



# CHICAGO JEWISH History

## Prof. Paula Pfeffer to Deliver First Orlinsky Talk

Paula Pfeffer, associate professor of history at Loyola University of Chicago, will deliver the first in a series of annual lectures honoring the memory of long-time Society Board member and well-known Chicago activist Elsie Orlinsky.

Pfeffer's talk is titled, "A Home for Every Baby, a Baby for Every Home: Jewish adoption in Chicago."

Pfeffer will speak at Loyola *(continued on page 3)*

## Zionist Odd Couple:

*When Chaim Weizman Persuaded Albert Einstein to Join Him in a Lecture Tour that Brought the Two Men to Chicago, He Set in Motion One of the More Unlikely Pairings in Zionist Activity History*

By Walter Roth

Chicago saw many of Europe's most prominent Zionists pass through in the early decades of the century, but it is possible the most unusual pair of all was Albert Einstein and Chaim Weizman. When Aaron Aaronsohn, Shmariyahu Levin, Vladimir Jabotinsky, and Weizman himself came to Chicago, each was a seasoned Zionist speaker and a public figure whose political positions would have been familiar to most in their audiences. Einstein, in contrast, was a Zionist unknown. The most famous scientist in the world, he was only just beginning *(continued on page 4)*

## Alex Goldman Named Sixth Winner of the Minsky Award for Memoir of Self and Father

Rabbi Alex J. Goldman has won the 1996 Doris Minsky Memorial Award. His manuscript, *My Father, Myself: A Son's Memoir of his Father, Rabbi Yehuda D. Goldman*, will be published and distributed to all Society members by this Fall.

Goldman's memoir is essentially a biography crossed with an autobiography. In it, he recounts his own experiences growing up in Chicago, training for the rabbinate, and serving as one of the country's leading conservative

*(continued on page 12)*

### Inside:

- Oral History Excerpt of Conversation with Rabbi Leonard Mishkin
- Fragments of the Life of Chicago Rabbi Chaim Mednick
- Jewish War Veterans Celebrate Centennial

# President's Column



Walter Roth

While not to be located in Chicago, a new center for Jewish Learning and Culture being built in New York City should be a great resource for Chicago-based scholars, teachers, and students of every facet of American Jewish history, scholarship, art, and culture.

The new institution is called The Center for Jewish History, and, by the end of 1997, it will house the collections of four national Jewish organizations: The American Jewish Historical Society, which specializes in American Jewry and of which our Society is an affiliate; the Leo Baeck Institute, which concentrates on German-speaking Jewry; the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, which focuses on East European Jewish History; and the Yeshiva University Museum, dedicated to interpreting Jewish art, culture, and history.

These four major resources will be housed together in a new edifice being formed out of two existing Manhattan buildings located on 116th and 117th streets, just west of Fifth Avenue.

The Center will house over 80 million archival items, 500,000 library volumes, and thousands of artworks and artifacts.

Some people are already referring to it as the "Library of Congress and Smithsonian Institution of the Jewish people." It should prove to be an unparalleled resource for the country and the world.

For communities such as ours, the technical infrastructure being designed for the Center should be of great value. A tailored computer network should make it possible for Chicagoans to access the collections by computer.

The Center already plans to provide a number of Internet resources, including digitized archives and computerized databases that will further the work of local researchers, students, and historical societies.

The Center promises to be a resource for the entire country, and I look forward

to seeing the many uses to which members of our Society and other Chicago-area historians can put it.

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Closer to home, however, I have news of sadness to report. As 1996 drew to a close, Chicago lost one of its great Jewish scholars, Rabbi Leonard Mishkin.

On December 29, 1996, Rabbi Mishkin died tragically. He held various leadership roles as a teacher and administrator in the Orthodox Jewish community, but was equally noted for his historical collections.

He was a national authority on American Jewish history, and he owned a comprehensive library of Yiddish and Hebrew publications, many of them originating in Chicago.

Both as a tribute to his memory and as a means of presenting accounts of Chicago Jewish history, we are publishing an excerpt of an oral history he gave to Society members in 1978, and we are also publishing an account of the life of Rabbi Chaim Mednick that Rabbi Mishkin had a hand in recovering from obscurity. See page 12 for the oral history excerpt and page 8 for the article on Rabbi Mednick.

We extend our deepest sympathies to Rabbi Mishkin's family and many friends. □

## Letters:

### To the Society:

In the last edition of *Chicago Jewish History* (Vol. 21, No. 7, Fall, 1996), I found some errors and/or oversights in the oral history excerpts of *Sentinel's* Jack Fishbein.

In column one on page 9, I believe that in listing Chicago newspapers at the time, Mr. Fishbein omitted the *Chicago Evening Post* and the *Herald-Examiner*. The editor should have made a note to that effect.

In column 2, in listing Yiddish newspapers in Chicago, Fishbein could not recall the name of the newspaper at 12th and Halsted. The editor's note in parenthesis states that it was the *Morn-*

*ing Journal*. Wrong. It was the *Jewish Courier* located at 1214 South Halsted Street.

The *Morning Journal* was a Yiddish periodical (daily) available by subscription or on the newstands in Chicago but published in New York. (A Mr. Milner was a Chicago representative for that newspaper.)

The *Jewish Daily Forward* was published in Chicago (The Chicago Edition), and was located in its own building on the corner of Kedzie Avenue and 13th Street. The exact address was 1256 South Kedzie Avenue. Jacob Siegel was the editor of the Chicago edition. Morris Seskind was the labor editor.

On page 10 of the same article,

Mr. Fishbein says, "My mother came from ... Poland called Plaunch." The correct spelling should be "Plonsk," from the Russian. His father's home town should be spelled "Stashov" – not "Stasich." You should find both of these towns listed in the *Shtetl Finder* and perhaps Dr. Irving Cutler's recent book should have those *shtetlach* listed.

In fact, Chicago had two large *landmenshaften*: one was the *Plonsker Verein* and the other was the Independent *Stashover Verein*.

I sincerely hope that the mistakes will be corrected so that the archival data will not have these errors.

—Fagel R. Unterman

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## Pfeffer

*continued from page one*

University's Crown Center Auditorium on February 9. The talk begins at 2 p.m., and there will be a social hour starting at 1 p.m.

Loyola Hillel is co-sponsoring the talk and will be providing both the hall and some of the refreshments.

Pfeffer's areas of specialization are United States history and sociology of ethnic group leadership. She has written often about A Philip

Randolph, a founder of the civil rights movement.

In addition, she is at work on a biography of Esther Loeb Kohn, a descendant of a pioneer Jewish family who worked closely with immigrant communities in conjunctions with Jane Addams of Hull House.

Pfeffer has previously taught at Mundelein College, Northwestern, and Northeastern Illinois. She received her B.A. and M.A. from Northeastern and her Ph.D. from Northwestern in 1980.

Elsie Orlinsky was a founding board member and a long-time active member of the Society.

Her family and friends have established the Elsie Orlinsky Fund as a means of celebrating her life and adding to the telling of Chicago Jewish history.

The Fund provides an honorarium for an annual talk given on some aspect of Jewish history.

There is no charge for the talk and it is open to the public. We encourage members to attend and to bring guests with them. □

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## Board Member Dr. N. Sue Weiler to Chair Oral History

The Society announces with pleasure that board member Dr. N. Sue Weiler has agreed to assume the chair of our oral history committee.

Weiler takes over leadership of the project from long-time board member and chair Sidney Sorkin.

Sorkin has recently resigned from the board, but he remains an active member and an active participant in the oral history project.

The Society's oral history project is an effort to have individuals recount their experiences in a less formal historical setting.

Oral histories often afford glimpses of unusual professions, recollections of overlooked individuals and events, and unusual perspectives on more familiar happenings.

While tracking down and interviewing appropriate subjects is obviously a central part of what the committee does, it does a great deal of other work as well.

Many of the oral histories taken by Society members over the last 20 years have never been transcribed from their original audio tape.

In addition, the Society has only just begun to index our oral histories;

without such time-consuming work, much of the information remains inaccessible to historians who might be interested in it.

In one effort to make the material of the oral histories more widely available, the Society recently turned over stewardship of them to the Asher Library of the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies.

Anyone interested in examining our existing oral history collection can do so by going to 618 South Michigan Avenue, Fifth Floor.

Anyone interested in volunteering to help in the Society's effort to continue the oral history project should contact the Society office at (312) 663-5634. □

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## Cutler Book Wins Best Book Award

Society Board member Irving Cutler's book, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb*, has won first place for Best Regional Book by the Mid-America Publishers Association.

Cutler's book has enjoyed remarkable sales and has received a number of favorable reviews.

It remains on sale at bookstores throughout the Chicago area.

The entire Society congratulates him and the University of Illinois Press on the honor. □

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## Information Request: Seeking Materials on Synagogues of the Old West Side

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society is seeking information about the synagogues that were operational on Chicago's West Side.

As part of a project to preserve the history of the many large and small congregations that flourished on the West Side in the early half of this century, we are interested in hearing from anyone with historical accounts or archival material.

While the greater Lawndale area is the focus of the project, we are interested in material about other synagogues from the West Side as well.

Such material might include synagogue documents, architectural studies or details, photos, or memorabilia of any sort. If you have unusual or peculiar items, please let us know. One can never be certain what detail might help unlock a larger mystery.

We are also seeking a local photographer interested in working on this project.

Please contact Society board member Bea Kraus at (312) 663-5634, or by e-mail at [BKWriter@aol.com](mailto:BKWriter@aol.com) if you have anything you believe might be useful. □

# Zionists

*continued from page one*

to speak publicly about Zionism when he appeared in Chicago in 1921.

While Weizman was a popular speaker and beloved Zionist figure – he would eventually become the first President of the State of Israel – it was Einstein who drew the interest of English-language newspapers during the pair's Chicago stay. From his publication of the general theory of relativity in 1905 through a succession of scientific triumphs culminating in the 1921 Nobel Prize, Einstein awoke a broad wonder in Jews and non-Jews across the world. Still a relatively young man, he was widely credited with devising the most significant step forward in physics since Newton.

The story of their partnership and their Chicago visit marks another chapter in the story of Zionism's coming to Chicago.

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The unlikely pair may have come together, but they had separate agendas and separate motives. Einstein spoke on behalf of raising funds for the new Hebrew University in Jerusalem, while Weizman sought to inaugurate a new organization, Keren Hayesod, dedicated to rebuilding the land of Palestine.

Both men shared an interest in Jewish culture, however, and both were distinguished scientists. Although Einstein's accomplishments dwarfed Weizman's, the eventual president of Israel had discovered a potent explosive which was helpful to the British in their war efforts during World War I.

Where Weizman turned the bulk of his energies to politics, however, Einstein continued working chiefly as a scientist. Weizman had become the leader of the European Zionist Movement, with much of his influence stemming from the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917 in which the British declared their support for a Jewish national home in Palestine. Weizman, by 1921, was highly involved in Zionist politics and in the struggle for the overall leadership of the American Zionist Organization with the Louis Brandeis group.

The Chicago mission was an unlikely one for Einstein, however. He was not only a non-observant Jew, but he was naive politically, a pacifist, and an anti-nationalist.

Weizman had not known Einstein personally before

the two men began discussing the trip. However, he was soon alerted to the possible benefits to his mission if someone of Einstein's repute would join him on a forthcoming trip to the United States. Einstein had impressed Weizman in his stand against German anti-Semitism and his wish for the creation of a Hebrew University in Palestine. A brief look at Einstein's early professional life will serve to clarify how Einstein came to Zionism.

\* \* \*

Einstein was born of German-Jewish parents in Ulm, Germany in 1879. His early school years were spent in Munich and then for some years in Zurich, Switzerland.

Beginning in 1902 he held a pedestrian job as an engineer in the Swiss Patent Office. It was during this period that he began to develop much of the work for which he is best remembered, including "The Special

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Theory of Relativity."

From 1909 to 1911 he was a professor at the University of Zurich, from where he moved to Prague. In 1914, he was appointed Professor of the Prussian Academy of Science in Berlin.

During World War I, his pacifistic views brought him into conflict with the pro-war sentiments sweeping Germany and the resurgent anti-Semitism which came during and after the War. He saw first-hand the oppression of East European Jews and became convinced that a national home was the only solution for the plight of East European Jews.

Einstein was urged by non-affiliated Jewish colleagues to resist Zionist overtures on the grounds that Zionism made assimilation more difficult. Such colleagues argued, as would many in the United States, that Zionism threatened Jews by asserting that they were different from other people in the countries in which they lived.

Although Einstein did not immediately declare himself a Zionist, he made clear his distaste for such arguments. On April 3, 1920, he sent his now famous letter to the "Central Association of German Citizens of the Mosaic Faith" decrying Jewish self-hatred:

I am a Jew and glad to belong to the Jewish people, even if I do not consider them in any way God's elect. Let us calmly leave anti-Semitism to the non-Jews and retain our love for people of our kind.

Later he wrote to another German Jewish group:

The German Jew who works for the Jewish people and for the Jewish home in Palestine no more ceases to be a German than the Jew who becomes baptized and changes his name ceases to be Jew.

Einstein's views soon reached the headquarters of Chaim Weizman in London, where he functioned as the *de facto* European leader of the Zionist movement. At that time, in 1920, Weizman was planning the trip to the United States to raise funds for the Keren Hayesod.

Thinking he needed additional scope for his mission, he urged Einstein to come along; Einstein's role would focus on raising funds for a Hebrew University and Weizman for the Keren Hayesod.

To the surprise of everyone, Einstein quickly accepted Weizman's offer.

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Einstein, it was said, had no idea of what he was getting into. He had little knowledge of Zionist "realpolitik," was naive politically and highly idealistic, while Weizman was "overbearing and politically ruthless." Weizman was also locked in the epic political struggle with Louis Brandeis and his group for control of the American Zionist Organization. The Brandeis group disapproved of the creation of the Keren Hayesod and Weizman's fund raising efforts in America. Einstein, untouched by these polemics, blithely left Berlin for Holland on March 21, 1924 with his second wife and first cousin, Elsa. There they embarked on the liner Rotterdam and were joined by Chaim Weizman and his spouse.

During the sea voyage, Weizman wryly wrote: "Einstein explained his theory of relativity to me every day and on my arrival I was fully convinced that he understood it."

At the liner's arrival in New York City, the group received a tremendous reception from political leaders and masses of Jews. "What the crowds saw at the top of the gangway was Weizman, smiling but stiff, almost a model of Lenin in physical features as in single



**Chaim Weizman (second from left) and Albert Einstein (fourth) on April 2, 1921 as they arrive for their U.S. tour. Also pictured (from left) M. M. Ussishkin, Zionist leader; Vera Weizman; Elsa Einstein; and Ben Zion Mossinson, principal of the Jaffe College**

mindedness, and beside him the shorter features of Einstein."

Einstein wore a faded gray overcoat and a black hat. He looked like an artist, a musician, wrote one reporter. "He is of medium height with strongly built shoulders, but with no air of fragility and self-effacement. Under a broad, high forehead the large and luminous eyes were almost childlike in their simplicity and unworldliness."

The American tour now began. Naive as he was said to be, Einstein quickly limited his role to fundraising for The Hebrew University and excluded the intra-Zionist polemics. Most of all, he spent his efforts in lectures on "The Theory of Relativity" made to the American academic world.

From New York the group went to Washington, D.C., where Einstein visited President Harding with a group from the National Academy of Sciences, at whose annual dinner Einstein spoke.

On May 2, 1921, Weizman and Einstein arrived in Chicago, where they quickly went their separate ways. While Weizman and his chief lieutenant, M.M. Ussishkin, went to the East European Jewish immigrant community of Chicago's West Side for parades, demonstrations, and speeches, Einstein departed for the calmer intellectual world of Chicago's leading university, the University of Chicago, with professors from different universities attending his lectures.

Also on May 2, 1921, the *Chicago Tribune* announced Einstein's arrival under the headline "Dr. Einstein Here Today to Explain His Relativity." The

newspaper wrote that Einstein was to lecture for the next three days, at the University of Chicago, with lectures of one hour each at Mandel Hall. "Dr. Einstein, who is in Chicago in the interest of a drive for funds for the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, now being erected on the Mount of Olives, maintains that a conception of relativity cannot be properly expounded in less than three hours, and has steadfastly refused to undertake treatment of the subject in less time."

The *Tribune* concluded by noting: "The famous scientist will be a guest at a reception tonight at the home of Max Epstein, 4906 Greenwood Avenue."

On the next day, the *Tribune* headlined its story of Einstein, "Audience Sinks Into Einstein Relativity Sea." It also displayed a large picture of Einstein and his wife under a banner headline, "World's Smartest Man?"

The *Tribune* wrote that the audience listened to Einstein explain "The Theory of Relativity." "The scientists looked, listened and partly understood. The rest of the audience just looked and listened." While Einstein spoke in simple German, it was reported that the audience was soon lost.

Einstein also spoke highly of University of Chicago Professor and Nobel Laureate Albert Michelson and his work "in connection with measurements." He also offered high praise for Professor Robert Milliken of the University of Chicago. Both were scientists of world-wide fame.

The *Tribune* also reported that Einstein was scheduled to speak to high school students at the Francis Parker School the next morning on the subject "scientific research." Years later a Parker booklet described the event as "Morning Exercises with Albert Einstein." In the Fall, 1996 issue of *Parker* magazine, Madi Bacon recalled the talk as bewildering but "fun."

*The Sentinel*, Chicago's Jewish English weekly, covered Einstein's arrival in Chicago in great detail, while largely ignoring Weizman's activities. It noted that Einstein had arrived with his wife and a secretary, Mr. Ginsburg, the son of Ahad HaAm (a great Zionist leader and well-known Hebrew author). A committee of fifteen university people had gone to the railroad station to meet Einstein. In addition, a group of "Hadassah girls headed by Miss Shulman presented a bouquet of flowers to Mrs. Einstein."

The Einsteins were then driven to the Auditorium Hotel, where the *Sentinel* reporter was given a special

interview. The reporter quoted Einstein as stating: "If the Chicago Jews will respond to my appeal on behalf of the University, I will be the happiest man on earth."

Einstein said that he was pleasantly surprised at the generosity displayed by the American Jews. "They are liberal-minded and generous and take a deep interest in the life of our people abroad."

Einstein left Chicago after three days, bound for Princeton University for a week of lecturing, before returning to Europe.

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Chicago's leading Yiddish newspaper of strong Zionist sentiments, the *Jewish Courier*, representing Eastern European Jewry, barely covered Einstein's arrival in its editions, merely giving a short history of his life and accomplishments. Weizman's and Ussishkin's

mission, however, was widely covered and strongly supported editorially. Their portraits were carried under the caption "Welcome - Leaders in Israel." It also printed welcoming messages

from Chicago Mayor William Thompson and Illinois Governor Lennington Small.

After Princeton, Einstein returned to Germany, and his first mission to America was called a success even though his role as a fundraiser had been disappointing. Two years later, Einstein visited Palestine with great fanfare, but this too did not end well when he came into conflict with political problems in the Zionist movement; and, in years to come, he also retreated from playing an active role at the Hebrew University.

In the early 1930s Einstein left Nazi Germany and came to the United States, taking up a professorship at Princeton. He visited Chicago a number of times after that, and his role with American scientific efforts in peace and wartime are well-known. But his first trip to Chicago in 1921 was the memorable event that introduced Einstein to the United States and showed the pride American Jews felt in having a claim on the "most famous man in the world."

An interesting, final footnote to the Einstein-Weizman mission came in 1952 when David Ben-Gurion looked to appoint someone to be the second President of Israel. Wanting someone with world-wide eminence, he offered the appointment to Einstein. Flattered, Einstein nevertheless declined the honor. Israel's first President, of course, had been Weizman, the man who first initiated him into Zionist activity. □

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*Weizman wryly wrote: "Einstein explained his theory of relativity to me every day and on my arrival I was fully convinced that he understood it."*

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## Diana Haskell Shares History of Piano Virtuoso

Before a sizeable crowd at Temple Sholom for the October 27, 1996 Society bi-monthly meeting, Diana Haskell, Lloyd Lewis Curator of Modern Manuscripts at the Newberry Library, spoke about the life of Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler, one of the most famous pianists in Chicago history.

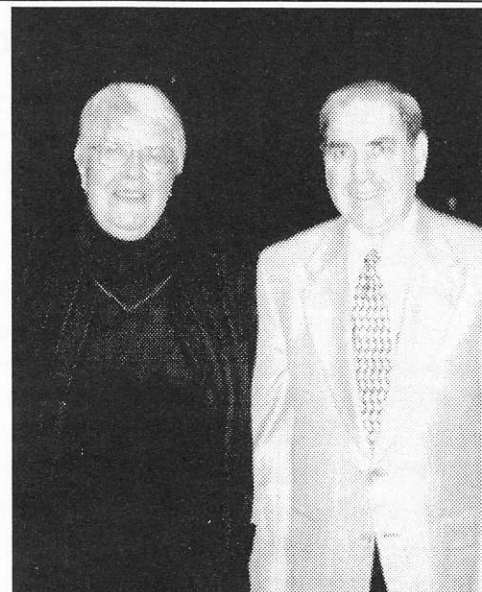
Although born in Austria, Bloomfield-Zeisler immigrated to Chicago at an early age. While she returned to Europe to finish her studies, she came to her greatest fame as a Chicagoan.

While not a member of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Bloomfield-Zeisler performed frequently with the CSO as a guest artist.

She performed in a similar capacity with orchestras all around the world.

Haskell recounted that Bloomfield-Zeisler overcame a reputation for frailty. While she was a student, at least one instructor thought she would be unable to withstand the rigors of top-flight orchestral playing, and he refused to work with her.

Years later, Haskell reported, the same instructor acknowledged that he could not have been more mistaken: she was undoubtedly world-class. □



**Diana Haskell and Society Vice-President Burt Robin**

Photograph by Norman Schwartz

## Society Membership Reaches All-Time High of Over 600

We are pleased to announce that last year's successful new membership drive has culminated in our growing larger than at any time in our twenty-year history.

Under the creative leadership of co-chairs Elise Ginsparg and Mark Mandle and with considerable support from long-time board member Clare Greenberg, we have had four successive strong quarters of growth. Our current membership total stands well above 600, a mark we have approached in the past, but never maintained consistently.

While we hope to continue growing, it seems appropriate to reflect on how remarkable it is for any all-volunteer association to survive and grow over a more than two-decade period.

Throughout our existence, we have had success at recruiting new members, but we have at times lacked the infrastructure to retain them all. With the limited resources we have, it is difficult for us to make repeated appeals to

members who have allowed their memberships to lapse, and it is difficult for us to target potential groups of new members.

We grow the same way we operate. We rely on the strengths and energies of our current members. Such an approach means that each of us bears the burden of perpetuating the Society, but it has the virtue that we each have a real and working stake in who we are. Everything we accomplish comes from the energy and creativity of our members.

As Society President Walter Roth said, "For an organization composed of all volunteers and without any major funding, we do remarkable work. When most people see the talks we present, the publications we put out, the newsletter we write, and the general presence we maintain, they have no idea that we are able to do so much with so few resources."

We look forward to continuing our growth in 1997, and we invite each of you to consider giving memberships in the Society to family, friends, neighbors, and others who share an interest in our subject and who might appreciate being part of our shared enterprise. □

## Society Welcomes New Members

In keeping with the success we had throughout the entire year in attracting new members, we are pleased to announce our most recent new members.

We survive as an organization only through the creativity and resources of our members.

Our newest members include the following:

*Charles Block  
Sandra Bornstein  
Stuart Brafman  
Pat Braus  
William Fishbein  
Bernice Fried  
Dr. & Mrs. James Gold  
Jack Goodman  
Faye Grossman  
Mr. & Mrs. Jerold Heckman  
Steven Kailer  
H.G. Karries*

*Mr. & Mrs. Charles Kraut  
Lester Levinson  
Jane Melnich-Stengel  
Ned Miller  
Mr. & Mrs. Harry Price  
Helen Rosenberg  
Dr. Samuel Schall  
Maurice Sweryn  
Mr. & Mrs. Burton Wax  
Hugo Wolf*

We know that all of our present and continuing members join us in welcoming them to the Society.

We look forward not merely to sharing our work and our projects, but to learning from them as well.

As always, we encourage you to think about giving Society memberships as gifts. We also encourage you to join us at our bi-monthly meetings and to consider contributing material to our newsletter publication. □

## Nearly Forgotten Volume Begins to Recall Legacy of Rabbi Chaim Mednick

*The following essay was written by an anonymous contributor as an introduction to a collection of writings by Rabbi Chaim Mednick. Mednick lived in Chicago from 1925 until his death in 1955, and was a leading figure in the Orthodox community. He was rabbi of Congregation Agudas Achim and then of Congregation Machazike Hadat.*

*Society board member and past President Norman Schwartz recounts that he first heard of Rabbi Mednick from Rabbi Leonard Mishkin, an excerpt of whose oral history appears on page 13 of this issue. According to Schwartz, Mishkin was concerned that Mednick's contributions to Chicago Jewish history had not received their due*

*"Rabbi Mishkin told me that Rabbi Mednick had written a book that was in the library of the Hebrew Theological College," Schwartz said. "When I went to the library, though, I couldn't find the book, and I couldn't find it in the card catalogue.*

*"I told Rabbi Mishkin I hadn't been able to find it," Schwartz continued, "and he insisted on showing me himself where it was. Sure enough, without needing to look it up in the catalogue, he went right to the spot on the shelf where the book was kept, and he pulled it down for me. It's possible the book would simply have been lost on that shelf if he hadn't thought to talk about it."*

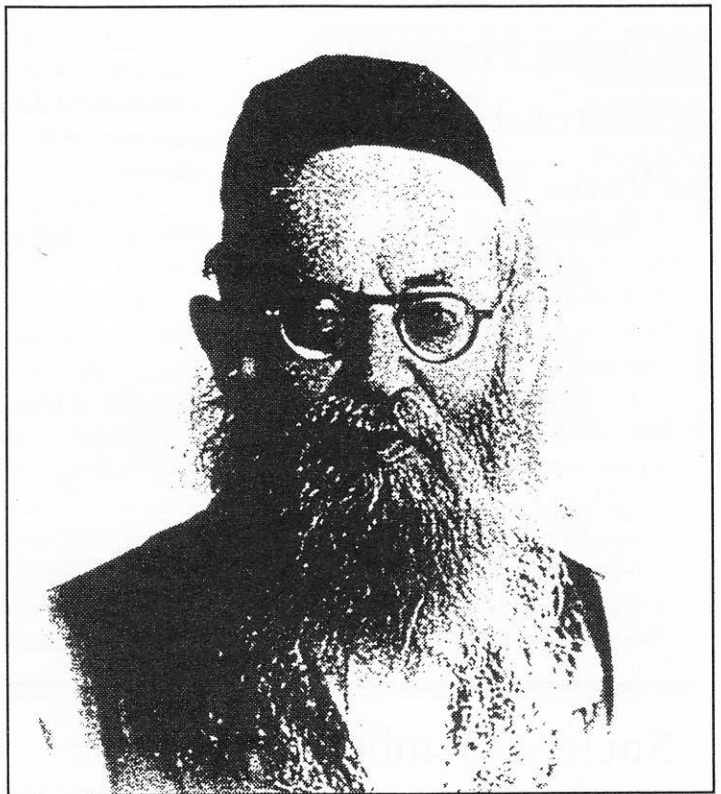
*In another unlikely occurrence, it is worth noting that Rabbi Mednick was both friend and predecessor at Machazike Hadas of Rabbi Yehuda Goldman, the father of Rabbi Alex Goldman and the subject of his Minsky-Award-winning manuscript [see page one].*

*Society member Moshe Davidson recently translated this essay from the Yiddish as a service to the Society and as a means of preserving Rabbi Mednick's memory.*

Among the outstanding Torah scholars and mighty spiritual giants in the United States whose splendor inspired its inhabitants and brought them close to G-d in heaven is the Gaon and Tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Mednick of blessed memory, the author of the sefer under review.

Harav Rabbi Chaim Mednick was born in 5638 (1878) in Shirvint in the province of Vilna, the son of the distinguished Rabbi Shmuel, a noted leader of the community. In his childhood he became famous for the unique talents he displayed.

From Shirvint he moved to a center of Jewish learn-



ing, to the famous yeshiva in Mir and studied there with the head of the yeshiva, Harav Hagaon Baruch Kamai of blessed memory. He was in frequent attendance at the Slobodke Yeshiva where he studied Torah with the Hagaon Rabbi Moshe Mordecai Epstein of blessed memory.

For a period of time he studied with the Gaon Rabbi Issar Zalman Meltzer of blessed memory. Rabbi Chaim always took pride in being the first to study with Hagraz.

Rabbi Chaim showed great diligence in his learning and completed his study of the Talmud (including the deliberations of the sages, halachic commentaries of the sages, epistles, responsa, and decisory rules) and Poskim (the halachic decisions of the Rabbinical decisors) and was ordained as a teacher by the Gaon Rabbi Rephael Shapira from Volozin, Hagaon Rabbi Eliyahu Baruch Kamai, and the Gaon Rabbi Moshe Mordecai Epstein of blessed memory.

In 5667 (1907), Rabbi Chaim Mednick was appointed the Rabbi of the congregation in Medvedtsh near Wachovitz. In 5669 (1909), he became the Rabbi of a congregation in Podhost near the city of Slutsk.

Despite his youth, he was already well-known as one of the outstanding Rabbis in Russia. His activities in the fields of education and religion aroused the hostility of the Bolsheviks, and miraculously he succeeded in escaping from them and from Russia.



In 5685 (1925), Rabbi Chaim arrived in the United States. Upon his arrival, he became the Rabbi of congregation Agudas Achim Anshe Tzetenheim in Chicago.

In 5691 (1931), he became the Rabbi of Congregation Machazike Hadas in Chicago where he remained to the end of his days.

His influence reached beyond the area where he served as a Rabbi. Outstanding Rabbis and Torah scholars throughout the United States turned to him with questions dealing with Halachic law, such as what is forbidden and permitted, and with questions of Rabbinic argumentation. Every detail interested him, and he answered every request by individuals seeking to better understand G-d's word with civility and warmth.

He showed particularly great affection toward young Rabbinical students from Chicago's Hebrew Theological College who received their Rabbinical ordination from him. He concerned himself with the problems and doubts troubling every individual who turned to him. They not only wanted his guidance in matters pertaining to Halachic and religious matters but with all problems confronting them in their roles and duties as Rabbis.

His greatness in Torah was matched by his ability to relate to people with loving kindness, a quality expressed through his love for his fellow man. Fatigue did not deter him, and he did not spare himself in giving of his time no matter what it entailed. He would be everywhere seeking help for those in need of being relieved of their depressed state of mind or improving their economic well-being.

He never neglected giving his support to public institutions such as Ezrat Torah.

During his advancing years, Rabbi Chaim remained a pillar of loving kindness whose home was always open to all, and he was generous in performing acts of kindness to others.

His was an image refined by the fire of Torah and ever strengthened by the awe in which he held G-d. In addition, his ability to absorb the teachings of the great Torah scholars helped him contend with the constant changes that life confronted him with.

Rabbi Chaim remained an authentic and true Torah scholar. One could sense that he enjoyed the give-and-take of Halacha and that he had complete devotion to Torah and fear of G-d.

Outstanding was his trait of modesty in the presence of Torah scholars. An example of this is related by the head of Midrash B'nai Tziyon in Jerusalem, Harav Hagaon Rabbi Yitchak Rosenthal Shlita (may he live a good

and long life, amen) when the Sefer *Kerem Tziyon*, Vol. XII was published. Harav Hagaon Rabbi Chaim Mednick contributed an article dealing with an Halachic matter, and both he and the article were described in highly complimentary terms.

Rabbi Chaim's reaction in a letter to the author of this account was one of disapproval. "I will not deny if I say I was angered by his words and he should know that. I am genuinely opposed to this characterization of me."

On another occasion Rabbi Chaim wrote, "Knowing myself as I do, I believe he overestimated my qualities by those standards with which I measure myself."

Eretz Yisrael was central in his thoughts. His greatest desire was to live in the Holy Land. To this end, he became deeply involved with researching Halachic issues

pertaining to Eretz Yisrael. Midrash B'nai Tziyon in Jerusalem became the institution which he most admired for its devotion to Halachic research dealing with Eretz Yisrael, and he became one of the staunchest supporters of this institution.

Rabbi Chaim developed a very special relationship with the Gaon

Tzvi Pesach Frank of blessed memory. They exchanged correspondence on a variety of Halachic matters, some of which appears in this volume.

As he was approaching his eighties and he was becoming physically infirm, he refused to give up his life's love: love of Torah and love of man.

In 5715 (1955), he decided to leave the United States and settle in the Holy Land. He prepared himself for the journey and had already bought a travel ticket. Great was his joy that soon he would be in Eretz Yisrael, the land he yearned for all his days.

But it was decreed otherwise, for on the day he was scheduled to leave for Eretz Yisrael, the sixth day of Tevet, 5715, (Dec., 1955), he suffered a fatal illness and died.

The religious community of the United States mourned the death of Rabbi Chaim Mednick. His casket was followed by multitudes, and he was eulogized by scholars and Rabbis.

Even though he never lived to make aliyah to Eretz Yisrael, he was privileged to be buried there: in the cemetery Zichron Meir B'nai Brak.

In the history of the religious community of the United States, Hagaon Harav Chaim Mednick of blessed memory will be remembered as one who put his stamp on religious Judaism in the United States. □

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*His influence reached  
beyond the area where  
he served as a Rabbi ...  
[extending] throughout  
the United States*

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## Jewish War Vets Reach 100 Years

The Jewish War Veterans of America is now 100 years old. The group came together originally to help demonstrate that Jews have always been well-represented in American armed forces.

Chicago boasts not just one, but two posts of the organization. In addition to a large and active men's post, Chicago has the only female post in the country.

Beyond calling attention to Jewish contributions to the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force, the posts join together in a variety of charitable undertakings.

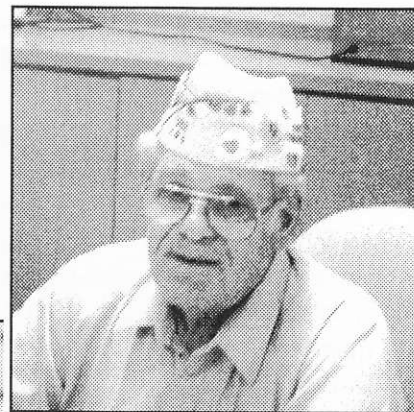
Members of the group often visit other veterans in the hospital, have played a hand in sponsoring Memorial Day activities, have helped raise funds for the National Museum of American Jewish Military History in Washington, D.C., and have put together blood drives.

One of the group's most famous accomplishments was having Congress pass a 1927 law permitting Jewish soldiers to have their graves marked by Stars of David rather than with crosses.

The organization will host an official local celebration of its centennial on Sunday, April 28. There will be an automobile parade of members, supporters, and government officials running from West Rogers Park through Skokie and Morton

**(Right) Harry Besser, commander, Chicago Jewish War Veterans**

Photographs by Norman Schwartz



**(Left) Evelyn (Mrs. Ruffy) Silverstein, member of the Chicago Jewish War Veterans female post**

Grove, and stopping at the American Legion Hall.

In addition, there will be a special Shabbat service at Northwest Suburban Congregation on April 26. □



(from left) Ruth Rubin and Louise Franks were among the many active and former members of Jewish Big Sisters who gathered on October 20, 1996 for a reunion of the chapter. Big Sisters organizations operated by matching adult mentors with girls who might benefit from attention from outside their families. Jewish Big Sisters is the oldest such organization in the Chicago area.

Photograph by Norman Schwartz

## Video History of the Jews of Chicago to be Unveiled May 18

The video history of the Jews of Chicago, produced by the Society and directed by Beverley Siegel will receive its first public showing at a special event on May 18 at the Chicago Historical Society.

Siegel and members of the Society have been at work on the video history for almost two years, and the project is now in its final stages.

Siegel has edited it into a final version, and all that remains is to lay-in the musical scoring, perform the final editing, and reproduce copies of the video for distribution.

The video will run at just under half an hour, making it suitable for broadcast on television, and making it appropriate for classroom and Hebrew school screenings.

Several members of the Society

contributed to writing the script and a number appear on camera as well, telling about various incidents from Chicago's Jewish history.

The video mentions some of the more recent events of Jewish life in the city, but it focuses on the first century, tracing the first Jewish settlers up to the massive "Romance of a People" pageant at the 1933 Jewish Day for the Chicago World's Fair.

Among the most striking sequences in the video is footage of the pageant that Siegel was able to uncover from historical archives and that had gone unviewed for more than 50 years.

Heidi Goldfein, reporter for Chicago's WBEZ public radio station, provides narration for the video.

The Chicago Historical Society has agreed to co-sponsor the initial screening event and has donated the use of its auditorium.

Copies of the video will be available for purchase at the event but prices have not yet been set. □

## Board Member Gertel Speaks on Solomon Goldman

Rabbi Elliot Gertel, Society Board member and leader of Congregation Rodfei Zedek, spoke on December 15 before an audience of about 100 people on the life of famed Chicago Rabbi Solomon Goldman.

Goldman served as Rabbi of Anshe Emet Congregation from 1929 to 1953, and he established himself during those years as one of Chicago's leading Jewish figures as well as one of America's leading Zionist voices.

He succeeded Rabbi Stephen Wise as the president of the Zionist Organization of America, becoming one of the few from outside New York City to hold such an office.

Gertel is at work on a book-length biography of Goldman, and he shared material from throughout the rabbi's career.



(from left) Albert Zemel, son-in-law of Solomon Goldman; Gayola Epstein, daughter of Goldman; and Rabbi Elliot Gertel

Photograph by Norman Schwartz

Two of Goldman's relatives, his daughter Gayola Epstein and his son-in-law Albert Zemel, were on hand at Temple Sholom for the talk as well.

The Society sponsors open bi-monthly meetings. We invite all members and their guests to join us at the next such meeting on February 9

at 2 p.m. at Loyola University's Crown Center Auditorium. Loyola Prof. Paula Pfeffer will speak on "A Home for Every Baby, A Baby for Every Home: Jewish Adoption in Chicago."

As always, there will be a social hour beginning at 1 p.m. for casual conversation and refreshments. □

## Minnesota Society Presents Exhibit on Pioneer Women

The Minnesota Historical Society is currently displaying an exhibit entitled "Unpacking on the Prairie: Jewish Women in the Upper Midwest." The exhibit is co-sponsored by the Jewish Historical Society of the Upper Midwest.

The exhibit features a number of artifacts loaned by families in the area. While the urban Jewish experience, including the experience of Chicago Jewish men and women, has generally received more attention, Jews in the rural Midwest also established a distinct culture.

Jewish women on the prairies often faced obstacles very different from their urban counterparts. Communities were spread out over wide areas, and it could often be difficult to find support for continuing Jewish customs.

Many persevered, however. As Linda Schloff, director of the Jewish Historical Society of the Midwest, said, "It's a story of how every immigrant culture faces change. We tell the story, not as a loss of culture, but as a transformation of culture."

Among the artifacts on display are a Yiddish-English cookbook published by the Pillsbury Company in Minneapolis; stationery from a Jewish women's organization that provided interest-free loans for householders trying to get started; and a variety of household implements that show how the immigrants negotiated the demands of prairie life and observant Judaism.

One detail the exhibit presents is the unlikely fact that sixty Jewish women were granted homesteads in their own names, without their necessarily having husbands.

The exhibit is on display at the Minnesota Historical Society's History Center in St. Paul through September, 1997. □

## Spertus to Present Exhibit on Humor

The Spertus Museum of the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies will open an exhibit on Jewish humor, February 2.

The exhibit will celebrate the peculiar – and peculiarly funny – tradition of Jewish comedians, writers, actors, comics, and clowns of all sorts.

Among the highlights of the display will be multi-media representations of many of the best-loved Jewish performers, including Barbra Streisand, Jackie Mason, and Danny Kaye.

The exhibit will feature images from such well-known settings as Broadway, the Borscht Belt, and Hollywood, and it will provide opportunity for exchanging the Jewish jokes that have kept us laughing and kept us groaning.

Spertus Museum is located at 618 South Michigan Avenue and is open Sunday through Friday.

The exhibit will remain on display until August 17. □

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## Goldman

(continued from page one)

rabbis.

At the same time, he recalls the life and wisdom of his father, Rabbi Yehuda Goldman, best-known as having been at one time the oldest practicing rabbi in the world.

The older Goldman had a lifetime of accomplishments, however, and his son recounts them lovingly and skillfully.

As the younger Goldman writes in his preface, "This work is not simply a biography. It is the joining of a son's biography with his father's; bonding and traveling the road of life together, with respect, candor, and paternal and filial love. It is a memoir: a journey in memory and reminiscence.

"Many of my experiences intertwine with my father's life; he was always interested, always counseled, always guided, always helped, always responded. Modestly, I say that my experiences enhanced his and my mother's lives, as, in turn, they both deepened the significance of mine."

In the course of recounting his father's and his own life, Goldman recalls many features of Jewish Chicago.

On arriving from Poland in 1921, the family moved to a South Side neighborhood that had only a small Jewish population.

Much of the early memoir traces the family's efforts to cope with a new country, a new way of living, and new wrinkles to their living their lives as Jews.

The family eventually moved to Lawndale and finally to West Rogers Park, following a broad movement of Jews in the urban area.

The later part of the memoir recalls the overlapping rabbinic careers of both the father and the son. The exchanges, shared dilemmas, and mutual affections of the two men illuminate not just their personal relationship but also many of the broader challenges facing the Jewish community over the last several decades.

This book is hardly the only one the younger Goldman has written. His *Giants of Faith*, a book of brief biographies of many of America's leading rabbis, has gone through a number of editions and was republished under the title *The Great Rabbis Hall of Fame*.

\* \* \*

The Doris Minsky Memorial Fund was established in memory of one of the Society's founders and long-time members.

Each year, the Society solicits previously unpublished manuscripts of particular interest to the Chicago Jewish community. The winning author receives an honorarium of \$1000, and his or her manuscript is published and distributed to all members of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society.

Copies of the published work will also be available for sale to non-members at bookstores throughout the Chicago area.

Previous winners of the award include Beatrice Michaels Shapiro for *The Jews of Lawndale* and Carolyn Eastwood for *Chicago's Jewish Street Ped-*

*dlers* whose manuscripts were published together in a single volume.

Eva Gross's *Memories of the Manor* and Morris Springer's *The Chayder, the Yeshiva, and I* were also published together.

Last year's winner was Bea Kraus, now a board member of the Society, for her work *The Cantors: Gifted Voices Remembered*.

This year's Minsky competition brought a number of impressive entries. As Charles Bernstein, chair of the Minsky committee, put it, "We are very gratified by the quality of the entries. There was much new material that had not been previously published."

He added, "Minsky material is a way to unearth hitherto unpublished material that will remain a permanent contribution to Chicago Jewish history."

The deadline for entries for the next Minsky competition is October 31, 1997.

Manuscripts should concern themselves with some aspect of Chicago Jewish history, and should be addressed toward the general reader. In general, manuscripts should be no longer than 15,000 words.

For a complete list of the regulations governing the competition, contact the Society office at (312)663-5634.

*My Father, Myself* should be available for distribution by Fall, 1997. Society members will receive a copy of it through the mail.

In the meantime, we extend our congratulations to Rabbi Alex Goldman for his impressive achievement. □

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## Society Newsletter Seeks Memoirs of Jewish Chicago

If the Minsky competition sounds daunting but you still have a story to tell, consider submitting it to *Chicago Jewish History*, the newsletter of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society

We occasionally publish personal accounts of specific neighborhoods, events, practices, or individuals that

have some bearing on Chicago's Jewish history.

Examples of the sort of memoirs we publish include one man's memories of growing up as the grandson of a West Side butcher and one woman's recollections of helping to entertain Jewish soldiers during World War II.

Individual memoirs give us the opportunity to present history in its narrowest contours. The stories that you might recall from your childhood or from some unusual situation in which you

found yourself often prompt other people's memories to flow as well.

Keep in mind that manuscripts should be no longer than six double-spaced pages. Be certain to include a return address and phone number with your submission.

We will try to respond to any inquiries, but cannot guarantee publication.

Submissions may be sent to Joe Kraus at 1416 W. Catalpa, Apt. 2, Chicago, IL, 60640. □

*Oral History Excerpt:*

## Rabbi Leonard Mishkin Recalls the Early Days of Hebrew Theological College

*The following is an excerpt of an oral history given by Rabbi Leonard Mishkin to Harold Pfefferman and Edward Mazur on March 4, 1978. Mishkin, who passed away on December 29, 1996, was Educational Director of the Associated Talmud Torahs and a leading historian of American Jewry.*

**Harold Pfefferman:** Rabbi Mishkin, your family came to Chicago from Eastern Europe. Did your family come directly to Chicago? And why did they choose this city?

**Leonard Mishkin:** My family did not come directly to Chicago. Part of my family – my father to be exact – was in the U.S. since 1913, and he lived in the East – New York. We came to the U.S. in 1922 and joined our father that year. We went to Danville, Illinois. My family remained in Danville, Illinois for another 10 years. I, on the other hand, left Danville in September, 1922, and came to Chicago to study in the Hebrew Theological College.

**Pfefferman:** In what section of Chicago did your family then eventually settle when the entire family came here?

**Mishkin:** Well, the year that I lived by myself, I boarded with some people. I lived at first with an aunt of mine and cousins on Troy and 13th Street. Then I lived on 13th Place and Central Park with another cousin of mine. Then I lived by myself with some classmates of the Yeshiva on Clifton Park and Douglas, and eventually when my parents came to Chicago, they lived on Homan Avenue between 16th Street and Ogden, and then Trumbull between 15th and 16th Streets.

**Pfefferman:** How old were you when you came to Chicago?

**Mishkin:** I was 15 years old.

**Pfefferman:** Did you have any brothers or sisters?

**Mishkin:** I have a brother who came with me from Europe. He remained in Danville, graduated high school there, and then he went to the University of Illinois in Champaign, and then he eventually graduated as a doctor

from Illinois Medical School. Another brother of mine was born in 1924 in Danville.

**Pfefferman:** What was your brother's occupation?

**Mishkin:** He was a *shochet*.

**Pfefferman:** What schools did you attend on coming to the city of Chicago?

**Mishkin:** Besides the Hebrew Theological College, I attended the Progressive Preparatory School – elementary, although even before that when I was in Danville, I went to regular public school. When I came in, I didn't know a word of English, and they put me in the 4th grade and I protested very much. I wanted to go into the first grade, but the principal refused. He said I was too big. Anyhow, when I came to Chicago, I completed in less than a year's time, from September 9, 1922, the first six grades.

For high school I went to the Lewis Institute of Chicago, and I also completed some of my college work at the Lewis Institute, which is now part of IIT [Illinois Institute of Technology].

**Edward Mazur:** Rabbi Mishkin, you said you

were 15 when you came to Chicago. Did your parents send money to you for your support, or were you working when you went to school?

**Mishkin:** When I was going to school, I did not work. My father supported me. He paid for the board and room and then the Hebrew Theological College gave us scholarships. From the year 1923 on, I used to receive \$40 a month as scholarship, with which I paid my high school tuition and later my college tuition.

**Mazur:** What are some of your earliest recollections of Jewish life in this city?

**Mishkin:** My earliest recollection was at first a little disappointing. When I first entered a synagogue – usually Friday evening or Saturday morning because before the Hebrew Theological College opened on Douglas Boulevard and St. Louis, I used to go to regular synagogues, and I was the only youngster of my age in the synagogue. Most of the people were older people – no teenagers – but later I used to attend services at the Hebrew Theological College and there were all young people.

However, when I became more familiarized with the community, I found out that it was a very thriving and exuberant type of community; there were lots of activities going on all around. Among them were Hebrew

speaking clubs and circles, Yiddish speaking clubs – all kinds of organizations.

A Kehilla [an Orthodox governing body] was being organized in Chicago to encompass all the synagogues, and at one time over 100 synagogues belonged to the Kehilla. They used to have annual meetings. There was Merkos Harabonim at that time which had their meetings, and I used to attend those meetings as a youngster because I wanted to learn what goes on. Fifty rabbis used to come together at a meeting on an average day, and I used to watch the proceedings.

There were two daily Yiddish papers published in Chicago: the *Jewish Courier* and the *Jewish Daily Forward*. Now we didn't read the *Forward* very much because it was a leftist kind of paper. The *Courier* was the mouthpiece, the voice of the Orthodox community. It used to have good editorial writers, especially Dr. S. Lamed who used to come out every morning with a column. [General newspapers did not have editorial columns in their newspapers yet.] The name of the column was "A Guten Tog" [A Good Day], and every morning he would attack or roast somebody. He fought many leaders of the Orthodox community because he thought they were doing wrong. He was, for example, against the organization of the Hebrew Theological College. He thought the Isaac Elchanan Yeshiva in New York was sufficient, but finally he prevailed upon to become a friend of the Hebrew Theological College.

The *Courier* had another interesting item: every day they had an English page, the last page. The paper itself would have eight pages, 12 pages, or 16 pages daily. The last page was always an English page, and the students when I was in high school would make attempts to write articles and news for the *Courier*. My first writing took place when I mailed, on a dare, a short story to the *Courier* that I had written for my high school class, and the *Courier* printed it.

And then I continued to publish, as did many other students. Some of them even dared write some articles on Philo-Judaists for the English page. Among Orthodox people, it was a novelty for Jewish young people to write on Jewish subjects.

There were many Jewish papers we used to receive on the stands in Chicago. 1922-23-24 all the way up to 1930 America had a very thriving kind of movement in

Hebrew and Yiddish. When I came to Chicago in 1922, there was a daily Hebrew paper; the *Hadoar* started as a Hebrew daily paper. Now, I couldn't subscribe to it, but every once in a while I would go up to a stand on Halsted and Roosevelt and buy a copy. When I'd come to Halsted and Roosevelt, I would find on the stand many times other newspapers from New York, from Europe,

etc., and I used to empty my pockets of all the change to buy the papers. One day I got caught without money, and I had to walk back from Roosevelt and Halsted to Central Park and Roosevelt because I had spent all my money buying papers at the stand.

The center of Jewish business life was at that time on Halsted and Roosevelt between Canal Street and Blue Island. The only Jewish bookstore was on Roosevelt near Blue Island. The Yiddish Theater was on Blue Island near Roosevelt. The *Courier* was on Halsted and 13th Street. The *Forward*

was on Blue Island next to the Yiddish Theater. Lawndale was growing in Jewish population; it was becoming the largest Jewish community in Chicago in population. But, from the point of institutional life, up to 1925 Halsted and Roosevelt was still the center. The Jewish Charities of Chicago were on a side street north of Roosevelt between Halsted and Blue Island.

On the corner of Canal Street and Roosevelt was a huge building; it was used formerly as a day school for general studies and all Jewish studies for Jewish children. Then it was abolished in 1923, and the building was converted to a Jewish shelter home; old and indigent people who lived or passed through Chicago found food and shelter in that building. The HIAS [Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society] had offices there. And there were very prominent people who were actively involved with it.

As I became acclimatized to Chicago, I began to like it very much. Once the Hebrew Theological College opened at the end of 1922 on Douglas and St. Louis there, it began a change. It became the center of Orthodox Jewish life in Chicago. The rabbis used to meet there, the Kehilla, any public meetings of the Orthodox people were held in the Hebrew Theological College.

We had about 350 students in the Hebrew Theological College: in two departments. The lower department met on the first floor of the building, and then there was the Bet Medrash LaTorah on the upper floor, for those studying for the rabbinate.

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*One day I got caught without money, and I had to walk back from Roosvelt and Halsted to Central Park and Roosevelt because I had spent all my money buying papers at the stand.*

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There were four classrooms on the second floor used by the College for the rabbinical department. There were six classrooms downstairs used for the lower level Yeshivas M'tschaim. There were a whole chain of teachers; none of them are today active in the teaching field. ...

**Mazur:** Rabbi Mishkin, what would you say were the objectives of the newly organized yeshiva called HTC?

**Mishkin:** The Hebrew Theological College has a three-fold purpose: Yeshivas M'tschaim, preparatory school and the Rabbinic department; prepar[ing] young people for *smicha* [ordination]; and then there was a teachers' department composed primarily of girls who met in the same building downstairs in the evening hours from 7 to 10. The same teachers who taught us Hebrew, history, and Bible in the Rabbinic department taught the young ladies in the teachers department downstairs.

We had a wonderful staff of teachers. Dr. A. Schacter taught Chochmos Yisrael, and then came Dr. Murray Workman who taught every field of Jewish knowledge: Bible, Hebrew literature, philosophy, et cetera. And then there was a man named Dr. Menasha Levine from Israel who spent a year and a half here who also taught Bible, Jewish history, and also taught modern Hebrew literature to the girls in the teachers department.

There were other people who came in; a man by the name of Salador who taught Hebrew literature and published a Hebrew magazine right here in Chicago. We also published a magazine at HTC. We gave it different names. We have a complete file of them in the library at the HTC. Students participated in writing articles in English and Hebrew.

**Mazur:** In what way was this yeshiva unique?

**Mishkin:** It was unique in many ways. First of all, it was the only yeshiva that catered to modern American young people and allowed them to go to college in the morning, and in the afternoon they used to come to the yeshiva at 2 o'clock or at the latest at 3 o'clock. From 3 to 4 o'clock, we used to study by ourselves in the large hall in the center of the building. At 4 we began the various classes – Bible, history, Hebrew literature, and other subjects on Jewish liturgy, various lectures – and only at 6:30 p.m. they used to begin the classes in Gemarah.

At 6:30 to 8 o'clock every class in Talmud met simultaneously. All the rabbis in the Talmud department taught Talmud at the same time.

Attendance was taken in the study hall outside of the class for study purposes. If you had a class at 6 o'clock, you were required to study from 5 to 6 before your classes. The rabbis stayed in the study hall together with the students. They all had a position, and all the students had their particular places. The two highest classes were assigned a *shtender*, not a table seat, but a *shtender* by the wall and each one had his *shtender*, his position, and nobody could usurp that place.

Rabbi Greenberg, the dean (May he rest in peace), he was really dedicated. He could walk through the halls – watch the students study – walk over and talk to them, and sometimes visit the classes (not too often), but he was always in the study hall. When he felt that someone

was not studying right or was talking too much, he would not say anything at that moment. But, after class, he would come up and say, "I would like to talk to you;" that was

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*My first writing took place when I mailed,  
on a dare, a short story to the Courier  
that I had written for my high school class,  
and the Courier printed it.*

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enough.

**Mazur:** How would you contrast the HTC then with the yeshiva today?

**Mishkin:** Well, the very fact that the whole program was changed around – that classes are meeting in the morning does not give the students a real chance to become integrated into the American environment, to go to a university or a college and be a part of the regular student body there.

Years ago, the mere fact that the classes in Talmud were at the end of the evening and not at the beginning and other subjects were at the beginning, it didn't give priority to any one subject. The emphasis was on all subjects alike. Today, the emphasis is mostly Talmudic studies, and the others are peripheral and they are not so well attended as in my time.

Remember, when I graduated in 1929, before me there were two other graduations. The first one was in 1925, the second 1927, and ours was the third in 1929. Now, everyone who graduated in these first three classes, I know who they were. I studied together with Rabbi Kramer, Rabbi Louis Lehrfield, and others. If we had a lecture with Rabbi Schechter, we all went together in one class. The same thing with Rabbi Waxman. These people, Rabbi Kramer and Rabbi Waxman, who were together with me and others who later went away from the rabbinate, came from the university straight to the yeshiva and it was an exhilarating change from the university to the yeshiva. □

# About the Society

## What We Are

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society was founded in 1977 and is in part an outgrowth of local Jewish participation in the American Bicentennial Celebrations of 1976. Muriel Robin was the founding president. It has as its purpose the discovery, preservation, and dissemination of information concerning the Jewish experience in the Chicago area.

## What We Do

The Society seeks out, collects, and preserves appropriate written, spoken, and photographic records; publishes historical information; holds public meetings at which various aspects of Chicago Jewish history are treated; mounts appropriate exhibits; and offers tours of Jewish historical sites.

## Minsky Fund

The Doris Minsky Memorial Fund, established in memory of one of the Society's founders and longtime leaders, seeks to publish annually a monograph on an aspect of Chicago area Jewish history. Members may receive a copy of each monograph as it is published. Manuscripts may be submitted, and contributions to the Fund are welcome at any time.

## Membership

Membership in the Society is open to all interested persons and organizations and includes a subscription to *Chicago Jewish History*, each monograph published by the Doris Minsky Memorial Fund as it appears, discounts on Society tours and at the Spertus Museum Store, and the opportunity to learn and inform others concerning Chicago Jewish history and its preservation.

## Dues Structure

Membership runs on a calendar year, from January through December. New members joining after July 1 are given an initial membership through December of the following year.

Regular Membership.....	\$25
Family Membership.....	\$35
Society Patron.....	\$50
Society Sponsor.....	\$100
Society Scholar.....	\$250
Society Historian.....	\$500
Senior Citizen Membership.....	\$15
Student Membership.....	\$15
Synagogue or Organization.....	\$25
Life Membership.....	\$1000

Checks should be made payable to the Chicago Jewish Historical Society, and mailed to our office at 618 S. Michigan Ave. Dues are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

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## Chicago Jewish History

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