matter, the committee decided that the Leeser Bible could be sold for \$1.00 per copy. Arrangements were made with Dr. Abraham de Sola, a close friend of the late Isaac Leeser and owner of the copyright to the Leeser Bible, and by 1880, and UAHC had sold 2,000 Leeser Bibles.¹²⁸ "This is the right step in the right direction," Wise wrote in the *Israelite*, "and thousands of these Bibles ought to be sold, in fact, they should be in every Jewish home."¹²⁹

By 1888, the Bloch Publishing and Printing Company had secured the copyright to the Leeser Bible from de Sola. The Bloch Company reissued it with great frequency. Until 1914, sacramental editions bound in white leather for weddings and confirmations were also very popular.¹³⁰ However, the literary and theological shortcomings of the Leeser Bible became increasingly manifest toward the end of the nineteenth century, especially after the publication of the Revised Standard Version in 1885.

At first, interest was only expressed in revising Leeser's work. "The project was conceived," Max Margolis reported, "at the second biennial convention (1892) of the Jewish Publication Society of America [reorganized in 1888]." However, "as the work progressed, it became evident that the undertaking was more in the nature of a fresh attempt at translation than of revision of a previous effort."¹³¹ Committee work proceeded very slowly. Twenty-five years passed before the Jewish Publication Society Bible appeared in 1917.

The new translation was vastly superior. "Leeser's Bible," Israel Abrahams predicted in 1920, "is more or less doomed. It cannot but pass out of general use."¹³² Yet, it did not immediately disappear from the scene. After Bloch discontinued publishing the Leeser Bible, the Hebrew Publishing Company began printing and distributing it, particularly among the East European Jews who began immigrating to America in large numbers after 1881. However, Abrahams was correct, and the Leeser Bible gradually fell into disuse.

Furthermore, in the past fifty years, few Orthodox authorities have acknowledged Leeser's contribution. Dr. J. H. Hertz paid tribute to Leeser as an important translator and commentator, but actually only referred to Leeser four times in the commentary to his popular *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (1929-36), usually referred to as the "Hertz Chumash."¹³³ Likewise, Harold Fisch, editor of the English-language Koren Bible, sponsored by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, consulted "the interesting nineteenth century Jewish Bible of Isaac Leeser."¹³⁴ However, he primarily based his work on M. Friedlander's *Jewish Family Bible* (1881).

More than the fate of the Leeser Bible was at stake. "We shall soon be thinking of putting Isaac Leeser's memory in a museum of Jewish antiquities as a specimen of a lost type," Abrahams concluded sardonically.¹³⁵ In 1918, on the fiftieth anniversary of Leeser's death and in wake of the new Jewish Publication Society's Bible, several articles on Leeser's life and career were published, the most important by a Reform Rabbi, Henry Englander, in the *Yearbook* of the Central Conference of American Rabbis.¹³⁶ Thereafter, virtually no new historical research on Leeser was conducted for thirty years. Beginning in the 1980s, Emily Solis-Cohen, Jr., a scion of a leading Jewish family in Philadelphia who still had access to an oral tradition about Leeser, attempted to write a popular biography of Leeser. However, she totally abandoned the project after two decades of research and never published her work on Leeser.¹³⁷

Even though Leeser faded from public view, he has a lasting place in the history of Judaism. Among his many accomplishments, his Bible served as an important vehicle for the acculturation of American Jews. Moreover, by providing an authentic Jewish version of the Bible and retaining the King James style in his English translation, Leeser also helped bring the Protestantization of American Judaism to completion. Thus, in effect, he was greatly responsible for the transformation and perpetuation of the Jewish heritage in America.

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NOTES

1. There is no standard biography of Leeser. For the first account of his life, see Mayer Sulzberger, "The Late Rev. Isaac Leeser," *Occident*, Vol. 25 (1868), pp. 583-611, republished in *American Jewish Archives*, Vol. 21 (1969), pp. 140-148 (hereafter: *AJA*). Book-length studies on Leeser include: Lance J. Sussman, "Confidence in God": *The Life and Preaching of Isaac Leeser (1806-1868)* (ordination thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1980) (hereafter: *Confidence*); E. Bennett, *An Evaluation of the Life of Isaac Leeser* (Ph.D. dissertation, Yeshiva University, 1959); and Maxine Seller, *Isaac Leeser: Architect of the American Jewish Community* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1965). Also see Bertram W. Korn, "Isaac Leeser: Centennial Reflections," *AJA*, Vol. 19 (1967), pp. 127-141. On Leeser's opposition to Reform Judaism, see Henry Englander, "Isaac Leeser," *Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook*, Vol. 28 (1918), pp. 213-252. On Leeser in the context of the Philadelphia Jewish community, see Maxwell Whiteman, "Isaac Leeser and the Jews of Philadelphia," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, Vol. 48 (1959), pp. 207-244 (hereafter: *PAJHS*). Whiteman's article complements E. Digby Baltzell's *Philadelphia Gentlemen, The Making of a National Upper Class* (Glencoe [IL], 1958). Also, see his "The Legacy of Isaac Leeser," in *Jewish Life in Philadelphia, 1830-1940*, Murray Friedman (ed.), Philadelphia, 1983, pp. 26-47.

2. Bertram W. Korn, "Centennial Reflections," p. 133.

3. Maxwell Whiteman and Edwin Wolf, *The History of the Jews of Philadelphia from Colonial Times to the Age of Jackson* (Philadelphia, 1957), pp. 372-373.

4. Harry M. Orlinsky, "Jewish Biblical Scholarship in America," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, N.S., Vol. 45 (1955), p. 380. See also his "Some Recent Jewish Translations of the Bible," *McCormick Quarterly*, Vol. 19 (1966), p. 2.

5. Israel Abrahams, "Isaac Leeser's Bible," *By-Paths in Hebraic Bookland* (Philadelphia, 1920), pp. 254-259, and Matitiah Tsevat, "A Retrospective View of Isaac Leeser's Biblical Work," *Essays in American Jewish History*, Bertram W. Korn (ed.) (Cincinnati, 1958), pp. 295-313.

6. *Occident*, Vol. 10 (1852), pp. 23, 524; Vol. 16 (1858), p. 485; Vol. 25 (1867), pp. 537-538; and Isaac Leeser, *Jews and the Mosaic Law* (Philadelphia, 1834), pp. iii, 234. Also see Arno Herzig, *Judentum und Emanzipation in Westfalen* (Aschendorf, 1973); Mordecai Eliau, *Jewish Education in the Enlightenment and Emancipatory Periods* (Jerusalem, 1960) [in Hebrew]; Jacob Rader Marcus, *Israel Jacobson: The Founder of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Cincinnati, 1972), reprinted from *Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis*, Vol. 38; and Jakob J. Petuchowski, "Manuals and Catechisms of the Jewish Religion in the Early Period of Emancipation," in *Studies in Nineteenth-Century Jewish Intellectual History* (Cambridge, 1964), pp. 47-64. Leeser published two catechisms: *Instruction in the Mosaic Religion* (Philadelphia, 1830) and *Catechism for Jewish Children* (Philadelphia, 1839).

7. Leeser, *Jews and The Mosaic Law*, p. 243. W. Engelkemper, "University of Muenster," *Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York, 1911), Vol. 10, p. 639. Also, see Maxine Seller, "Isaac Leeser: A Jewish-Christian Dialogue in Ante-Bellum Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania History*, Vol. 35 (July 1968), pp. 231-242.

8. Lawrence Grossman, "Isaac Leeser's Mentor: Rabbi Abraham Sutro, 1784-1869," in *Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein Memorial Volume*, Leo Landman (ed.) (New York, 1980), p. 156; and Bernhard Brilling, "Abraham Sutro (1784-1869)," *Westfälische Zeitschrift*, Vol. 123 (1973), pp. 51-64, and "Beiträge zur Biographie des letzten Landrabbiners von Muenster, Abraham Sutro (1784-1869)," *Uchim III* (1972), pp. 31-64. Also, see Leeser, *Jews and The Mosaic Law*, p. iii; *Discourses on The Jewish Religion* (Philadelphia, 1867), Vol. 1, dedication page; and *Occident*, Vol. 18 (1863), p. 274. Abraham Sutro to Isaac Leeser, Muenster to Richmond, February 24, 1829; Isaac Leeser to Abraham Sutro, Richmond to Muenster, November 1825; Esther Sutro to Isaac Leeser, Muenster (?) to Philadelphia, July 17, 1864; Esther Faber Sutro to Isaac Leeser, Ochtendung (Coblenz) to Philadelphia, October 19, 1865; and Esther Sutro Faber to Isaac Leeser, Muenster to Philadelphia, December 2, 1866 (photostatic copies in the possession of Jacob Rader Marcus. A small collection of Sutro papers is housed at Leo Baeck Institute, New York City.)

9. H. Englander, "Isaac Leeser," p. 214. Leeser claimed to have received a secular education equivalent to an A.M. in an American university, see *Occident*, Vol. 10 (1852), p. 23. Isaac M. Wise maintained he earned both rabbinical ordination and a doctorate. However, none of these claims can be substantiated.

10. *Occident*, Vol. 10, p. 23, note. On Rehine, see Myron Berman, *Richmond's Jewry: 1769-1976* (Charlottesville, 1979); H. T. Ezekiel and G. Lichtenstein, *The History of the Jews of Richmond: 1769-1917* (Richmond, 1917); and Isaac M. Fein, *The Making of an American Jewish Community* (Philadelphia, 1971).

11. On Mordecai, see Berman, *Richmond*, *passim*, and Lance J. Sussman, "'Our Little World': The Early Years at Warrenton" (typescript, American Jewish Ar-

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chives, 1974). On The Reformed Society of Israelites, see Lou Silberman, "American Impact of Judaism in the United States in the Early Nineteenth Century," *B. G. Rudolph Lectures in Judaic Studies* (Syracuse, 1964).

12. *Occident*, Vol. 9 (1851), pp. 210-211. During the 1830s, Mordecai also prepared several lengthy manuscripts, including a 200-page polemic against Christianity entitled "Introduction to the New Testament," as well as critiques of Harriet Martineau's 1832 missionary tract, *Providence as Manifested Through Israel*, and Rev. Alexander Keith's *Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion* (unpublished holographs, American Jewish Archives).

13. William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform* (Chicago, 1978), p. 139. Also, see Donald G. Matthews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 21 (1969), pp. 23-43.

14. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* I, Phillips Bradley (ed.), (New York, 1945), p. 303.

15. Abigail Franks to Naphtali Franks, New York to London, October 17, 1739, in *Letters of the Franks Family (1733-1748)*, Leo Hershkowitz and Isidore S. Meyer, eds., (Waltham [Mass.], 1968), p. 66.

16. Isaac Leeser, *Jews and the Mosaic Law*, p. vi (hereafter: *JML*).

17. Several times during the course of his career, Leeser referred to *Jews and the Mosaic Law* as a definitive statement of his belief in revelation and a summary of his view of the Bible, see *Occident*, Vol. 3, p. 189, and Vol. 12, p. 539.

18. *JML*, p. vii.

19. Isaac Leeser, "Preface," in *The Twenty-Four Books of the Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia, 1853) (hereafter "*Bible* [1853]"), p. iii.

20. Isaac Leeser, "Preface," in *The Law of God* (Philadelphia, 1845), Vol. 1, p. vi (hereafter: *Pentateuch*).

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21. Rosa Mordecai, "Personal Recollections of Rev. Isaac Leeser" (typescript, 1901), Englander Papers, American Jewish Archives, n.p.

22. *Occident*, Vol. 11, p. 523. Although Leeser decided to work on the Bible alone, he was offered assistance. For example, see Morris Jacob Raphall to Isaac Leeser, March 16, 1854, New York to Philadelphia, Microfilm 199, American Jewish Archives.

23. On Leeser's relation to Mickveh Israel, see Isaac Leeser, "To the Parness and Members of the Congregation Mikveh Israel of Philadelphia," May 15, 1840 (typescript, Dropsie College Library), 15 pp.; *A Review of the Late Controversies Between The Rev. Isaac Leeser and The Congregation Mikveh Israel* (pamphlet, Philadelphia, 1850), 18 pp.; and *A Review of "The Review"* (pamphlet, New York, 185), 11 pp., copy in Korn Papers, American Jewish Archives.

24. Isaac Leeser, *Instruction in the Mosaic Religion* (Philadelphia, 1830). Also, see David Uriah Todes, *The History of Jewish Education in Philadelphia* (Ph.D. dissertation, Dropsie College 1952), pp. 43-56, and Sussman, *Confidence*, pp. 34-42.

25. Isaac Leeser, "Preface (to Jerusalem)," *Occident*, Vol. 14. Part of Leeser's first sermon, "Confidence in God," is reprinted in Joseph Blau and Salo W. Baron (eds.), *The Jews of the United States, 1790-1840* (New York, 1964), Vol. 2, pp. 578-582.

26. Volumes 1 and 2 of Leeser's *Discourses* were first published in 1837, volume 3 in 1841, and the complete set, volumes 1 to 10, in 1867. In the preface to volume 3, Leeser places his interest in renewing Jewish preaching in America in a historical perspective. Leeser was heavily influenced by Protestant preaching in the United States, see *Occident*, Vol. 9 (1852), "Supplement," p. xiv, and Lewis O. Brastow, *The Modern Pulpit: A Study of Homiletic Sources and Characteristics* (New York, 1906), and also by developments in Germany, see Alexander Altmann, "The New Style of Preaching in Nineteenth-Century German Jewry," in *Studies in Nineteenth-Century Jewish Intellectual History*, pp. 65-116.

27. On the literary style of Leeser's *Discourses*, see Blau and Baron, *Jews of the United States*, p. 579. Although modern scholars generally take a negative view of Leeser's sermons *qua* religious literature, he was, nevertheless, encouraged by sympathetic congregants to continue his preaching, see *Discourses* I, p. 2.

28. Rebecca Gratz to Maria Gist Gratz, Philadelphia to Lexington, Ky., February 2, 1834, quoted in David Phillipson, *Letters of Rebecca Gratz* (Philadelphia, 1929), p. 193. Leeser, who remained a bachelor his entire life, had extremely poor eyesight and frequently suffered from ill-health, see Whitman, "Leeser," in *Jewish Life in Philadelphia*, p. 28.

29. Isaac Leeser, *Discourses* I, p. 34.

30. Sussman, *Confidence*, pp. 80-93.

31. Leeser, *Pentateuch*, Vol. 1, p. vi. Also see *Occident*, Vol. 9, Supplement A, p. xv.

32. Isaac Leeser, *The Form of Prayers According to the Custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews* (Philadelphia, 1838), Vol. 1, p. vi.

33. Joseph R. Rosenbloom, "Rebecca Gratz and the Jewish Sunday School

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Movement in Philadelphia," *PAJHS*, Vol. 48 (1958), p. 71, and also his *And She Had Compassion* (D.H.L. dissertation, Hebrew Union College, 1957); and Sussman, *Confidence*, pp. 94-117.

34. *Die vier und zwanzig Bucher der Heiligen Schrift* (Berlin, 1838), Leopold Zunz, ed. On Leeser's indebtedness to Arnheim and Zunz, see *Pentateuch*, Vol. 1, p. 146.

35. Korn, "Centennial Reflections," p. 33.

36. Leeser, *Pentateuch*, Vol. 1, p. viii.

37. Leeser, *Pentateuch*, Vol. 1, p. v, and Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Politics of Scripture: Jewish Bible Translations and Jewish-Christian relations in the United States" (typescript, American Jewish Archives, 1983), p. 12.

38. According to Whiteman, Leeser's *Pentateuch* met with "even greater approval than he had anticipated . . . [and] a pirated edition appeared in Germany and was sold in England" ("Leeser," in *Jewish Life in Philadelphia*, p. 35). However, Max J. Kohler reports: Soon after Leeser's Bible translation appeared, a pirated edition was also published and he brought suit for infringement of copyright in the Federal Court in Philadelphia. The claims of the defense were, of course, overruled, on the ground that there could be no copyright even in a new translation, made from the Hebrew, because the Bible itself is common property and the defendant could have made an independent translation of his own. The case is reported in the series entitled "Federal Cases," which is alphabetically arranged, in volume "L," containing this report under the plaintiff's name "Leeser"; undated holograph (1919?), Englander Papers, American Jewish Archives. Also, see Albert M. Friedenbergl to Dr. Henry Englander, New York to Cincinnati, January 7, 1919 (Englander Papers, American Jewish Archives).

39. Isaac Leeser to Rev. Nathaniel Hewitt, Bridgeport, Conn., July 11, 1839, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. On Joseph Jacquett, see Franklin Spencer Edmonds, *History of St. Matthew's Church, Francaville, Philadelphia, 1822-1925* (Philadelphia, 1925), pp. 72-73, copy at Archives of the Episcopal Church, Austin, TX. The Leeser-Jacquett, *Biblia Hebraica* (1848), was probably based on a Hebrew Bible published by Samuel Bagster (London, 1824 and 1844), see T. H. Darlow and H. F. Moule, *Historical Catalogue of the Printed Editions of Holy Scripture* (London, 1903), Vol. 2, pp. 725, 729. Leeser also edited a Hebrew edition of Job for the American Bible Union, see William H. Wyckoff to Isaac Leeser, New York to Philadelphia, March 11, 1857 (Leeser Papers, Dropsie College Library).

40. Sarna, "The Politics of Scripture," p. 1.

41. Tævat, "A Retrospective View of Isaac Leeser's Biblical Work," p. 297.

42. Tævat, p. 297, and Wolf and Whiteman, *The History of the Jews of Philadelphia*, p. 310.

43. *The Twenty-Four Books of the Holy Bible: Hebrew and English* (New York, 1912).

44. Abraham Rice to Isaac Leeser, May, 1849, Baltimore to Philadelphia, Microfilm 199, American Jewish Archives. Also, Grace Aguilar, a Jewish author in England, wrote to Leeser lamenting the lack of a translation of the Bible by a "faithful Hebrew" and also discussed the feasibility of writing and publishing such a work, August 13, 1846, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

45. *Charter and By-Laws of Kahal Kadosh Mickve Israel* (Philadelphia, 1841), by-laws XXVII and XXVIII, p. 23, copy at Dropsie College Library. Also, see *Occident*, Vol. 20 (1862), pp. 340, 343.

46. Gershom Kursheedt to Isaac Leeser, December 10, 1849, New Orleans to Philadelphia, Korn Papers, American Jewish Archives.

47. On Leeser's view of the "Jewish Ministry," see *Occident*, Vol. 3 (1845-46), pp. 218-221, 577-583; Vol. 9 (1851), pp. 385-394, 433-443; Vol. 10 (1852), pp. 177-187 and 225-38; Vol. 15 (1857-58), pp. 493-496; and Vol. 18 (1860-61), p. 304. More broadly, see Burton S. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and The Development of Higher Education in the United States* (New York, 1976).

48. *Occident*, Vol. 7 (October 1949), p. 377.

49. *A Review of the Late Controversies*, p. 17.

50. Joseph Schwarz, *A Descriptive Geography and Brief Historical Sketch of Palestine* (Philadelphia, 1850). Isaac Leeser, translator; "Jerusalem: A Treatise on Religious Power and Judaism by Rabbi Moses Mendelssohn," Isaac Leeser, translator, published as a supplement to *Occident*, Vol. 9 (1852); and, Leeser, *Bible* (1853).

51. Schwarz, *Palestine*, p. v.

52. Schwarz, p. xii. Leeser frequently referred to Schwarz in the notes to his *Bible* (1853), see comments to Genesis 50:11, Deuteronomy 2:23, and Judges 7:3.

53. Whiteman, "Leeser," *PAJHS*, p. 183, and "Leeser," *Jewish Life in Philadelphia*, p. 40.

54. *Occident*, Vol. 10, p. 335.

55. *Occident*, Vol. 10, p. 2. Also, see Jacob Rader Marcus, "Isaac Leeser, American Jewish Missionary," *Memoirs of American Jews: 1775-1865* (Philadelphia, 1965), Vol. 2, pp. 58-87.

56. *Occident*, Vol. 10, p. 2.
57. Leeser, *Bible* (1853), p. iv; *Occident*, Vol. 11, p. 523; and, Tsevat, "Retrospective," p. 300.
58. Leeser, *Bible* (1853), p. iv.
59. *Occident*, Vol. 11, pp. 521-522.
60. *Occident*, Vol. 11, pp. 521-522. For a typical reaction to the announcement of the publication of the Leeser Bible, see Isaac Jalonick to Isaac Leeser, Belton Bell Co., Texas, to Philadelphia, May 28, 1853, *American Jewish Archives*, Vol. 8 (1956), no. 2, p. 75.
61. *Discourses* 10, p. 256. On organized Jewish life in 1854, see Jacques J. Lyons and Abraham de Sola, *A Jewish Calendar for Fifty Years* (Montreal, 1854), pp. 148-173. Also, compare Bertram W. Korn, "American Jewish Life in 1849," in *Eventful Years and Experiences* (Cincinnati, 1954), pp. 27-57, to Leon Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue* (Hanover [New Hampshire], 1976), pp. 172-173. On the general proliferation of private organizations during this period, see Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Growth* (Philadelphia, 1968), pp. 61-2.
62. Tsevat, "Retrospective," p. 302.
63. "The Jewish Faith," *Discourses*, Vol. 2, no. 36; Moshe Shraga Samet, "Neo-Orthodoxy," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1972), Vol. 12, cols. 956-958; and Charles Liebman, "Orthodoxy in Nineteenth Century America," *Tradition*, Vol. 6 (Spring-Summer 1964), pp. 132-140. On the concept of "modernity" in Jewish history, see Michael A. Meyer, "Where Does the Modern Period of Jewish History Begin," *Judaism* (Summer 1975), pp. 329-338, and Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, "Introduction," *The Jew in the Modern World* (New York, 1980), pp. 3-6.
64. Abrahams, "Isaac Leeser's Bible," p. 259; Tsevat, "Retrospective," pp. 311-311; and Sella, "Isaac Leeser: Architect of the American Jewish Community," *passim*.
65. Leeser, *JML*, pp. 169, 186, and 190. Also, see note to Jeremiah 52:13 in *Bible* (1853), a rendition of Rashi's comment.
66. Isaac Leeser, "The Jews and Their Religion," in *He Pasa Ekklesia* 1, Daniel Rupp (ed.), (Philadelphia, 1844), pp. 362-366. Also, see *Discourses*, Vol. 6, p. 196; Vol. 7, pp. 157, and 262; Vol. 8, p. 103; and Vol. 9, p. 21. For a different view, see Jonathan D. Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew: The Two Worlds of Mordecai Noah* (New York, 1981), p. 139.
67. *Die Deborah*, Vol. 13 (December 27, 1867), p. 98.
68. *Discourses*, Vol. 7, pp. 251-252. On "Resurrection of the Dead," see note to Psalm 78:39 in *Bible* (1853).
69. The thesis that Leeser advocated Positive-Historical Judaism (Conservative) was first advanced by Moshe Davis, *The Development of American Judaism* (New York, 1951) [in Hebrew], *passim*. Also, see Herbert Parzen, *Architects of Conservative Judaism* (New York, 1964), *passim*, and Arthur Hertzberg, "Conservative Judaism," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1972), Vol. 5, cols. 901-902.
70. Leeser, *JML*, p. 175.
71. Mayer Sulzberger, "Isaac Leeser" (pamphlet, Philadelphia, 1881), p. 5. Sulzberger read this short biography of Leeser before the Young Men's Hebrew Association of Philadelphia in April, 1881. Copy in Abraham de Sola Papers, American Jewish Archives, and Mayer Sulzberger, "Isaac Leeser," in *American Hebrew*, Vol. 7, May 27, 1881, pp. 15-16, and June 2, 1881, pp. 28-29. Also, see Maxine Sella, "Isaac Leeser's Views on the Restoration of a Jewish Palestine," *PAJ*, Vol. 68 (1968), pp. 118, 135.
72. *Discourses* 5, p. 121 or p. 138 (?).
73. *JML*, pp. 77-78.
74. *Ibid.*
75. Quoted from *JML*, p. 21. Also, see pp. 9, 13, 15-20.
76. *Op. cit.*, p. 137.
77. *Pentateuch*, Vol. 1, p. vii.
78. *JML*, pp. 10, 167, 200 ff.
79. *Bible* (1853), p. iii.
80. *Pentateuch*, Vol. 1, p. vii; Sarna, "The Politics of Scripture," p. 11; and *Occident*, Vol. 12, p. 406.
81. *Bible* (1853), p. iv.
82. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, "Translator's Introduction," *The Living Torah* (New York, 1981), p. vii. On making translations conform with Jewish law, Kaplan adds that "his means following Maimonides' Code (the *Yad*) where law is concerned, literary considerations are secondary" (p. vii). On the problem of ~~normalization~~ harmonization in the Leeser Bible, see *Occident*, Vol. 10, p. 527.
83. On Leeser's views on slavery, see Bertram W. Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (New York, 1960?), pp. 15-55 and, more broadly, David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Ithaca, 1975), pp. 523-556. On the politics of slavery in Philadelphia, see Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Private City*, pp. 126, 130-137, 153.

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84. *Bible* (1853), p. iv.
85. R. Mordecai, "Personal Recollections," n.p.
86. Abrahams, "Isaac Leeser's Bible," pp. 256-257.
87. *Bible* (1853), p. x.
88. On Anglo-Jewish translations of the Bible, see Raphael Lowe, "Bible: Modern Versions - English," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1972), Vol. 4, cols. 868-872. Leeser, however, did correspond with Benisch, see A. Benisch to Isaac Leeser, London to Philadelphia, November 27, 1848, photostatic copy in the possession of Jacob Rader Marcus.
89. Leeser, *Bible* (1853), note to Exodus 25:17.
90. *Discourses* 2, p. 272.
91. *Bible* (1853), p. iv. The Raphael-de Sola version of Genesis was also published by Samuel Bagster and Sons. Leeser's preference for British Bibles may stem from the strong Episcopalian influence in Virginia as well as in Philadelphia; see E. Digby Baltzell, *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia* (New York, 1979), pp. 365-368.
92. On the general influence of German-Jewish culture, see Bertram W. Korn, "German-Jewish Intellectual Influence on American Jewish Life," Syracuse University, B. G. Rudolph Lecture, 1972.
93. *Pentateuch*, Vol. 1, p. 146.
94. *JMI*, p. 228.
95. "Supplement," *Occident*, Vol. 9, p. vi. A comparison of Leeser's version of Jerusalem with the translation prepared by Moses Samuels, *Jerusalem: A Treatise on Ecclesiastical Authority and Judaism* (London, 1838) leaves little doubt that Leeser independently prepared his rendition of Mendelssohn's classic work. Leeser's rendition is very "wordy" and also includes the translator's glosses.
96. "Supplement," *Occident*, Vol. 4, p. v. However, see "Revealed Truths," in *Discourses*, Vol. 9, pp. 216-217 and *Occident*, Vol. 23, p. 487.
97. *Bible* (1853), p. iii. Also, see "note" at the bottom of that page.
98. *Occident*, Vol. 10 (February 1853), p. 531.
99. In *Bible* (1853), see notes to Genesis 2:4 and Deuteronomy 6:4.
100. *Israelite*, Vol. 14 (February 14, 1858).
101. *Occident*, Vol. 10, p. 534. Leeser also occasionally consulted Dr. Gotthold Salomon's Bible, see *Occident*, Vol. 10, p. 533.
102. *Allegetime Zeitung des Judenthums* (November 14, 1839, and October 1842), pp. 618-619, and L. Philipson to Isaac Leeser, Magdeburg to Philadelphia, August 22, 1854, photostatic copy in possession of Jacob Rader Marcus. For an extensive listing of Leeser references in European Jewish periodicals, see "Deutsch File" at the American Jewish Archives.
103. *Bible* (1853), p. iii.
104. *Occident*, Vol. 10, pp. 525-535. Charges by Leeser's opponents from the Reform movement that he could not read unvocalized Hebrew are overblown. However, he often relied on the *Be-ur* and L. Philipson's biblical notes when he did not have access to select material in rabbinic literature.
105. *Pentateuch*, Vol. 1, p. 147.
106. Jakob J. Petuchowski, "The Bible of the Synagogue," *Commentary* (February, 1959), p. 150. Reprinted in his *Heirs of the Pharisees* (New York, 1970), p. 37.
107. *Bible* (1853), p. iv. Unlike other biblical commentaries of the period, Leeser's does not include "Introductions" to individual books of the Bible, except for a short overview of "The Song of Solomon" and "Koheleth," the latter in a note to Koheleth 12:13.
108. Tsevat, however, maintains that "Leeser referred to Philipson and Zunz more than was necessary in an edition for popular and liturgical use," in "Retrospect," p. 302, note 27. However, in general, Protestant Bibliocentrism in America, unlike the medieval Jewish tradition, inhibited the publication of exegetical commentaries with popular Bibles.
109. Also, see notes to Numbers 25:11, Judges 11:39, and Esther 8:8 in *Bible* (1853).
110. Also, see E. I. Rosenthal, "Anti-Christian Polemic in Medieval Bible Commentaries," *Journal of Jewish Studies*, Vol. 11 (1960), pp. 115-135.
111. Leeser's comment on Genesis 44:10 is an expansion of an earlier note in his *Pentateuch*. Also, see his "The Messiah, No. 3," *Discourses*, Vol. 2, p. 46. Similarly, see Dr. J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (2nd ed., 1973), pp. 201-202.
112. On the "Suffering Servant" (Isaiah 52:13), Leeser simply translates a lengthy note from L. Philipson.
113. Also, see notes to Exodus 6:11 and Numbers 25:11 in *Bible* (1853).
114. Also, see "On Miracles, No. 3" in *Discourses*, Vol. 4, p. 20, *Occident*, Vol. 1, pp. 7-21; and "note" to Jeremiah 23:29 in *Bible* (1853).
115. "Notes" to Joshua 10:12 and II Kings 20:7 in *Bible* (1853).
116. Following Philipson, Leeser explains in his "note" that the mode of hos-

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pitality discussed in Genesis 43:34 is "yet prevailing in Persia." Also, see "notes" to 1 Samuel 6:5, Jeremiah 25:10, and 35:2. In the *Occident*, Leeser frequently reported on distant Jewish communities. For instance, on the Jews of Persia, see *Occident*, Vol. 7, pp. 317, 504-507, 549-554, 596-601, and Vol. 8, pp. 43-48 and 111-45.

117. On difficulty in being a religious Jew in the thought of Leeser, see "The Dangers and Defences of Judaism," *Discourses*, Vol. 5, pp. 389-406 and "The Requirements of Faith," *Discourses*, Vol. 7, pp. 87-101.

118. Isidor Kalisch, "English Versions of the Bible," *Israelite*, Vol. 1 (July 28, 1854), pp. 21ff, and especially p. 170.

119. *Occident*, Vol. 12, p. 357.

120. *Occident*, Vol. 12, pp. 358-364.

121. *Occident*, Vol. 12, pp. 520-521.

122. *Occident*, Vol. 12, p. 360. Also, see Alexander A. Hodge, *The Life of Charles Hodge* (New York, 1880, reprinted 1959), and Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religion in America: An Historical Account of the Development of American Religious Life* (New York, 1973²), pp. 162-168.

123. R. Mordecai, "Personal Recollections," n.p. Also, see Anna Robeson Burr, *Weir Mitchell, His Life and Letters* (New York, 1929).

124. *Bible* (1856), p. viii.

125. A quarto edition with notes was printed as late as 1914, copy at Klau Library (HUC-Cincinnati), Rare Book Room. On Pocket Edition, see Advertising Supplement to *Occident*, Vol. 13, p. 2.

126. *Bible* (1856), pp. iii-iv.

127. Quoted in Leeser Bible, Pocket Edition (1856, 1869), after p. xii.

128. Steve Fox, *A Detailed Analysis of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Its Structure, Its Goals, and Its Accomplishments, 1873-1903* (ordination thesis, HUC, 1980), pp. 122-123. Moses Dropsie prepared an agreement to transfer the copyright of the Leeser Bible to Abraham de Sola on January 6, 1873. Subsequently, de Sola printed a "Public Notice" including a "Deed of Transfer" on May 1, 1875 (de Sola Papers, Misc. Fil., American Jewish Archives). On how Leeser sold his Bibles, see Isaac Leeser to H. H. Kayton (?), Philadelphia to Baltimore, November 4, 1864, copy at Jewish Historical Society of Maryland.

129. *American Israelite* (August 21, 1874).

130. The Klau Library has Bloch Publishing and Printing Company editions of the Leeser Bible from 1888, 1891 (fourth edition), 1894, 1897, 1899, 1901, 1905, 1907, 1912, and 1914.

131. Max Margolis, *The Story of Bible Translations* (Philadelphia, 1917), pp. 91-101 and "Preface," *Jewish Publication Society Bible* (1917), p. v. However, the Revised Standard Version was not an independent translation, see Miller Burrows, *Diligently Compared: The Revised Standard Version and the King James Version of the Old Testament* (New York, 1964), p. 1.

132. Israel Abrahams, "Isaac Leeser's Bible," p. 258.

133. Dr. J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorah* (London, 1960²), pp. 1050-1051, and his notes to Leviticus 1:3, 4:22, 25:46, and 26:34.

134. *Koren Bible* (Jerusalem, 1969), p. vii. On Harold Fisch, see *Decennial Volume 1973-1982: Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1982), pp. 189, 247.

135. I. Abrahams, "Isaac Leeser's Bible," p. 259.

136. Henry Englander, "Isaac Leeser," p. 213.

137. Emily Solis-Cohen, Jr., made two attempts to write a biography of Leeser: *Leeser, A Beginner in America* and *Leeser, A Man and His Destiny*. Her unpublished and incomplete manuscripts are part of the Leeser Papers at Dropsie College. She employed Solomon Grayzel to translate Hebrew, Yiddish, and Judeo-German correspondence received by Leeser. These translations, handwritten and typescript, are scattered throughout the Leeser Papers at Dropsie. Furthermore, Solis-Cohen and Grayzel typed and annotated much of Leeser's correspondence with both Mickveh Israel and Beth El Emeth as well as some congregational minutes. Also, see Emily Solis-Cohen, Jr., to Henry Englander, July 12, 1933; July 25, 1933; July 28, 1933; and August 8, 1933; Philadelphia to Cincinnati, Englander Papers, American Jewish Archives.

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