



Daniel Jeremy Silver Collection Digitization Project

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MS-4850: Daniel Jeremy Silver Papers, 1972-1993.

Series III: The Temple Tifereth-Israel, 1946-1993, undated.

Sub-series B: Sermons, 1950-1989, undated.

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Einstein - The Jew, 1979.

Einstein - The Jew
Daniel Jeremy Silver
March 18, 1979

Edited copy
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A hundred years ago this past week, on the fourteenth of March of 1879, Albert Einstein was born in the south German town of Ulm. His family had lived in southern Germany since the middle of the eighteenth century. As far as we know there had been no intermarriage in the family; yet, for some time its members had been indifferent to active involvement in the religious inheritance. There was a synagogue in Ulm, but Einstein's parents did not attend. Albert was never enrolled in any religious schoolclasses. The Einsteins did not keep kosher and the family ate what it wished in local restaurants.

Albert Einstein's father was an electrical contractor whose scientific ability was not matched by an equal degree of business competence. I do not know if Hermann Einstein knew, and I am rather certain he did not, the old Hebrew proverb:

Change your place and you change your luck; but it was, obviously, a bit of folk wisdom instinctive to him. Every few years another business went bad and the family would try father's luck in another town.

When Einstein was about to enter elementary school, the family moved to Munich. In Munich there was a fine Jewish school. Einstein enrolled in a Catholic school which was closer to home, and, therefore, more convenient. During the years that he was in the Gymnasium, and later while at the Polytechnical Institute in Switzerland, Einstein made no attempt to involve himself in Jewish causes or even, socially, with Jews. His Jewishness seems to have been a matter of relative indifference to him as it was to his family.

Albert's first marriage was to a lapsed Catholic. It was an unhappy marriage which ended in divorce, but the issue of religion seems not to have been a contributing factor to the breakup. Religion seems to have played no part in their home.

By the time Einstein was thirty he had achieved world-wide fame. One of the unique aspects of science is that the great breakthroughs are generally made when a man is still fairly young. By the time Einstein was thirty he had published the special theory of relativity and important work in the theory of light.

I suspect if you had asked Einstein at thirty what he felt about the fact that he was a Jew he would have shrugged his shoulders indifferently. He seems not even to have been much concerned with the personal cost which went along with being Jewish in Europe in the early part of the century. Einstein had been sent down without a diploma from the Gymnasium. When he graduated with a doctoral degree from the Polytechnical Institute in Switzerland he did not receive an academic appointment.

Given the realities of quotas at that time, many would have seen these acts as anti-semitic. Einstein seems not to have done so. He was remarkably honest with himself. He knew that he had been a difficult youth, that as a student he had paid little attention to classes or teachers who did not interest him. The young rebel had made no attempt to get assignments, which he felt were unnecessary and silly, in on time or even in. At the university he had called his professors "Mr. " instead of Herr Professor, a deliberately provocative practice in those title-conscious times. Over the years he had stimulated a good bit of anger. His later fame has made us forget that the young Einstein was as much a bohemian as anybody could be, who lived in relative poverty and in conservative southern Germany and Switzerland at the time. Einstein knew that the piper had to be paid and that if you step on the sensibilities of your professors they will step on your prospects. In his mind the issue was not his Jewishness but his spirit. In any case, he had no option but to hire himself to the Swiss Patent Office where his job was to examine models of inventions submitted by Swiss engineers to see whether they qualified for the Certificate of Patent.

At thirty Einstein emerges a wunderkind, from bohemia and rebellion into the status of genius, a great theoretical physicist who happens to be a Jew. By the time he is forty Einstein is not only the world-reknowned physicist who happens to be a Jew, but an actively involved Jew who is recognized by his fellow Jews not only as one of our contributions to civilization but as a leader of the Jewish people. This man who, up to the age of thirty, had not involved himself in Jewish we find at forty planning to leave his library and study at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin to accompany Chaim Weizman to the United States on that ultimate of all Jewish undertakings, a fund-raising mission. Their purpose was to raise funds for the Kenen Hayssid and for the contemplated Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

When he was thirty Einstein would not have known the difference between the Besht, Israel Baal Shem Tov and Elijah the Gaon of Vilna.

Last week I found in my father's files a number of letters that Einstein had written him in the late 1940's dealing with Benjamin Lewin. Benjamin Lewin was a Russian Jew, a scholar, who had emigrated in the second aliyah to Palestine where he became a leading authority on Gaonic literature. Gaonic literature is a rather special form of Jewish legal responsa originating in the eighth and ninth century academies in Babylon. If you find those few details new imagine how talk of Gaonic literature would have appeared to Einstein at twenty-nine or thirty. He had never been to religious school and was not known to be interested in Jewish literature; yet, Einstein writes of some days spent with Benjamin Lewin and speaks of the importance of his research and publication. The purpose of the correspondence is to ask whether help can be given to Lewin to help him with the publication of this research. More, Einstein suggests the value of that great institute for the research and publication of halachic Jewish studies which will be established.

Einstein has changed. What made for the change? How did the physicist become a Jew? In all of the television essays and articles that have appeared the last weeks in honor of the centennial of Einstein's birth, little attention has been paid to the aspect of the genius and I would like to explore this side of his spirit with you because, obviously, Einstein lived through many of the crises that we have lived through and his road to Jewishness is not irrelevant to our own.

To understand Einstein, the Jew, we must disabuse ourselves of the legendary Einstein, the Einstein who comes down to us as a gentl, teddy bear, a rumpled suit professor, a warm avuncular figure who bounces the neighbor's children on his knee and is always ready to do their mathematics homework even if he sometimes gets it wrong. The legend is simply not Albert Einstein. Einstein was a tough-minded, self-centered human being. He was a mind that happened to be tied to a body; minds have to be, but he never allowed emotion to intrude on intellect. He had little instinctive compassion and was anything but a romantic. He had little need for friendship. He had almost no capacity to sustain a long, intimate relationship. We think of Einstein playing with the neighbor's children as he walked to his office in Princeton. Towards his own children he was coolly distant. He provided for them, but little more. He seems to have moved away from his wife because she insisted on intimacy, on sharing his world. She was a physicist. She wanted to know what he was thinking and doing and he had no intentions of telling her. He tolerated his second wife and remained with her for life because she was a wonderful maid. She catered to him. She protected him. She saw that he had food on the table and clean linen when he needed and never intruded in his life.

Einstein was a man who lived within a shell. In 1911 Einstein took a position at the German University in Prague. At that time and place a small group of Jewish intellectuals who used to meet in the salon of Berta Funt. Einstein came there with some regularity, perhaps attracted to people like Franz Kafka who came regularly to her chambers.

At the Funt's Einstein met a young novelist, Max Brod, and the very next novel, subsequently, a novel about the life of Tyche Barhe, a sixteenth century Czech astrophysicist, one of the fathers of modern astronomy, and the teacher of Kepler who revised our understanding of the nature of the universe. Brod pictured young Kepler as the young Einstein that he knew. He, too, was a scientific genius and a theoretical physicist. What was more natural than to describe Kepler out of Einstein? Listen then to Max Brod on Kepler's Einstein:

The tranquility with which he applied himself to his labors and entirely ignored the warblings of flaterers was almost super-human. There was something incomprehensible in its absence of emotion, like a breath from a distant region of ice. He had no heart and therefore had nothing to fear from the world. He was not capable of emotion or love and for that reason he was also secure against the aberrations of feeling.

He had no heart and therefore had nothing to fear from the world. He was not capable of emotion or love. In that way he was also secure against the aberrations of feeling. Now, Brod liked Einstein and Einstein knew a good bit of this about himself. Here is Einstein on Einstein:

My passionate interest in social justice and social responsibility has always stood in curious contrast to a marked lack of desire for direct association with men and women. I am a horse for single harness, not cut out for tandem or team work. I have never belonged wholeheartedly to country or state, to my circle of friends, or even to my own family. These ties have always been accompanied by a vague aloofness, and the wish to withdraw into myself increases with the years. I have never belonged wholeheartedly to anyone. The desire for aloofness and withdrawal has only increased with the years.

Einstein came to his involvement with Jews and the Jewish people intellectually, not emotionally. His relationship was not a matter of chance meeting with a few intellectual Jews who were also Zionist; nor was it out of instinctive sympathy for some Jewish suffering, but as a careful result of reasoning from his principles.

Einstein was a young rebel who came to certain convictions quite early. At the age of fifteen Einstein renounced his German citizenship. He felt that his teachers at the Gymnasium were rigorous, arbitrary, iron-willed, unfeeling, romantically and imperialistically chauvinist and typical of Germany. He wanted no part of such a Germany. Einstein did not believe in nation states. He believed in world order. He held that

boundaries of nations were artificial and the divisions so effected intolerable, and from the age of fifteen and sixteen he was committed to internationalism. Einstein lived in the international world of science which he saw as a model for the relationship which must exist at all other levels.

Also as a teenager, Einstein was angered by the divisions between the poverty of peasants and workers and the inherited wealth of German princes, Prussian yunkers and the commercial rich. He came then to the socialist conviction that the natural resources of the state should be owned by the citizenry. He studied history when he learned that the class and economic divisions between rich and poor and between the states inevitably led to war. War was simply and clearly evil. Einstein became a pacifist. To Einstein internationalism, socialism and pacifism were proven principles - as basic to the natural order as E equals MC squared. Later on, under the pressure of Hitler and Naziism, Einstein moderated a bit his pacifism. He came to accept the radical evil needed to be defended against; but these basic principles, arrived at analytically while still a young man, remained Einstein's principles throughout his life.

His Zionism, his reinvolvement with the Jewish people, grew out of these principles. Zionism, as he came to understand it, was a movement of the human liberation of Jews. He saw that in Europe Jews were treated as a people apart. The period of his youth saw the dramatic rise of European nationalism - Wagner et al - and this tendency was to him not only regressive on all fronts but particularly destructive of the desire of the Jew to emerge as a true citizen of the world. The Jew should not turn himself into a chauvinist German. The chauvinist German would not accept the Jew. Herzl's vision became for him the vision of a cultural center in which there would be no limitations on the ability of the Jew to emerge as a human being and contributing member of civilization.

Einstein was first exposed to Zionism in Mrs. Funt's salon in Prague. Berta Funt was a Zionist and a disciple of Herzl. It is well to remember that Herzl's vision of the Jewish State was of an almost secular, social democracy. It was not particularly "Jewish." In their land the Jews would have one advantage they lacked in Europe. They

would be at home. There would be no quotas. There would be no discrimination. The spirit of the individual Jew could naturally evolve. When Einstein then moved back to Zurich and to Berlin in 1914 he took these ideas with him and applied them to the events preceding the first World War.

The first World War was radically different than the second one. The first World War was fought in a Europe which until then had thought of itself as a cultural unit whose values would ultimately become those of the rest of the world. The concept of a nation state had flourished in the nineteenth century, but no one really believed that Europe would turn against Europe. The first World War was proof of the destructive impact of nationalism.

Einstein had hardly settled into the position of Director of the Physics section of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in 1914 when war broke out. Ninety-three of Germany's scientists signed a manifesto which said, among other things, that were it not for the German army German culture would have been wiped off the face of the earth. Einstein had looked on these men as fellow members of a truly international fraternity. Now he found them to be more German than scientist, quite willing to put their skills to work for the sake of the German military machine, prepared to develop poison gas or other lethal weapons to increase Germany's chance of victory.

Einstein, with only four colleagues, countered this platform with a countermanifesto which said that it is the duty of scientists to prevent Europe from succumbing to death by fratricide. All his principles cried out against what was happening in Europe and he began to realize that nationalism had become elemental to the European world order with dire consequences not only for Europe but for the Jew. In Prague he had lived near a Jewish community caught between two rival nationalist groups. There were the Czechs and there were the Sudetan Germans. Their nationalism burgeoned, the Jews were caught between. In Prague there were two universities: a Czech university and the German university. There was no cooperation between the faculties. Both Social Science faculties had turned themselves into centers of nationalist propaganda.

Einstein was appalled. He saw the consequences of this for the individual Jew and Jewish intellectuals. Jews would have no place in la patrie or The Fatherland. He began to think about the Jewish people as an internationalist community devoted to social justice who could develop these laudible traits once they had a place of their own. When the first World War ended Einstein was known as the leading Jewish scientist of Europe and was beset by Jews who had been displaced by the war and who sought through him letters of introduction to one faculty or another. Einstein found that whatever the qualifications of the individuals, in Germany they wanted only German scholars and in France only French scholars. Few had learned anything from the war and nationalism had made Jews stateless. These people were not granted even an interview because of the fact of their Jewishness.

This experience, combined with the fact that his anti-war activities had led him to be damned by the more romantic German nationalists as the Jew traitor and his physics be demeaned as Talmudic physics, led Einstein to Zionism. He realized that for the Jew to be able to live as a human being he would have to have a place of his own and hence his lifelong commitment, conversion if you will, to Zionism as a movement for the creation of a Jewish cultural homeland. Einstein was to spend the rest of his life as a world citizen and as a Jew. After the rise of Hitler he would not go back to Germany. During those terrible years he worked to succor as many fellow scholars and their families in Germany and in central Europe as he could and to find them a place in American universities. I am sure that there is not a major university in the United States or England which does not have a full dossier of letters written by Einstein seeking support for a Jewish scholar who had to flee from Nazis. He had a world position which allowed him to speak out on issues and to be heard, and he used that pulpit to speak out against the rise of all that Hitler and national Socialism stood for in Europe.

As a Jew working within the Jewish community, as a mind interested in all that affected the mind, Einstein became not only a Zionist but a well-read Jew. He became acquainted with the leading Jewish leaders and scholars. He became a Jew of some learn-

ing but he never became a synagogue Jew. Einstein did not believe in a personal God to whom one could pray and who would respond to individual human needs. Einstein believed in Spinoza's God. There was a design to the universe. The greatest mystical moment was when a mind like his understood the will of God as it was revealed in that universe. Spinoza had called this the intellectual love of God; that is, the ability to sense God in the majesty and symmetry and motion and creative design of nature.

Einstein was human. He was not above assuming that because he was world reknown in physics he could pontificate on any other subject. The fallacy of omniscience comes naturally to genius and in his latter years Einstein loved to discuss his religious views. He coined a phrase, cosmic religion. Cosmic religion was no more or no less than the awe which he felt before God's design. He believed that he served that god by defining the mechanisms and describing the equations which suggested how the universe was put together. "I believe in Spinoza's god who reveals himself in the orderly harmony of all that exists. I do not believe in a god who concerns himself with the faiths, actions of human beings." He described his work as motivated by a desire to know God's thoughts.

Einstein was motivated by the finest humane concerns. He was involved with all the good causes of his time, with all the causes that made for the redemption of the poor, the elimination of war, the elimination of poverty and malnutrition and of ignorance. He did not look upon these simply as Jewish values, these were broad human values which conformed to what was necessary for man to live successfully within this grand design which is the universe.

He developed a certain love of ritual. Ritual was educative and the value of bringing people together; but it had no purpose in and of itself. One ritual essentially was as good as any other. His faith in the Creator God was an optimistic one. We might call it a messianic one. "God is subtle but He is not malicious. The universe is a beautiful thing and, therefore, the possibilities for human life within this universe are full or promise if man will only cease to be the kind of craven, cruel, calculating, callous beast that he sometimes allows himself to be."

We touch an arresting paradox. Precisely because he had this belief in the grand

design of the universe, he spent his last years trying to uncover a unified field theory, equations which would describe in a single set of mathematical equations all of the activities of the universe. Such equations would give men the ability to describe how all things work and relate, one to the other: electricity to matter to light to energy and on and on; but during the latter years of Einstein's life, science was moving beyond the watchmaker universe of Spinoza, the universe where there is a cause for every effect and where all activity can be described. Scientists were discovering that there is a kind of randomness to the universe. There are actions within the sub-electrical particles of the atom which cannot be described as the result of any particular cause. A principle of indeterminacy began to be enunciated. There is a mystery beyond the mystery that Einstein himself sought to describe or even recognized. Paradoxically, given the nature of our universe there is room for those very scandalous ideas about the personality of God, about God responding in miraculous and mysterious ways.

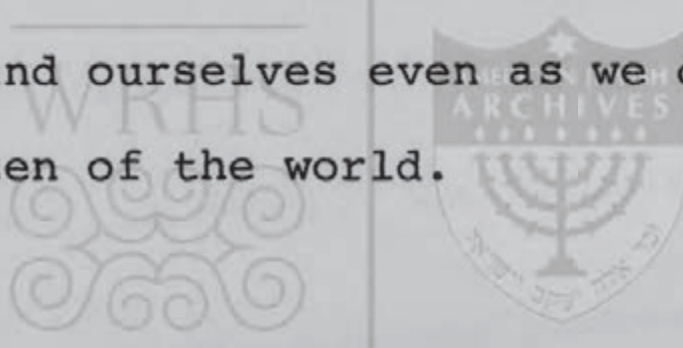
Science tended to pass Einstein by during the last twenty years of his life. He could not accept the consequences of the new discoveries; there was not simply an electrical magnetic field, but many fields; that there was a principle of randomness in the activities of energy which could not be described in a very specific way as the result of a specific cause. The theology of Einstein remains thoughts, personal to him, and unmoving to those who do not share his particular view. Theologically, Einstein broke no new ground.

I find it difficult to sympathize with those clerics who brand Einstein as an atheist and coupled the label with the assumption that somehow an atheist is less humane or decent than those who have faith. Fulton Sheen, the smooth-voiced Roman Catholic preacher particularly went after Einstein, accusing him of all manner of weakness and flaw because of his religious views.

I must say that I give credit to my rabbinic colleagues of the time who never damned Einstein for his theology. Jews have been remarkably tolerant of the peculiar ideas about ultimate questions of other faiths. We have

had the good sense to know that no one really knows, not even Einstein. And so, whatever meshugas, whatever the theology that any one of us has about God, that is not the test. The test is what kind of a person are you? What kind of a human being are you? Are you compassionate, empathetic, sensitive, committed to justice, alert, able to assimilate the facts of your time? Do you have a vision about the future of mankind? If you do God is with you and you are with God; and God bless you.

Our people blessed Einstein. They blessed him for his Zionism. They blessed him for his support of the Hebrew University. They delighted that he was given the privilege to deliver the inaugural lecture at the Hebrew University in 1925. They delighted that with the death of Haim Weizman he was offered the presidency of the State of Israel. We remember him warmly as one of our own and remind ourselves even as we do that to be one of our own is to be a concerned citizen of the world.



Kaddish

Friday _____

Sunday _____

MARCH 18, 1979

Those who passed away this week

Donald Rubin^{feld}
L.

Yahrzeits

HENRY H. AMSTER
HAROLD M. STRAUSS
HUGO GELLNER
IRWIN A. ADLER
ALFERD B. SHIELDS
ARMIN H. WOHLGEMUTH
LESTER BENSEV
MAX SWERDLOW
LOUIS NEUMAN
SAMUEL S. WEBER
MARVIN A. KANE
NATHAN SEIDMAN
SAMUEL A. ROTH
SOPHIE KLOPFER STRAUSS
HOWARD SIMON SAKS
LOUIS SCHOEN
MARY NEWHOUSE FIRTH
SARAH BAUMOEL
EDWARD ENGLANDER
LEON SPERLING
ROSE SPILKA
FRANK H. FOX
GERTRUDE LOVEMAN JASKULEK
ROSE BERNSTEIN

SAMUEL S. ROSENTHAL

HENRY SADUGOR

CELIA AUERBACH

HUGO A. FISHEL



Your TEMPLE Calendar — *Clip and Save*

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
11 SERVICES 10:30 a.m. The Temple Branch Rabbi Silver will speak on IN A LIGHTER VEIN PURIM CARNIVAL 2:30 - 6:00 p.m. The Temple Branch	12	13 PURIM TWA Activities 10:00 a.m. - Branch Fellowship & Study Group Rabbi Stephen Klein 10:45 a.m. - Branch TMC LUNCH WITH THE RABBI Commerce Club 12 noon - 1:30 p.m. Temple Board Meeting 8:00 p.m. - Branch Religious School Board Meeting - 8:15 p.m. - Branch	14	15	16 Services - 5:30 p.m. The Temple Chapel	17 Shabbat Services 9:45 a.m. - Branch Bar Mitzvah COLIN DAVIDSON 11:00 a.m. The Temple Chapel
18 SERVICES 10:30 a.m. The Temple Branch Rabbi Silver will speak on EINSTEIN — THE JEW	19	20 TWA Activities 10:00 a.m. - Branch Fellowship & Study Group Rabbi Stephen Klein 10:45 a.m. - Branch	21 TWA Board Meeting 10:00 a.m. - Branch TMC Board Meeting 8:00 p.m. - Branch	22	23 Services - 5:30 p.m. The Temple Chapel	24 Shabbat Service 9:45 a.m. - Branch
25 SERVICES 10:30 a.m. The Temple Branch Rabbi Silver will speak <i>ISRAEL to go</i> <i>what are</i>	26	27 TWA Activities 10:00 a.m. - Branch Fellowship & Study Group Rabbi Stephen Klein 10:45 a.m. - Branch	28	29	30 Services - 5:30 p.m. The Temple Chapel	31 Shabbat Service 9:45 a.m. - Branch Bar Mitzvah BRUCE ROTH 4:30 p.m. The Temple Branch
APRIL 1 SERVICES 10:30 a.m. The Temple Branch Rabbi Silver will speak	2	3 TWA FIRST TUESDAY 11 a.m. - Shop & Socialize 12 noon - Lunch 1 p.m. - Beryl Rothschild Fellowship & Study Group Rabbi Stephen Klein 10:45 a.m. - Branch Mr. & Mrs. Club Board Meeting - 8:00 p.m.	4	5	6 Services - 5:30 p.m. The Temple Chapel	7 Shabbat Service 9:45 a.m. - Branch Bat Mitzvah MIRIAM FRIEDMAN 11:00 a.m. The Temple Chapel Bat Mitzvah RENEE WHITE 5:30 p.m. The Temple Chapel SENIOR YOUTH GROUP THEATRE PARTY

A.E. was in the small S. Green Lane of ULM on March 17, 1971.
- 100 years ago was erected, the family had lived in the area for
several years, the 15th cent. They had been in the area for
in the 15th century family - they were in all other respects
unaffected by the full of being Jews.

There was a synagogue in the town - They did not
belong to it.

They also belonged to a church - not known in detail as
in the 15th century.

A.E. never spent a week in a religious house.

When A.E. was of age, he was sent to the family house in Munich.

He never was in the house of his father - he never
saw him, he never saw his mother - he never saw his father.

He never saw his father - he never saw his mother - he never saw his father.

There was an old friend of his father - he never saw him.

He never saw his father - he never saw his mother - he never saw his father.

He never saw his father - he never saw his mother - he never saw his father.

He never saw his father - he never saw his mother - he never saw his father.

A.E. was sent to a R.C. school 24 years before he was

home and administered a punishment.

I want to know God's thoughts.

The secret is not that mystery

"I believe in Spinoza's God who reveals himself in the orderly harmony of what exists," he replied, "not in a God who concerns himself with fates and actions of human beings."

God is subtle, but he is not malicious

God does not play dice with the universe.

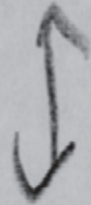
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ee- his head in winter.
ent "My passionate interest in so-
ere cial justice and social responsi-
bility," he wrote, "has always
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ou- association with men and women.
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rn- not cut out for tandem or team
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re even to my own family. These
ng ties have always been accom-
panied by a vague aloofness, and
the wish to withdraw into my-
self increases with the years.
"Such isolation is sometimes hu

about the only significant factor about the B.T. system
was the fact that the parents had been given violent lessons
Earlier could be part 30 years of the life without
really being concerned with the child's future.
The new mental institution intended a religious life
The religious aspects too children would need
the Bible stories were taught in the gymnasium - as in
normal school and the same in the school - ~~normal~~
The new school

Through the making of physical scientific books
I don't know the conclusion that work of the
STALIN OF THE Bible could not be true. The
CONTRADICTION WAS A FACT ONLY OF THE OTHER
coupled with the impression that youth is
intentionally being deceived by the state
through lies.

There is no way of knowing the truth about the
to have been given to the parents, for the
my MILWAUKEE MARCH was a new year. The parents
the new public school was a dead end - but the religious
to be seen and one of the - They had a and
new. But were not unless they were
the future not in the past.

historical novel about the life of the 16th century
astronomer Tycho Brahe - one of the first to develop
all the laws of Kepler. But never did he
model of the young Kepler when every phenomenon
was being to solve system model A.C.I., - 4th
to the example of A.C.I. at 30



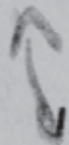
Alonso y Euterio

Wrote me heart

He was not a student of astronomy - but

much like A.C.I. But some of the same way about

himself



Wrote book of laws for David on the same

was in there -

Very few collections - and to collect one with myself

٤١

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

~~her interest~~

burial

Once he was 2 years old
and was sent off - to live with his grand father
and mother in the same place.
He was not at all happy there.

