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Articles, "The Terefa Banquet Story Or a Study in Causation,"
unpublished paper for a Hebrew Union College class, 1952.

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**The Terefa Banquet Story
Or a Study in Causation**



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History 5
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Professor Fay in his Origins of the World War speaks of Thucydides as being the first historian who understood the importance of systematizing and emphasizing the whole concatenation of events which eventuate in a particular historical phenomena rather than the "final spark which starts the conflagration"(1) Leaving aside for the nonce, the question of who is responsible for this particular method of research, it is certainly true that historians to-day, without exception, follow this method. An occurrence is now considered as the product of a large number of historical causes, rather than of any single event. Thus we can not limit ourselves to a discussion of the immediate causal relationship in which the terefa banquet stands to that denouement, the final rift between reform and traditional American Judaism, which it is supposed to have precipitated: but we must also turn our attention towards evaluating all problems which are in any way causatively related to this event, and we must be primarily interested in fitting ~~in~~ this particular occurrence into its proper place within the chain of events which lead to the split.

N.B. We realize that any such evaluation depends upon the scope and accuracy of available facts as well as the particular methodological system which the author brings to the problem. At best any history is a tentative one. There can never be a complete and final formulation of the truth, only more or less accurate approximations- depending on the author's historical sense and accuracy, his grasp of the subject matter, his mental awareness and acumen, and also whatever insights he may have arrived at. As shall be evident shortly we have been unfortunately limited to a great extent in regards to the availability of source material,

and as we can make no special claim as regards competence, this study should best be regarded as tentative- of value, primarily, in that it may be suggestive for future studies.

In brief our problem concerns itself with the following situation. By 1883, the Jewish community of the United States seemed well on its way towards achieving that unity of organizational structure for which its major leaders had been striving for over three decades. (2) On the surface old mistrusts seemed to have been assuaged, old differences compromised, and the extremists of both groups rebuffed. Organized Jewry seemed reasonably happy with a single congregational body, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, (founded in 1873 and the sole organizational body after the Board of Delegates was merged with it in 1876) and as patrons of a single seminary, the Hebrew Union College, (founded in 1875). Thus at the beginning of the eighth decade of the nineteenth century we find the names of such nominally traditionalist congregations as Chev Shalom of Baltimore, Rodeph Shalom and Mikve Israel of Philadelphia, and Shaaray Tefila of New York City enrolled in the books of the Union; while from the records of the College we see that Rabbis who up to this time had been associated primarily with Eastern conservatism, such as Marcus Jastrow, Benjamin Szold, and Sabato Morais, had ~~xxxxxxxx~~ ^{begun to} permit themselves to assist in the work of preparing rabbis for the American pulpit. (3). The moderates of both viewpoints seemed well entrenched in positions of leadership and were apparently receiving the support of the vast majority of the laity (4) It seemed to be only a question of time before this meeting of minds would solidify into a permanent organizational core -to which the dissidents and extremists would because of the pressure of numbers be forced to comply.

In fact by 1883 ^{Wise} felt so sanguine about the chances of speeding up this process that he decided to take advantage of the first ordination of students from the College and make of this festive occasion a great and symbolic love feast during which all past rancor and bitterness would be forgotten and forgiven in the shared joy of accomplishment and ^{during} ~~out of~~ which friendships which had up till now been ^{fraught} ~~tainted~~ with misgivings would become lasting and binding. When such a tangible evidence of the similarities of aims and purposes between the two groups ^{could be demonstrated}, Wise felt it was inevitable that they should learn to respect one another and work in concord and amity. To this end Dr. Wise decided to hold a joint meeting of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Rabbinical Literary Society in Cincinnati on July 10-13, 1883, in conjunction with the previously mentioned ordination and in order to reach the fullest possible numbers. Further it was planned to show special attention and to signal out for honor at this affair those Eastern conservatives whose tacit and active support had made this unity possible. (5) The whole program seems to have gone off very successfully. Thus the Cincinnati correspondent for the "pro union along Orthodox/religious lines" (6) newspaper, The Messenger, reported in a special dispatch dated July 15th and published in the issue of July 20th:

It was a representative body...undisturbed harmony prevailed ... we are unable to recall a single instance wherein an unpleasant and personal allusion was employed...there was no reference made to sectional Judaism nor did the Conservative members of the Assembly receive their usual quota of accustomed thrusts at the hands of their more liberal(?) brethren...When all the records are handed in...they will impress the reader as they did the witness... (with the fact) that peace reigned throughout. (7)

But apparently an incident did arise which marred the proceedings and it is with this event that we are primarily concerned. The meetings were to be climaxed with a banquet on the night of the 12th,

at the fashionable Highland House. The prospectus which was published in the July 6, 1883 issue of the American Israelite in which the list of speakers and those who are to respond to toasts are given makes it apparent that our contention that the banquet was planned to give special k'vod to the Eastern and more conservative delegates an apparently plausible one. (8) Indeed the best proof of this is the following except from the dispatch of Rabbi Szold's daughter, Henrietta, to The Messenger dated July 16: "We were gracefully admitted to share the laurels although in my opinion we had shirked a considerable amount of the work" (9) Was not her father, a pillar of Baltimore traditionalism, scheduled to respond to one of the toasts?

Unfortunately Wise's obvious good intentions were vitiated to a degree by a minor but none the less disturbing incident. Perhaps the best way to describe what occurred is to let a young man of some twenty-one years who had just graduated from the College that afternoon and was present at the dinner recall for us just what occurred. I refer to Dr. David Philipson.

Knowing that there would be delegates from the various parts of the country present who laid stress upon the observance of the dietary laws, the Cincinnati committee engaged a Jewish caterer to set the dinner. The great banquet hall was brilliantly lighted, the hundreds of guests were seated at the beautifully arranged tables, the invocation had been spoken by one of the visiting rabbis, when the waiters had served the first course. Terrific excitement ensued when two rabbis rose from their seats and rushed from the room. Shrimp had been placed before them as the opening course of the elaborate menu. (10)

It is impossible to doubt the historicity or accuracy of this report as we have at least two other eye witness accounts. The first is the previously cited dispatch of Henrietta Szold and the other is to be found in an article written and published by Sabato Morais in the July 20, 1883, issue of The American Hebrew. What can, however, and

indeed, must be challenged is the statement with which Dr. Philipson sums up his reminiscence:

This incident furnished the opening to the movement that culminated in the establishment of a rabbinical seminary of a conservative bent.(11)

Though Dr. Philipson is a competent historian whose special province is the history of the reform movement; it is the author's opinion that this summation is an exaggeration which is unwarranted and in our opinion historically indefensible. We shall try to show that this occurrence can in no way be labeled the original cause or even the catalytic event which led to the final rupture between reform and traditional patterns of life in America. In our opinion the sources of this split lie much deeper and have roots which reach much further back — even to the fourth decade of the century. Moreover, even in the final immediate set of events which precipitated the split we feel that this judgement gives undue weight to what may have been a disturbing, but certainly not an important, occurrence. For, as we shall try to establish (as best we can with the limited facts available) contemporary partisans of both camps remain singularly unperturbed and other causes both immediate and basic must be adduced if we would fully understand the dissolution of the Wise, — Jastrow-Szold/^{informal} alliance which made all this uniformity of approach possible. In short the terefa banquet may have ^{a few} frayed/tempters at the time and later may have in retrospect been added to the general list of charges which the leaders of a separate ^{lonely} traditionalist group began to prepare, but if we were to accept Dr. Philipson's thesis we would be at a loss to account for the hiatus of about fourteen months between this episode and the breaking out of a 'shooting war.'

It might now be advantageous to phrase a little more clearly the problem with which we are concerned. In 1883, there was but one seminary and one union of congregations and there were hopes that in the
no

not too distant future there would be only one major form of religious Jewish life here in America. Three years later a rival seminary had been established and the once ^{terrefa} ~~undefine~~ boundary between the two approaches to Judaism rigidly defined. Many causes contributed to this state of affairs. The Pittsburgh Conference of 1885; the Kohler-Kohut debates; the Jastrow-Wise controversy concerning kashruth; the changing demographic complexion of American Jewry; a new immigrant wave which brought with it men of different economic, religious, and national orientations; the capture of the positions of leadership in the reform movement by the leaders of the so-called Eastern radical wing; basic lay unrest which was caused by different traditions and customs and which could not be legislated out of existence by fiat, the fact that this marriage had from the first been one of incompatible elements who only had to awaken from the first bliss of the honeymoon to discover severe and irreconcilable differences of background and approach--all these causes and many others contributed in greater or lesser degree to the final denouement. By evaluating all these facts and placing them in their proper perspective we shall have some yardstick to test Dr. Philipson's thesis that the terefa banquet was an important and catalytic agent in "provoking the lingering distrust of the conservatives in Dr. Wise's College and in reawakening their antagonism towards him" (12)

"at sources should be exploited for such a study? Unfortunately the author was severely handicapped in regard to primary material by the physical limitations of the Hebrew Union College Library--the only library the assigned scope of this paper would warrant visiting. Certainly careful research would demand a thorough

perusal of all the major periodicals of the period 1883-1886. ^{Of these} It was possible only to consult The Messenger and The American Israelite. The pertinent volumes of The American Hebrew are missing from an otherwise complete set, while the issues of The San Francisco Hebrew, The Hebrew Intelligencer, The Hebrew Standard, and The Jewish Herald are not to be found in its possession. Moreover, for a complete and accurate appraisal certain of the contemporary biographical material should have been scanned, but this was beyond the scope the author has allowed himself for this work whose aim is to be suggestive rather than exhaustive. In regards to secondary material the pickings are meager. The standard histories deals superficially and cursorily with the material. Even the theses of certain graduates of the College to which the author had access have very definite and severe limitations. Thus Rabbi Allen Tarshish's doctoral dissertation deals intensively only with the period up til 1880 and Rabbi Joseph Bucheler's master's thesis which deals with this very issue of union in American Jewish life stops short in 1868. The only work which covers in any detail this period is that of Rabbi Abba Fineberg on The Rise of the Conservative Movement which suffers all the ills of a bad piece of historical research and study. Beyond this the author knows of only two monographs which deal in any detail with this era and problem; Dr. Samuel Cohen's, History of the Hebrew Union College and Mr. M. She Davis's, Jewish Religious Life and Institutions In America (An Historical Study) both of which suffer from apologetical qualities and are unfortunately, to the author's limited knowledge, the only published works which deal with this subject with any attempt at historical analysis.

In the face of these manifest difficulties there were but two choices left to the author; either to give up the work which had been

choices left to the author: either to give up the work which had been begun or else to make manifest at every turn the obvious tendentiousness of each generalization which in this case must combine as much pure logical deduction and outright historical guessing as factual proof. This, of course may make for poorer reading, but it is the only way open to a writer who would preserve even the vaguest semblance of method,

We propose first to explore contemporary reactions to our terefa incident to see in what view it was seen by those immediately involved, whether the actual participants sensed it to be historically important or not. But since contemporaneity has the obvious difficulty of making perspective difficult it will then be necessary, to complete our picture, to rehearse with unfortunately overly broad strokes the whole background of the split to see if we can assign this incident to its proper place within the particular chain of events which now occupy our attention. Always recognizing that we can, because of the nature of this paper, only suggest or intimate and never prove.

Whatever conclusions we arrive at concerning the place the terefa banquet occupied in the thinking of men and women of those days must be qualified by three basic limitations. In the first place we know that there exists at least one other extremely important editorial reaction to our incident which we have been unable to appraise. We refer to a statement by Sabato Morais which appeared in the July 20, 1883, issue of The American Hebrew (13) This article would be of special importance because Morais had been an active participant in the work of the College and was to become in the next year or so the central figure in the founding of the Seminary (14).

If we had been able to see more fully the role the banquet played in his change of heart, we might have been able to arrive at a more accurate summation. Then too, because of the limitations of the Library, we have been unable to determine whether Dr. Philipson's statement that "the Orthodox Eastern press ran the charges on the terefa banquet week in and week out" (15) is an accurate statement of what actually occurred. And finally, a much more exhaustive study than this will have to be undertaken to ascertain to what degree the Jastrow-Wise exchange on kashruth was motivated by this incident or whether it antedates it, since Wise's public utterances on this subject can be traced as far back as his Albany days. (16)

These limitations then must qualify any generalizations we may form. Next we must determine what we do know. In the first place, the Rev. Samuel M. Isaac's, The Messenger, which had since its inception in 1857 been the newspaper outlet for New York traditionalism and was to become during the next three years the ardent and persistent advocate of a separate seminary, remains editorially silent on the whole issue. Indeed on July 13th it shows that it had not as yet determined on the final dissolution of the Union when it takes to task Aaron Wise of the Jewish Herald for penning an editorial criticizing the Union and advocating that the College should be moved to the more salubrious climate of New York City:

What possible good can be accomplished by such a heated, unjust, and querulous communication? Writing apparently in the interests of Conservatism, it may only add to sectional feelings and increase the sentiment of distrust. Let us have peace... (17)

Such an editorial would seem to show that the time was not yet ripe for the split and that much water would have to spill over the dam before the moderates would be willing to forsake the union idea. Indeed one can trace a definitely pro-union policy on the part of this paper well into the spring and early summer months of 1884, when for the first time

in over a decade the moderate press begins to highlight demands for a separate 'truly Jewish' seminary. Throughout the meeting The Messenger gave full, and laudatory coverage to the ^{SESSIONS} ~~meetings~~ both before and after the incident. Typical of the tone of the articles is this caption which heads Henrietta Szold's dispatch of July 13th; "The Hebrew Union College-The Examination-Graduating Addresses - A Favorable Verdict"(18). That the tone of these articles does not change drastically after the incident of the terefa dinner can be seen from the contents of this letter submitted to The Messenger by its Cincinnati correspondent, one A.M.C., which reads in part:

"It was a representative body...undisturbed harmony prevailed... unable to recall a single instance wherein an unpleasant and personal allusion was employed...there was no reference to sectional Judaism nor did the Conservative members of the Assembly receive their usual quota of accustomed thrusts...(19)

Keep in mind that this dispatch was filed after the banquet and yet contains no mention of the incident. Indeed the July 16th letter of Miss Szold which contains her unfavorable comments on the terefa issue contains also such commendatory phrases as that she believes the Union is an "effective religious body which is intelligently organized"(20).

Moreover as we read Shulamith's statement, we can not escape the thought that it was taken by most of the diners as an unfortunate but rectifiable mistake and was not allowed by the vast majority of those in attendance to cast a shadow over the occasion. Shulamith's description of the scene leads one to believe that with one or two notable exceptions the diners quickly recognized that to create an incident over such an issue would be to make a tempest in a teapot:

I would be outraging my own feelings were I to omit recording the indignation which was felt by a surprisingly small minority at the manner in which the banquet was served. There was no regard paid to our dietary laws and consequently two rabbis left the table without having touched the dishes, and I am happy to state that I know of at least three more who ate nothing

and were indignant (Ed. note there were over 220 diners) but signified their disapproval in a less demonstrative manner. It was a painful revelation to me that there were so few who objected; I imagined that we, the half-conservative at least, were still in the majority; we were, instead of that being the case, stared at as if we were mummies or fossil remains (21)

The Messenger makes no more of the whole incident, and from the complete silence which the usually pugnacious Dr. Wise maintains in the pages of his American Israelite, it appears that after the first outrage and flurry no one was prone to assign any grave weight or diabolic intent to the incident. Though the reports that seeped back to certain of the unconverted traditionalists in the East may have appeared to them as just another conclusive proof that Wise and his followers were out to destroy the fundamental roots of Judaism and that there was no common ground for union with such epicorsim.

Yet we must account in some way for the rapid disintegration of the apparently united religious front after 1883; for it is an incontrovertible fact that before eighteen months were out men who had mingled together in the fullest friendship at the Ordination had again become enemies and what had been envisioned as an all embracing union of congregations had become a sectarian body. The author contends that to understand this disintegration of the entente cordiale we must go back some three and a half decades to see how it had come into being and just how much of a solid front it was ever able to represent.

If we go back to the ten year period between 1845 and 1855, we would find that there was really very little which differentiated the traditional and the so-called liberal congregations. Both were adopting certain reforms piecemeal. Thus even such a staunchly orthodox synagogue as Mikveh Israel where Isaac Leeser was employed for a time as schazan and preacher was not beyond introducing an English sermon or English prayers into the service. The laymen were in background still of very

similar religio-economic ^{stocks} ~~backgrounds~~. Practice was so close that it was difficult to see that there were two very dissimilar approaches to Jewish life which in time would ^{inevitably} ~~grow far~~ apart. For the present it was possible for men of good intentions of both camps to dream and make plans for the development of a single American Judaism. Moreover the personalities of the two leading figures of the period contributed to this end. Both Wise and Lesser were more interested in organizing a strong Jewry than in doctrinaire theologies, both were friends, both were in a measure unaware of the difference in approach which would in time carry them poles apart.

The beginnings were then made for a single over-all religious congregational union in 1849 and again in 1855. Personalities, congregational snobbery combined to defeat the first attempt; while the second was wrecked upon the shoals of ideological differences-shoals which were never cleared away in all the years of the union movement. The great Cleveland Conference of Oct. 1885, was proceeding in ^{The} ~~an~~ amity and concord which had been keynoted by Wise and Lesser in the opening session until "Wise revealed the basic differences of approach when he presented to the Conference his Minhag America, and as men began to consider the reform character of this work, basic differences became clear. Then charges and counter-charges began to flow thick and fast... Even Lesser (said) ... that the cause of Union had been damaged because the reformers had taken control of the project and had forced through a broad religious platform which in essence backed the spirit of reform" (22) In the various siddurim of the reform leaders which appeared in the fifties Merzbacher's Seder Tefillah which was published about 1855 and Einhorn's ^(see 158) Olat Tamid, it was evident for the first time to even the most optimistic of the pro-union moderates that though at present the

practice was similar, ultimately there was that motivation and spirit in the reform camp which would take it far beyond the limits of acculturation ~~into~~ ^{into paths wherein} ~~that~~ ^{not} the traditionalists would/care to go.

The pro-union men were thus building on very weak foundations- on the gamble that the American social milieu would stay fairly constant and that the radical German trained reformers would not be able to win any substantial following here. For where ~~was~~ ^{Wise} was willing to meet Leiser half way holding the Bible to be "the revealed word of God, given to us by divine inspiration" (23) and considering the Talmud as "The logical and legal development of Holy Scripture (whose) decisions must bind us in all matters of practice and duty" (24); David Einhorn was not. Indeed Wise's espousal of the authority of the Talmud was at best dictated by the necessities of the union situation rather than any systematic theology on his part. Indeed the very reforms he introduced: mixed ~~men~~ choirs, family pews and an organ for the service; and the deletions which he made in his prayerbook did much to take his own congregation beyond the point where they would ever accept the reimpositions of customs and ideas which any full partnership with the conservative forces would demand. Because of these growing number of reforms an area of misunderstanding began to grow between the lay members of the various kehillahs, which contributed in the end mightily to the historical necessity of the split. One came to consider the other as hopelessly behind the times, bound by emotion, and prone to believe rationally unacceptable and apparently foolish doctrine; while the other group looked on horrified at the tampering with the Holy Law and considered such Judaism deformed and not reformed. Added to this we must consider the fact that the Jew in America had to adjust to two very dissimilar social situations; one in the more ^{thickly} Jewishly populated Eastern cities where

a more intensely old-world Jewish life was possible, and one to the smaller Jewish communities of the mid-west where the Jew had to assimilate more completely into the Christian environment. Distance itself becomes in time a barrier to understanding, It permits the wildest rumors and stories to circulate unchecked etc. One other factor ought to be mentioned which helped create a feeling of mistrust between the two groups; a gradual social cleavage between the wealthy and the not so wealthy who were not so anxious to be accepted as equals by the more advanced of their neighbors.

While this gradually widening differentiation was growing on the congregational level, the religious and intellectual leaders began to systematize and formalize their particular approaches to religious belief. During the first two decades after the Civil War it was the reform ideology and practice that made the greatest headway. Thus by 1881.. the vast majority of the congregations in the country were either reform or definitely on the way²⁵⁾ This contributed in part to the stability which the Union-College alliance was able to hold over American Judaism for a decade and a half and made inevitable the failure of Leeser's organizational attempts of a generation earlier. Thus Maimonides College died almost in childbirth⁽²⁶⁾, the Board of Delegates was eventually amalgamated into the Union⁽²⁷⁾, and the Jewish Publication Society died without having had too glorious a career.⁽²⁸⁾ Yet even Wise's creations lost their supremacy once a new wave of immigrants began to replenish the numbers of the traditionalists ^{with men who} ~~and~~ were socially and economically and culturally ready and eager for the gospel which Kohut, Szold, Jastrow, and Henry Pereira Mendes began to preach to them with renewed vigor. Terefa banquet or no terefa banquet, the supremacy of the College-Union nexus had to give way in the middle eighties because of three main underlying factor

- 1) the emergence for the first time of a strong, popular traditional Judaism with a dynamic leadership and active following all its own.
- 2) the movement of the reform group far down the path towards assimilation and its gradual removal from the pale of Jewish confraternity together with the supercedence in power and popular approval of the former moderate leaders by the Eastern radicals who followed the lead of Dr. Einhorn.
- 3) the basic illegitimacy of the marriage between the two moderate groups who once the honeymoon was over began to recognize that they represented two dissimilar patterns and philosophies of life and in large measure could not even communicate with one another because of language difficulties, social distance and mutual mistrust.

In view of all these factors it is not surprising that the break of 1885-86 took place or that it occurred with such an intensity AND finality. The logic of events had rendered a single American Judaism for the moment impossible. The Union continued to function more because the conservatives lacked for the moment dynamic leadership who could appreciate the new turn of events, then because it continued to represent the wishes of most American Jews. It existed on an uneasy base. There was always the fear that Wise would have to give in to the pressure of the radicals -as he did at Pittsburgh, which would be more than anything else the signal ^{that} ~~that~~ the end of an era was at hand. If Kohler, Hirsch, and co. could take the play away from Dr. Wise; Kohut, Henry Pereira Mendes, and Morais the corresponding extremists of the traditionalists would be able to gain large support for their demands to break once and for all with this 'non-Jewish' group and form a seminary and a congregational union of their own. Wise and Lillienthal on the one hand and Szold and Jastrow on the other:

began to find it increasingly difficult to straddle the fence. Events were forcing the choice of one side or another.

All these pressures were boiling beneath the surface; yet as late as 1883, on the surface at least, harmony and unity seemed to prevail. It was the quiet before the storm. A tempest which broke with a terrible fury casting Wise's pleas for sanity and calmness, his protestations that the College represented "the catholicity of Jewish interests"(29), his earnest attempts to avoid the domination of the Einhornites, his willingness to make compromises with the traditionalists; aside as easily as chaff. These were earnest and sincere attempts by a man to plug the dike with his head after the whole levy has been broken through. It was but a case of a leader being passed by new sociological and cultural forces whose emergence and strength he neither foresaw nor fully understood.

It was primarily a case of the reversion of two separate and distinct groups to that level of religious and cultural life which was most in keeping with their station, interests, background, and convictions. It was a rendering of an artificial milieu, for more normal and natural patterns of life. It was an inevitable split. No single hand, no matter how powerful, could have for long stayed the tide. The speed and dispatch with which the dam broke should, indeed, be taken as an indication of the intensity of the pressures which it had been restraining. For in a little over a year's time, the whole congregational organizational unity had been dissolved; two such old time friends as Jastrow and Wise had become engaged in a battle over the efficacy and relevance of the dietary regulations which caused Rodeph Shalom and several other Eastern conservative synagogues to withdraw from the Union; (30) the American Hebrew had embarked

on a long vitriolic crusade against reform using the mixed choir as the battle cry;(31)even Dr. Szold whose congregation had refused to quit the Union had been drawn into a public debate with Samuel Hirsch over the Sunday Services(32). In addition, two young dynamic and forceful leaders had emerged in both camps and had engaged in a public controversy which carried them into positions of leadership within their respective groups and made issues crystal clear. "e refer,of course, to the Kohler-Kohut exchange of the Summer months of 1885 which were the talk of the nation as well as of New York City.(33) As a result of this debate Dr. Kohler was in a position to force Wise to call the Pittsburgh Rabbinical Conference of Nov. of that year in order that the reform position might be clarified, and once at the Conference he was able because of its small representation and his forceful personality to force through a platform consonant with his views. After this the die was cast. This was the point of no return. Hegelianism, Anti-Zionism, anti-Talmudism did not sit well with even the most lenient of the traditionalists. As the Rev. Henry S. Jacobs wrote immediately after the Conference:

This vaunting of infidelity,hardly cloaked under showy rhetorical utterance,tends to break the bonds of concord and unity, and compels the question to be put to every honest, God-fearing Israelite,which must be answered by his heart and conscience: 'Art thou for us or for our adversaries?'(34)

While Sabato Morais began to formulate the battle cry of separation as "he argued the impossibility of maintaining historical Judaism, if persons entertaining the opinions enunciated at the Pittsburgh Conference were to instruct the youth,more especially the rising rabbis of America. He expressed his disappointment with the Hebrew Union College and strenuously advocated the formation of an institution for training young Israel to the ministry on principles thoroughly conservative."35) In vain did Wise try to disassociate the College from the Pittsburgh stand:

The College remains steadfast upon its traditional basis. The law which Moses commanded us is the inheritance of the Congregation of Jacob, and no deviation from the divine spirit, as it reveals itself in Israel's prophets and sacred history; as it re-echoes in the literary treasures of our great and immortal teachers of all centuries of history; as it proclaims itself loudly and emphatically in the reason and conscience of all good men. No evolution; development is the watchword. No deviation; continuation is the key-note. The spirit remains unchanged. (36)

Too many reformers agreed with Kohler, and the Conservative movement was tired of a long and profitless compromise-in which it was making all the adjustments and was also beginning for the first time to feel a strength and life all its own. Issues were now sharply drawn, The union which had been made possible only in measure as basic differences were obfuscated was no longer possible. It took a surprisingly short time for the traditionalists to reassert their independence and found an Association for the establishment of a truly traditional seminary. It would take several decades before the full strength of the new immigration waves gave Conservatism anything which could compare with parity with the reform movement. But from 1886 on, traditionalism would be master of its own destiny here in America.

"here does the terefa banquet fit into this picture. It appears now most bizarre to ascribe to it any importance beyond that of another in a series of events which contributed to a general uneasiness and helped set the stage for the final breakdown. There must have been many other such incidents between leaders and lay people of the various factions. But whatever its role it was not the opening of the movement which led to the split, the roots of this go far back into the past, nor was it an important catalytic agent, otherwise the split should have occurred in 1883-1884 and not a year later. Apparently, it was just another of a series of friction points,

which appear at many points along a levy before it finally breaks. Its historical importance lies more in that it was singled out by one writer, rather than in any intrinsic merit of its own.



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Footnotes

- 1) Fay, Sidney B., Origins of The World War, New York, 1928, p.3.
- 2) The early stages of this development may be traced in The Struggle For Unity, Buchler, Joseph, Epitomized in The American Jewish Archives, vol. 11 no.1 pp21-38.
- 3) Thus Meirais was on the Board of Examiners of the College and Szold and Jastrow were both invited to give toasts upon the occasion of the first Ordination. cf. Cohon, Samuel S., The History of The Hebrew Union College, American Jewish Historical Society vol XI Part 1. pp 17-55.
- 4) cf. Davis, Moshe, Jewish Religious Life and Institutions (Ank Historica Study, in The Jews Ed. Finkelstein, J.P.S. 1949, vol. 1, pp354-443.
- 5) American Israelite, July 6, 1883, p.5.
- 6) Buchler, op.cit., p.24.
- 7) The Messenger, July 20, 1883 p.7,
- 8) American Israelite, July 6, 1883 p. 1.
- 9) The Messenger, July 27, 1883. p4.
- 10) Philipson, David, My Life As An American Jew, Cincinnati, 1941. pp22ff.
- 11) Ibid, p. 23.
- 12) Cohon, op.cit., p.34.
- 13) cf. Cohon, op.cit. Note 33.
- 14) David, Op.cit., pp388-89.
- 15) Philipson. Op.cit. p23.
- 16) Tarshish, Allen, The American Jewish Community, p.122.
- 17) The Messenger, July 13, 1883, p 5.
- 18) The Messenger, July, 13, 1883, p 6.
- 19) Ibid., p 3.
- 20) The Messenger, July 27, 1883. p6.
- 21) Ibid.
- 22) Buchler, Op.cit., p. 30.
- 23) Ibid. p 30
- 24) Ibid. p.30.
- 25) Tarshish, Op.cit., p. 122.

Footnotes con't.

- 26) Only four men were graduated in the six years (1867-1873) of its existence.
- 27) In 1879.
- 28) It lasted five years until all its plates and assets were destroyed by fire.
- 29) Davis, op.cit., p 387.
- 30) Op.cit., p 386.
- 31) Ibid.
- 32) Ibid. 385.
- 33) Dr. Kohut's arguments were contained in a series of sermons on the Pirke Aboth and Dr. Kohler's can be found in Backwards or Forwards
- 34) American Hebrew, Nov. 27, 1885.
- 35) Feinberg, Abba, The Rise of Conservatism p. 12.
- 36) Wise, Isaac Mayer, Proceedings V.A.H.C., vol 111 (1886-91) p2053.



I found the
essay

JACOB RADER MARCUS

JRM

March 3, 1970

Dr. Jacob Rader Marcus
HUC-JIR
401 McAlpin Avenue
Cincinnati, Ohio 45220

Dear Jacob:

Thank you for sending me a paper from the past. It came at a good time when I am feeling the aches and pains of a long winter and needed a bit of my youth. Everyone is well here. Again my thanks.

Sincerely,

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER