

# chicago jewish history

A Special Joint Meeting of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Illinois and the CJHS  
**Sunday, October 25 – Joan Adler Speaks on  
“The Greenebaum Family: From the Rheinpfalz to Chicago”**

“The Greenebaums: From Rheinpfalz to Chicago” will be the topic of a presentation by Joan Adler, Executive Director of the New York-based Straus Historical Society, at a special joint meeting of the JGSI and the CJHS on Sunday, October 25, 2015. The program will begin at 2:00 p.m. at Temple Beth-El, 3610 Dundee Road, Northbrook, Illinois. Admission is free and open to the public.

The JGSI meeting facilities at Temple Beth-El will open at 12:30 p.m. to accommodate those who want to use or borrow genealogy library materials, get help with genealogy websites, or ask genealogical questions before the main program begins. For more information, visit <http://jgsi.org/> or phone 312-666-0100.



The Greenebaum family originated in south-western Germany in the Rheinpfalz. They were a large and observant family, pious in all ways.

They were prosperous merchants who suffered many hardships due to changing political conditions in their region. After immigrating to Chicago in the mid-1840s, they became the founders of some of the city's outstanding financial, religious, and philanthropic institutions, including KAM Isaiah Israel Congregation, Ramah Lodge of B'nai B'rith, and the National Council of Jewish Women. Adler's talk will illuminate the Greenebaum family's history, in Germany and then in America, and will touch on the factors that contributed to their success.

Ms. Adler has spent the past 25 years researching, documenting, and disseminating information about the Lazarus Straus family from the Rheinpfalz. The Greenebaum/Grüenebaum family are progenitors of the Straus family.

**Pictured: Henry Greenebaum (1833-1914)  
and Hannah Greenebaum Solomon (1858-1942).**  
*History of the Jews of Chicago, 1924.*

**Sunday, November 8 –  
Dr. Preston Wolin Speaks on  
“Jewish Connections to  
Chicago Sports”**

“Jewish Connections to Chicago Sports” will be discussed by Preston M. Wolin, M.D., at an open meeting of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society on Sunday, November 8, 2015. The program will begin at 2:00 p.m. at Kehilat Chovevei Zion, 9220 Crawford Avenue, Skokie, Illinois. A social hour with kosher pastries will follow the program.

Chicago is well-known for being a “sports town,” and there is a long, rich history of Jews' involvement. In his talk Dr. Wolin will highlight the many contributions to our sports community by Jewish athletes, coaches, referees, promoters, and execs.

Preston Wolin is the director of the Center for Athletic Medicine, Ltd., which he founded in 1991. He has served as a team physician at the professional, collegiate, and high school levels, and as U.S. physician at the Maccabiah Games in Israel.

General admission is \$10 per person. Members of the CJHS and Kehilat Chovevei Zion free.

## President's Column



**Edward H. Mazur.**

### DOESN'T IT SEEM THAT TIME PASSES MORE QUICKLY THAN IT USED TO?

It seems so, as we age. Where has the summer gone? The 2015 Major League Baseball season is almost over. Cub fans are looking ahead to the playoffs, and even beyond, to the World Series—*ptoo, ptoo, ptoo*—(spit three times to ward off the Evil One and the St. Louis Cardinals). For my team, the White Sox, this disappointing season will be over very soon.

The Chicago Jewish Historical Society certainly provided rewarding summer experiences for our members and friends. Thanks to Leah Axelrod for arranging two terrific Summer Sunday motor coach tours: "Chicago Jewish Roots" a half-day trip through our old neighborhoods guided by the master, Dr. Irving Cutler, and a day-long excursion (expertly shepherded by Leah) to Springfield, to the magnificent Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, and the special "Lincoln and the Jews" exhibit. Illinois State Historical Society President Randall Saxon provided guidance.

*Illustrated reports on the two tours are on pages 6-9.*

This year's final tour will be on Sunday, October 11. Board members Mark Mandle and Herbert Eiseman will guide our group on walks through "Chicago's Historic North Side Jewish Cemeteries."

*A tour reservation form is on page 15.*

### NEW BOARD MEMBERS ZEV ELEFF AND PATTI RAY

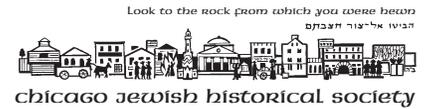
I am delighted to announce the election of two new member to our Board of Directors: Rabbi Dr. Zev Eleff, Chief Academic Officer of the Hebrew Theological College (HTC), and Jewish community activist Patti Ray. Dr. Eleff's latest honor is described on the facing page. Ms. Ray was co-presenter of the superb "Birth and Growth of Hillel on Campus" program at our Society's open meeting in May. Dr. Eleff addressed the August meeting of our Board.

*The text of Dr. Eleff's talk is on pages 12-14. Ms. Ray's program is reported in our Spring quarterly, which can be read on our website.*

### THE CJHS SPEAKERS' BUREAU

Recently, I spoke to the Sisterhood of Temple Beth Israel in Skokie. More than fifty attendees learned about the origins of the CJHS, our programs since the 1970s, and our current membership. I offered a brief "tour" through Chicago Jewish history (with artifacts in hand), emphasizing community development, synagogue origins and locations, and the Jewish contributions to Chicago in the areas of government, commerce, and service to the USA in the World Wars. Members of our Board are available to speak to groups on a variety of topics. Please contact the Society office for further information.

*The officers and directors of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society wish you, our loyal and supportive members, your families, and friends, L'Shana Tova—A Happy and Fulfilling New Year.*



2015

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### Chicago Jewish History

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*Editor/Designer* Beverly Chubak  
*Editorial Board* Edward Mazur, Burton Robin, Milton Shulman.

Send all submissions to Editor: electronically or via standard mail. If manuscript is sent via standard mail, enclose SASE.

## Election of Members to CJHS Board of Directors

At our open meeting on Sunday, November 8, before the start of Dr. Wolin's presentation, President Mazur will conduct a brief business meeting. Members of the Society who are present will be asked to vote in the election of members to our Board of Directors. All of the nominees are currently active members of the Board, and they are seeking re-election to another three-year term.

**Jerold Levin**  
**Janet Iltis**  
**Mark Mandle**  
**Dr. Milton Shulman**



**Rabbi Dr. Zev Eleff.**

Pews: Religious Authority and the Formation of American Judaism, 1816-1885." A revised version will appear in book form next year, published by Oxford University Press.

## YASHER KOACH

*More Power to You!*

CJHS Board Member Zev Eleff is the recipient of the Baron Dissertation Award (\$5,000) for 2015, judged at Arizona State University. The donors are Dr. Shoshana Tancer and Mr. Robert Tancer. Dr. Shoshana Tancer is the daughter of Professor Salo W. Baron, the great Jewish historical scholar for whom the award is named. The title of the dissertation is: "Power, Pulpits and

## Sunday, November 22

### The CJHS Sponsors a Screening of "The Life of Emile Zola" at the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center

**A Limited Number of Tickets Have Been Set Aside for CJHS Members**



**Paul Muni, 1936.**  
*Wikipedia.*

The film "The Life of Emile Zola" will be screened on Sunday, November 22, in the Goodman Auditorium of the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center, 9603 Woods Drive, Skokie, Illinois, at 1:30 p.m. (Running time: 116 minutes), followed by a discussion led by David Chack, Artistic Director of ShPleL Performing Identity Theatre, and faculty member of The Theatre School at DePaul University.

**Admission is free, but reservations are highly recommended.**

**A limited number of tickets have been set aside for CJHS members.**

**Order today at <http://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org/zola-cjhs/>**

Winner of 1938 Academy Award for Best Picture, the film profiles French author Emile Zola, including his campaign on behalf of Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish army captain accused of treason. Starring Paul Muni, this feature film demonstrates one aspect of Hollywood's response to the anti-Semitism of the Nazi regime. Paul Muni (born Muni Weisenfreund in Lemberg, now Lviv, Ukraine) was a child actor in the Yiddish theater here in Chicago. German-born William Dieterle directed Paul Muni for Warner Brothers in three first-rate movie biographies: "The Story of Louis Pasteur" (1936), "The Life of Emile Zola" (1937) and "Juarez" (1939).

The screening is part of the program "**Light & Noir: Exiles and Émigrés in Hollywood, 1933-1950**" that tells the fascinating story of immigration, acculturation, and innovation that influenced Hollywood film as an American cultural phenomenon. After coming to power in early 1933, Hitler took control of the German film industry and used cinema to fuel his propaganda. As a result, many German-speaking film icons fled to America and became the actors, directors, writers, and composers of Hollywood's "Golden Age." **From October 11, 2015 through January 10, 2016**, there will be lectures, screenings, and a special exhibition of costumes, props, film footage, and personal memorabilia.

For details visit <http://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org/lightnoir>

## On Exhibit at Spertus

Spertus Institute for Jewish Learning and Leadership • 610 South Michigan Avenue

**August 30, 2015 – January 17, 2016 – First Floor Lobby Gallery**  
**From Maxwell Street to Milwaukee Avenue:**  
**Painted Portraits of a Chicago Family in the Shoe Business**

For exhibition hours  
and to buy lecture tickets  
visit [spertus.edu](http://spertus.edu)  
or phone 312-322-1773.

Howard Schwartz is both an accomplished artist and an avid family historian. He is the last of four generations to work in his family's shoe business and he has preserved artifacts, photographs, and memorabilia documenting his family's story. This story begins its American chapter with merchants on Maxwell Street. Howard Schwartz's art combines, photography, paint, and found objects. Spertus is presenting a selection of his works, alongside some of the artifacts that inspired them. **Meet the artist.** Gallery talk Tuesday, Oct. 27 at noon. No reservations required.



**Howard Schwartz.** *Harry's Shoes*, mixed aqueous paints and collage on canvas.

### Collection Highlights Now Online!

We have been waiting for this. Spertus Institute Collection Highlights can now be viewed online—allowing you to explore treasures of Jewish art and material culture from your computer, tablet, or phone. Browse objects by theme or search by keyword. Take a closer look with stunning high-resolution photography and multimedia clips. Visit [collection.spertus.edu](http://collection.spertus.edu)

This project is funded by grants from Luis and Fortuna Spitz and the Charles & M.R. Shapiro Foundation.

**September 13, 2015 – January 3, 2016 – 7th Floor Corridor**  
**A Gift to Birobidzhan: Chicago Artists  
in Support of a Jewish Homeland in Siberia**

Last September, the Chicago Jewish Historical Society presented a lecture by Dr. Nathan Harpaz of Oakton Community College about the portfolio of lithographs created in 1937 by a group of Chicago artists in support of a Jewish homeland in Birobidzhan. (See report in CJH Fall 2014). At our meeting we were shown slides of Oakton's copies of the prints. Now we have an opportunity to view the rare, complete set in the Spertus collection, on display in conjunction with the Institute's exploration of Jewish life in the former Soviet Union.

**Sunday, November 15, 2015 at 2 p.m.**  
**Lecture: Building Zion in Stalin's Russia**

The presenter is Jeffrey Veidlinger, the Joseph Brodsky Collegiate Professor of History and Judaic Studies and Director of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan.

## **Calling All Authors (Active CJHS Members): List Your Books in the Fall 2015 Issue of Our Journal**

If you are an active member of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society (dues paid through 2015), we will list your book, film, or music in the upcoming Fall Book Issue of our quarterly journal. Let us know: title, publisher, number of pages, illustrations, running time for DVDs and music CDs, and availability. There are many formats and vendors these days, so we will not list prices. If your work was listed last year—rest assured—it will be listed again in Fall 2015. The copy deadline is **October 27**.

Send details via e-mail to [info@chicagojewishhistory.org](mailto:info@chicagojewishhistory.org) or via standard mail to Editor, Chicago Jewish Historical Society, 610 South Michigan Avenue, Room 803, Chicago, IL 60605-1901.



### **Chicago Art Deco Society An Illustrated Lecture by Donald Albrecht “Designing Home: Jews and Midcentury Modernism”**

This presentation explores the contributions of Jewish designers, architects, patrons, and merchants in the creation of a distinctly modern American domestic landscape.

**Sunday, October 4**

The Breakers at Edgewater Beach

Details and Registration [chicagoartdeco.org](http://chicagoartdeco.org)

### **Chicago a cappella “Jewish Roots of Broadway”**

The acclaimed nine-voice ensemble explores the forebears of American musical theater, from European synagogue music and Yiddish vaudeville to American Songbook standards by Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, and Rodgers & Hammerstein. Four concerts:

Naperville, Oct. 10 – River Forest, Oct. 11,  
Evanston, Oct. 17 – KAM Isaiah Israel, Oct. 25.

Details and Tickets [chicagoacappella.org](http://chicagoacappella.org)

### **Edgewater Historical Society Seeks Information and Material on Jewish Immigration for Exhibit Opening in October**

The Edgewater Historical Society is planning a major exhibit on Immigration to Edgewater, from October 2015 through May 2016, at the EHS museum, 5358 North Ashland Avenue.

The exhibit will include the stories, oral histories, artifacts, photos, textiles, maps, and census statistics of the many waves of immigrants to Edgewater, the Chicago community area bounded by Foster Avenue on the south, Devon Avenue on the north, Lake Michigan on the east, and Ravenswood on the west. Edgewater is home to immigrants from almost a hundred countries who make up over thirty percent of the current population. There were at least three waves of Jewish immigrants to Edgewater. The first was from Central and Eastern Europe in the 1880s to about 1914; then refugees from Nazi Germany in the 1930s; and the most recent from the former USSR starting in the 1970s.

**Any materials loaned or donated will be properly accessioned and gratefully acknowledged.**

**Phone Exhibition Curator, Dr. Dorothy Nygren at 773-386-5206.**



**Stone Temple Missionary Baptist Church,  
3622 West Douglas Blvd, corner  
of Millard, the former First Romanian  
Congregation Shaarei Shomayim.**

*Report: CJHS Tour, Sunday, July 12, 2015*

## **CHICAGO JEWISH ROOTS**

Dr. Irving Cutler's "Roots" Tour is a favorite of our members and guests. This year, the youngest participant was Adam Rosenthal, almost 10 years old, who attended with his grandparents, Lawrence and Ina Rosenthal.

Adam is a fourth grader at Shabonee Elementary School in Northbrook and attends Hebrew School at Congregation Beth Shalom in Northbrook. Additionally, he takes enrichment courses at Northwestern University's Center for Talent Development in Evanston. We asked Adam to report on his tour experience, for *CJH*, and he obliged with this fine response:



"I liked the Chicago Jewish Roots bus tour. It was long but interesting. I liked the African American service in the former synagogue. I particularly liked seeing the synagogue decorations. However, I was wondering why they have a bathtub in the lobby where the restrooms are located. I liked seeing the

*The photos of the church facade and the Maxwell Street Market entrance sign are by Michelle Smith.  
The photo of Adam and Ina Rosenthal at the market is by Lawrence Rosenthal.*



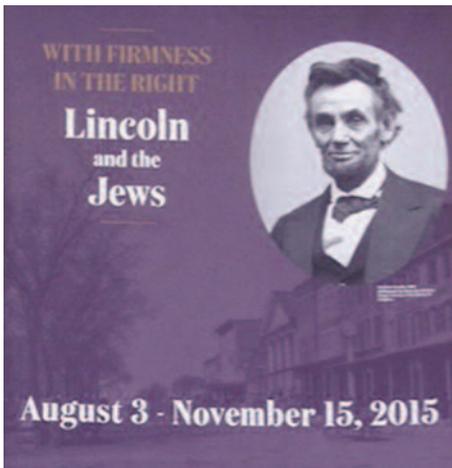
other old synagogues on Douglas and Independence Boulevards. I would have liked to see the Rushishirshull [the demolished Anshe Kneseth Israel, the Russishe shul] because I think the name is cool. I liked the Garfield Park Conservatory. I thought the park was nice, and I got a gift along the way. I liked seeing the different places that my grandfather lived and where he went to Hebrew school. Thank you for letting me go on the tour with adults.”

We wrote to Bishop Derrick M. Fitzpatrick at Stone Temple Church to thank him for his congregation’s warm hospitality. He replied:

“Thank you guys for coming to share with us. We’re glad you were able to enjoy parts of our service. We work very hard trying to preserve as much of the history of the synagogue as possible, as well as keep the building in good shape. You are correct. [I guessed the purpose of the bathtub.] The area is used for baptism. We look forward to the next time we are able to open our doors to share with you.”



The photos of the interior are by Michelle Smith. The photos of Bishop Fitzpatrick and Dr. Cutler, the stained glass window, and the choir are by Lawrence Rosenthal.



Our destination was the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois, and specifically the Traveling Museum Exhibition titled “With Firmness in the Right—Lincoln and the Jews.”

CJHS Tour Chair Leah Axelrod planned our long day to perfection, starting with early morning pick-ups at the Horwich JCC and the Marriott Hotel Chicago Magnificent Mile in a comfortable motor coach. As we headed south, President Ed Mazur displayed his professional tour guide expertise by pointing out many architectural wonders of our city that have Jewish connections.

## Report: CJHS Tour, Sunday, August 23, 2015 A DAY TRIP TO SPRINGFIELD



Then we were treated to a documentary that we viewed on screens throughout the coach. “Lincoln: Prelude to the Presidency” (WILL-TV Public Media) tells about Lincoln’s early years as a circuit-riding lawyer, with reenactments and commentary by historians. Thanks to Board Member Joan Pomaranc for suggesting this enhancement to our trip. A rainy morning turned sunny as we rode past the farmhouses, vast fields of corn and soybeans, grain elevators, and windfarms of central Illinois. After a rest and snack stop we were soon at the Library, greeted by our guide, Randall Saxon, President of the Illinois State Historical Society, and Robert Silverman, a leading member of the Springfield Jewish community. On the walk leading



The photos of the exhibition poster, the orientation in the Library, and Robert Silverman (lower left) are by Joan Pomaranc. The photos of the Museum exterior and Dr. Randall Saxon (lower right) are by Willa Bryer-Douglas.



into the Museum were purple “footprints” representing Lincoln’s troublesome feet. Why? One of Lincoln’s closest associates was Issachar Zacharie, “the President’s mysterious Jewish foot doctor and personal spy”—in the words of the eminent historian Jonathan Sarna, on whose book, with collector Benjamin Shapell, the exhibition is based.



Documents attest to Lincoln’s friendship and political support of Abraham Jonas of Illinois, though his family was “a house divided,” with some Jonas sons in the Confederate Army.

“Lincoln and the Jews” is a small but worthy temporary part of the magnificent Museum, where Abe’s early life is depicted in superbly crafted dioramas; the gowns of Mary’s Washington fashionista rivals are displayed; and, finally, the horrible human cost of the Civil War is vividly detailed.

Our group’s long day ended with light supper choices in Springfield and a contented ride to Chicago.



**Left: Self-Portrait of Samuel G. Alschuler, Jewish photographer, painter, and friend of Abraham Lincoln.** The full-color oil painting is in the Springfield exhibition. Alschuler had a studio in Urbana, Illinois, where he took two famous photographs of Lincoln, which were in the original New York exhibition but are not in Springfield.



*The photo of Leah Axelrod with young Abe at his log cabin home is by Joan Pomaranc. The photo of the Lincoln Family is by Willa Bryer-Douglas (John Wilkes Booth lurks in the background). The photo of the CJHS tour group is by Leslie Axelrod.*

# Salzenstein's Store: Abraham Lincoln Shopped Here

Reprinted from *Chicago Jewish History* Winter 2002

**W**e appreciate reader response to articles in *CJH*. Just about every letter or e-mail offers something that enriches our publication—further information, correction, or clarification about a subject we have covered, or an idea for a future article. Last February [2001] we received this letter from Society member Robert S. Frisch of Morton Grove:

I found the article "Living Waters...A Tour of Jewish History in North Central Illinois" [*CJH* Year-End 2000] of great interest, particularly since ancestors of mine were early pioneers in downstate Illinois, particularly in the Springfield area.

My great-great uncle, Louis Salzenstein, was born in Halsdorf, Hessen, Germany, in the early part of the 19th century. As you can see in the enclosed reprint from a history of the village of Athens, Illinois, he came to this country, settled in Baltimore, Maryland, and came to Athens around 1831. Two brothers came with him, one settling in Pleasant Plains, and the other in Salisbury, Illinois. Each founded a branch of the family. Another brother, Solomon Salzenstein, remained in Germany and passed away in 1864. At the end of the Civil War, Louis brought Solomon's widow, Henrietta Wertheim Salzenstein, and her daughter, Sophie, to Athens. Sophie was my grandmother. She married Isaac M. Frisch in 1876.

The home that Louis built still stands on the main street of Athens (population of about 700 in the 1800s—now about 1,000). The "Long Nine Dinner" was held in that building. It was a dinner attended by nine state legislators on their way to Springfield after the state capital had been moved from Vandalia. A museum was established in the home some years ago, but failed, as there weren't enough sightseers passing through Athens. They primarily go to New Salem. [See postscript.]

**H**ere we will insert historian David Herbert Donald's explanation of the origin of the nickname "Long Nine," taken from his Pulitzer Prize-winning biography, *Lincoln* (Jonathan Cape, 1993):

The Sangamon delegation in the 1836-37 session of the legislature became known as the "Long Nine" because the two senators and the

seven representatives were all unusually tall in an age when six-foot men were rare; some, like Lincoln, were veritable giants. Their collective height, it was said, totalled fifty-four feet. But they were distinguished even more by their enthusiastic support of two objectives: promotion of Springfield and state support for internal improvements. The delegation looked to Lincoln, now an experienced legislator, though the next-to-youngest member of the group, as their floor leader.

Mr. Frisch's letter continues:

If you've read *A History of the Jews in America* by Howard M. Sachar (1992), you'll note that it tells of the Salzenstein family in Athens sponsoring the Myers family's move to Springfield to open a men's clothing store. Their entrance into Springfield was delayed because of the funeral of President Abraham Lincoln (who, you will note, in the enclosed historical reprint, was a friend of Louis Salzenstein's).

The majority of the Salzenstein family is buried in Springfield, in the part of Oak Ridge Cemetery known as the "Old Jewish Section." It is the same cemetery where Abraham Lincoln's tomb is located. My grandparents and three aunts are also buried there. There's a Salzenstein gravestone showing a birth date of 1792.

**F**ollowing are some excerpts from the photocopied pages Bob Frisch sent us, from a printed history of Athens, Illinois:

Mr. [Louis] Salzenstein was one of the most successful of all merchants here, and he became the wealthiest man in the community. Many of the enterprises were financed by him. He also loaned money to farmers in the community, and probably did more than any other man toward bettering ... the mode of living in this section.

Abraham Lincoln and Louis Salzenstein were close friends, and Lincoln often stopped at his store and his residence. Mr. Salzenstein built a sort of bar room where liquors were dispensed. Most of the stores in that age were selling whiskey. It is a tradition that Lincoln stayed in the front part of the store and many times refused to accompany his friends to the bar room for a drink.

Mr. Salzenstein had a great deal of influence in the community, both political and otherwise. His influence extended to other parts of Menard County. He was a great deal of help in a political way to Abraham Lincoln.

The goods to replenish the stocks of the early merchants were first transported from St. Louis by ox teams. Later, when Louis Salzenstein opened his store in Athens, he made trips on a flatboat from Beardstown on the Illinois, Mississippi, and Ohio Rivers to St. Louis and Cincinnati to purchase goods, and brought them back the same way. After making the journey back as far as Beardstown, he had them hauled over the road that passed through New Salem and Athens.

Some of these trips would take him longer than a month to complete, and he was obliged to remain away from his store for that time,

usually leaving a son, “Little Charlie” Salzenstein or his nephew, Charles S. Salzenstein, in charge during his absence.

Louis Salzenstein was succeeded by his son Meyer, in the same location, down to the present generation. [The photocopied pages are undated.] Charles Salzenstein, known as “Little Charlie” Salzenstein opened a store and ran it in competition with his father.

**B**ob Frisch’s merchant forebears transported their wares via the great waterways, the Mississippi and the Ohio Rivers that frame our state, and the gently flowing rivers of Illinois. “Living Waters”—a biblical term—provided the theme for the CJHS summer tour on August 27, 2000, to Jewish communities in north central Illinois river towns—Sterling, Rock Falls, Dixon, LaSalle, Spring Valley, Ottawa, and Lockport.... A final note about Athens, IL: its name is pronounced *AY-thens*, just as our Cairo is pronounced *KAY-ro*. ❖

### Postscript 2015: We Received This E-Mail

**M**y name is Albert Katz and I live in Napa, CA. As with many people my age (60) I have been increasingly looking into my ancestry. In doing so, I came across an article from your Winter 2002 quarterly journal entitled “Salzenstein’s Store: Abraham Lincoln Shopped Here.” This was exciting for me on many levels as my real name is Albert Salzenstein (Katz).

My dad was Albert Salzenstein. His mother changed his name to Katz when he was 10 years old and she remarried after his father’s passing.

My dad’s father was also Albert Salzenstein of Peoria, IL, His grandfather was Charles Salzenstein of Athens, IL, and his great-grandfather was Solomon Salzenstein (mentioned in the article) from Hessen.

Unfortunately I never knew my grandfather, as he passed away long before I was born. I had only known myself to be “Katz.” It wasn’t until my father passed that I began to research my Salzenstein roots, which led me on a journey a few years back to Peoria to visit where he was buried and to look for the old family home.

Finding out about the connection to Lincoln a few years ago, and to the Athens/Springfield area, took my family journey much farther back, to Louis Salzenstein, who owned the store in the article. He was critical to my future as he was already living in Illinois in the 1850s when he returned to Germany to bring back Solomon’s children (including my great-grandfather, Charles), and my great-great-grandmother, Henrietta.

Anyway, I was hoping that you might be able to

connect me with Robert S. Frisch who is mentioned in the article as one of your members. His grandmother, Sophie, and my great-grandfather, Charles, were siblings. I would very much like to connect with any relatives who might be left in the Chicago area....

Sincerely,  
Albert Katz  
albert@katzfarm.com

*We replied that, unfortunately, Robert Frisch and his wife have died, and the CJHS has no information about any descendants. Mr. Katz wrote again:*

I hope that some “Salzenstein” views my message and gets in touch with me. I originally centered my search in Peoria, where my grandparents had lived and my father was born, but as time has passed I realize that much more of my family history is in the Springfield/Athens area. We are considering another visit there soon to visit the Long Nine Museum, which, as you know, is housed in Louis Salzenstein’s store.\* I may now plan it around the Lincoln exhibit that is traveling to Springfield.

On another note, almost all of my family was born and raised in Chicago. My maternal side were the Agays and Kampels, all from your fair city. Even on my father’s side, my grandmother (from the Klee family), was born in Chicago and moved to Peoria when she married my grandfather. So most of my ancestry for the last few generations lies right there, which makes your publication even more enjoyable to peruse. ❖

\* Visit the museum website:

**abrahamlincolnlongninemuseum.com**

# Zionism, Mussar, and the Cultural Foundations of the Hebrew Theological College

BY ZEV ELEFF

*Text of the talk delivered at a meeting of the Chicago Jewish Historical Society Board of Directors, August 6, 2015.*

In March 1978, Esther Kopstein participated in an oral history project organized by the newly established Chicago Jewish Historical Society. Kopstein was a worthy candidate for a project of this kind. She and her husband, Max, were longtime leaders of their Lakeview Jewish community. Mrs. Kopstein was also the daughter of Rabbi Saul Silber, the founding president of Hebrew Theological College.

In 1921, Silber was among a cohort of committed traditional Jews who established a small, but dynamic rabbinical school on Chicago's West Side. In due time, HTC emerged as the center of Orthodox Jewish culture in Chicagoland. Moreover, Silber established one of two prevailing cultural forces within the school: namely, Zionism. The other was Mussar. This is the subject I am eager to explore with you this afternoon.



**Rabbi Saul Silber.**  
*History of the Jews of Chicago, 1924.*

From the standpoint of Chicago's modern-leaning Orthodox lay leaders, Rabbi Saul Silber was an ideal candidate to assume the leadership of their school. He supported secular education and the introduction of English-language sermons in the Orthodox synagogue. Most of all, Silber was a Zionist. Truth to tell, the majority of rabbinic forces in the United States at this time promoted a Zionist agenda.<sup>1</sup> However, HTC's top executive

articulated his passion for Jewish nationalism in more powerful terms than most. For the Lithuanian-born Silber, Zionism was "perhaps the greatest [movement] in Jewish history."<sup>2</sup>

In 1935, Silber wrote that Jews in the Exile lacked a certain dimension of holiness, unachievable outside of then-Palestine. His Yiddish-language article occasioned the passing of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook, whom Silber admired and whose viewpoint he had adopted as his personal Religious Zionist creed.<sup>3</sup> In addition, Silber wrote a sizable essay on Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, perhaps the most well-known Zionist in the United States.<sup>4</sup>

Zionism held firm at HTC, much more than other cultural enterprises. For Silber, the trouble was that the laity did not control the Jewish culture that permeated through Chicago's Orthodox community. To the contrary, the spirit of Orthodox life on the West Side was moved along by the scores of highly-trained rabbinic elites who had migrated to Chicago from various European locales. Mrs. Kopstein alluded to some of her father's consternation with the Windy City rabbinate in the 1978 interview:

With his Yeshiva and Rabbis, my father did have trouble from some of the older Rabbis. He wanted his boys, he called them, he wanted his boys to get their practice speaking in Orthodox synagogues along Douglas Boulevard and Independence. The rabbis were against it. They wouldn't allow English to be spoken from their bimah. From their dais you could not speak English. It was a trefa language. The only shul that would allow them to speak in English was my father's shul.<sup>5</sup>

Rabbi Ephraim Epstein was one of Silber's intellectual antagonists. To be sure, the two men were friends. In fact, Epstein delivered a eulogy at Silber's wife's funeral. However, the two did not at all agree on the course of studies to be offered at HTC. Epstein was a student in the Slobodka Yeshiva and a product of the Mussar curriculum of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter that stressed moral self-improvement. In the first decades of the twentieth century, Epstein had lobbied and raised funds for the establishment of HTC. He had hoped to form the yeshiva in the image of Slobodka but backed down after it became clear to him that Silber preferred to focus on *Wissenschaft des Judentums*—academic Jewish studies—rather than on Mussar moralisms.<sup>6</sup>

Epstein's departure from the HTC inner-circle was premature. Despite Silber's implementation of so-called Hakhmat Yisrael—Jewish studies—the Mussar curriculum remained a focal feature of the rabbinical school. In all probability, Epstein himself should have recognized that Mussar would endure within HTC.

Consider the findings of a recent volume produced by the Chicago Rabbinical Council and the late Rabbi Moshe Kushner. This handsome biographical dictionary of important Chicago Orthodox rabbis of the nine-

teenth and twentieth centuries features about thirty rabbinic scholars who received their training at the famed Knesset Yisrael yeshiva in Slobodka.

Many of these individuals taught or carried great influence with the students enrolled at the Douglas Boulevard rabbinical seminary. For instance, Silber selected the Slobodka scion Rabbi Nisson Yablonsky to serve as Rosh Yeshiva of the school. Paradoxically, though, the greatest exponent of Mussar on the HTC students was the scholar that Silber had recruited to teach Hakhmat Yisrael in the Chicago school: the historian Mayer Waxman. On a number of occasions, Waxman, employing the rhetoric of a stern Mussar-trumpeting mashgiach, was wont to complain: “If the attitude of this class doesn’t change, there will never be any system in the Yeshiva.”<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps a better source for Mussar’s impact on Hebrew Theological College may be derived from the earliest student publications. In 1928, one student wrote on the “Proper Way of Conduct for a Talmid Chochom,” or Torah scholar.<sup>8</sup> What is more, the journals reveal an acute willingness among students to indulge in self-improvement by way of the very sort of introspection and self-criticism advocated by the champions of Mussar.

A number of students published essays that admonished their friends for less-than-punctilious observance of kashrut and the Sabbath.<sup>9</sup> Another chastised his fellow seminarians for neglecting their traditional Talmud studies. “Why can a Yeshiva Bochor be persuaded so easily to ‘ditch’ a shyoor, ‘cut’ a class, ‘kip’ a prescribed study hour, to betake himself to his schoolbooks?” Actually, this writer confessed that he too was guilty of this sinful betrayal of Torah study in favor of the other courses offered at HTC.<sup>10</sup> All this contrasted markedly from other collegiate newspapers of this time—including the one printed by the student journalists at Yeshiva College in New York—that more often than not assumed the mantle of youthful irreverence and unchecked self-promotion.<sup>11</sup>

In the subsequent decades, HTC underwent considerable change, much to the detriment, I should add, of a clear institutional mission. In the 1960s, a student writer asked: “What should be the main purpose of our Yeshiva?” He then admitted that this “question is neither new, nor novel” at HTC.<sup>12</sup> For example, the seminary’s commitment to broad-minded secular studies vacillated throughout the twentieth century. In more recent years, the yeshiva propagated Talmud study for its own sake rather than to train students to serve in the rabbinate. Lately, HTC has, to my delight, worked to reverse that course and strike a balance that promotes

undeterred Torah study and professional rabbinical training. In this manner, the history of the Hebrew Theological College is one of discontinuities and varied iterations.

Yet there exists two great cultural constants that have managed to hold the Chicago school together: Zionism and Mussar. Here are some facts. In 1942, the Hebrew Theological College Student Council unanimously passed a resolution that declared:

1. The Jews be recognized as one of the United Nations.
2. The Jewish nation should have representation at all peace conferences.
3. The Jewish nation be permitted to organize a Jewish Army composed of Palestinian and stateless Jews, of which there are approximately 150,000 to fight the common enemy.<sup>13</sup>

Subsequently, Zionism at HTC became more idealistic and less political—but no less sincere. Nearly thirty years later, two students participated in a Thursday evening debate on the merits of hosting Bnei Akiva and its Religious Zionist programs at HTC. One student argued for the centrality of Zionism and Israel in Orthodox Jewish life. The other, admittedly the minority opinion on campus, stressed that Religious Zionism was an ancillary matter in a traditional yeshiva setting.<sup>14</sup> The same argument replayed itself among the student body two years later, with the pro-Zionist expositor seizing the lion’s share of the audience’s applause.<sup>15</sup>

Mussar also remained a thread woven in and out of HTC’s history. In May 1962, a high school student in the Yeshiva editorialized on the value of Mussar and the heroics of Rabbi Yisrael Salanter to spearhead the movement. “Many great yeshivot,” explained the writer, “both in Europe (Slobodka, Mir, and Telshe) and now in America had and have books in Mussar.”<sup>16</sup> Later that year, another student published a fanciful legend of Rabbi Salanter’s encounter with a less-than-pleasant Jew aboard a train in Europe.<sup>17</sup> In all probability, both students learned of Rabbi Salanter and his Mussar program from their teachers at HTC.

The dual legacy of Mussar and Zionism continues into the present epoch of the Hebrew Theological College. I assumed my post as chief academic officer of the school in July 2015. My start was concurrent with the new union between HTC and Touro College and University System. Upon setting foot in the beit

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## Hebrew Theological College *Continued from page 13*

midrash, I quickly noticed several copies of Rabbi Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto's *Messilat Yesharim*, the most classic of Mussar texts. In fact, piled on a table were a number of various editions of the work alongside several versions in English translation. As well, the current beit midrash curriculum features a segment of study devoted exclusively to Mussar. As for Zionism, the school remains as steadfastly committed to the movement as it did during Rabbi Saul Silber's tenure. HTC's first president died in 1946, too early to partake in the celebration of Israel's birth. In turn, Silber's successors have commemorated Israel Independence Day in his stead, with all of the convivial and religious trappings of a premier contemporary Jewish holiday.

Of course, the partnership between HTC and Touro will help the Chicago school advance its academic programs and grow its student body, both in quantity and quality. There will be some change, I pray for the better. In this way, I testify to the cyclical nature of history: change is far from uncommon in the annals of Hebrew Theological College. For those of us in search of a sturdy foothold, we are comforted that the cultural bedrock of the institution remains firmly in place. Together, the teachings and devotion to Zionism and Mussar will remain the reliable guideposts in this era of the yeshiva and all those that follow it.

<sup>1</sup> See Jeffrey S. Gurock, "American Orthodox Organizations in Support of Zionism, 1880-1930," in *Zionism and Religion*, eds. Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1998), 219-34.

<sup>2</sup> Saul Silber, *Selected Essays* (Chicago: International Printing Company, 1950), 21.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 172-77.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-60.

<sup>5</sup> Moselle A. Mintz and Norman D. Schwartz, Interview with Mrs. Esther Kopstein, March 19, 1978, Chicago Jewish Historical Society Oral History Project.

<sup>6</sup> See David Gleicher, "The Origins and Early Years of Chicago's Hebrew Theological College," *Tradition* 27 (Winter 1993): 62.

<sup>7</sup> William Howard Graft, "A Tragic-Farcical RAZzberry in Four Convulsions," *Hebrew Theologian* 4 (July 1926): 3.

<sup>8</sup> Meir S. Ostrinsky, "Ethics of Derech Eretz Raba and Zuta," *Hamayan* 4 (Winter 1928-1929): 14-15.

<sup>9</sup> See "Setting the Example," *Hebrew Theologian* 1 (February 22, 1925): 1.

<sup>10</sup> Manuel Laderman, "Why Not More Masmidim?," *Hebrew Theologian* 3 (April 15, 1926): 9.

<sup>11</sup> See, Zev Eleff, "Freedom and Responsibility: The First Orthodox College Journalists and Early Yeshiva College Politics, 1935-1941," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 62 (December 2010): 55-88.

<sup>12</sup> Elliot Margolies, "Essay on Insight," *Insight* (March 1969): np.

<sup>13</sup> "Council Passes Resolution," *Scribe* (December 21, 1942): 1.

<sup>14</sup> "Should B'nai Akiva be in the Yeshiva?," *Thursday Night Review* (April 1970): np.

<sup>15</sup> "B'nei Akiva—Does it Belong?," *Thursday Night Review* (March 26, 1972): 5-7.

<sup>16</sup> "Mussar," *Reflector* (May 1962): 3.

<sup>17</sup> "Reb Yisroel Salanter," *Reflector* (November 1962): 3.

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## Welcome, New Members of the CJHS

Jerry & Annette Brenner  
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*Glenview, IL*

Sandra Gnippe  
*Chicago, IL*

Elizabeth Gordon  
*Arlington Heights, IL*

Lowell B. Komie  
*Highwood, IL*

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Marilyn Brodsky  
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*Chicago, IL*

Matthew Nickerson  
*Chicago, IL*

Helene Rosenberg  
*Evanston, IL*

Lara Rosenbush  
*Chicago, IL*

Lee & Sandra Silverglade  
*Highland Park, IL*

## **CJHS Tour – Sunday, October 11** **“Historic North Side Jewish Cemeteries”**

**Guides: Mark Mandle and Herbert Eiseman, CJHS Board Members**

*Jewish Graceland:  
Memorial to Civil War  
Colonel Marcus M. Spiegel.  
He died of battle wounds  
in Mississippi. His remains  
were not recovered.*



*Rosehill Cemetery:  
Main Gate. Beautiful  
Rosehill is the resting  
place of many prominent  
Chicago Jews, including  
Julius Rosenwald,  
Milton Florsheim,  
and Morris B. Sachs.*



*New Light Cemetery:  
Holocaust Monument  
and decorative doors of  
Mander Chapel.*



A walking tour through the grounds of three historic cemeteries: Hebrew Benevolent Society (Jewish Graceland), founded in 1856; beautiful Rosehill Cemetery, where many renowned Jewish Chicagoans are at rest; and New Light Cemetery in Lincolnwood, founded by German Jews in 1895 and lovingly restored and rededicated in 2006 with a new chapel and a Holocaust Monument where an annual memorial service is conducted. Travel between sites via motor coach.

**11:30 am – 4:30 pm Bernard Horwich JCC, 3003 West Touhy Avenue**

**12:00 pm – 5:00 pm Chicago History Museum, 1601 North Clark Street**

**\$40 CJHS Member / \$45 Non-member**

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Horwich

History Museum

Number of Participants \_\_\_\_\_

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The Chicago Jewish Historical Society was founded in 1977, and is in part an outgrowth of local Jewish participation in the United States Bicentennial Celebration of 1976 at an exhibition mounted at the Museum of Science and Industry by the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago and the American Jewish Congress. Two years after celebrating our “double *chai*,” the Society’s

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unique mission continues to be the discovery, collection, and dissemination of information about the Jewish experience in the Chicago area through publications, open meetings, tours, and outreach to youth. The Society does not maintain its own archives, but seeks out written, spoken, and photographic records and artifacts, and responsibly arranges for their donation to Jewish archives.

**Membership** in the Society is open to all interested persons and organizations, and includes:

- A subscription to *Chicago Jewish History*.
- Free admission to Society public programs. General admission is \$10 per person.
- Discounts on Society tours.
- 10% discount on purchases at the elegant Spertus Shop.
- Membership runs on a calendar year, from January through December. New members joining after July 1st are given an initial membership through December of the following year.

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