Contents

Introduction

This book brings together six articles I have published in recent years on the development of the Orthodox Jewish community in Cleveland, Ohio. The first of my publications relating to Orthodoxy in Cleveland dates to 2005. However, the beginning of my interest in this subject goes back nearly half a century. In 1973, as a first-year graduate student in Jewish history at Columbia University, I met Sandra Moskovitz, then a Barnard senior, at a Shabbat meal and we began dating. We married in 1976.

Almost from the beginning of our relationship, Sandy began introducing me to her family, and I began visiting Cleveland, Ohio, Sandy's hometown, on a regular basis. Starting with her nuclear family, and continuing with her extended family of aunts, uncles, and cousins, I began an introduction to the living world of Orthodox Jews in Cleveland. I prayed in Cleveland's Orthodox synagogues, particularly Young Israel of Cleveland, and frequented the community's bakeries, butcher shops, restaurants, schools, and other institutions.

Mi-kol melamdai hiskalti. In my frequent visits to Cleveland that often coincided with Jewish holidays, I began absorbing the atmosphere of Orthodox Jewish Cleveland, particularly from the perspective of Sandy's Holocaust-survivor parents, Margaret (Mindl) and Aaron Moskovitz, who spoke English well, but remained more comfortable in Yiddish, and thereby helped improve my grasp of a language that even in the late twentieth century was essential to fully understand what was going on in Cleveland's Orthodox community.

All these experiences prepared me in an important way for my intellectual interest in North American Orthodoxy, and the publication of scholarly articles and books relevant to the history of traditional Judaism in North America in general,[1] and in particular the history of the community of Yiddish-speaking immigrant Orthodox rabbis in Montreal,[2] that occupied me for a significant portion of my academic career. My developing scholarly interest in North

---

1 These articles are collected in my book *Translating a Tradition: Studies in American Jewish History* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2008).

2 *Rabbis and Their Community: Studies in the Immigrant Orthodox Rabbinate in Montreal, 1896–1930* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007). Cf. also my *A Kabbalist in Montreal* (New York: Touro University Press, 2021): *The Life and Times of Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2021).

American Orthodox Judaism also prepared me to notice the publications of Samuel Rocker, editor of the *Yiddishe Velt* (*Jewish World* [JW]), Cleveland's Yiddish newspaper in the early twentieth century, which lay on a bookshelf in the Young Israel of Cleveland synagogue, and to take note of their significance for the history of North American Orthodox Judaism in that era. The encounter with Rocker's books at Young Israel laid the groundwork for my first publication in this area, which is included in chapter three of this book. Further thanks for that initial publication go to Steven Engler, a former graduate student at Concordia University, and now professor of religious studies at Mount Royal University. It was Engler who invited me to contribute an article on the subject of "historicizing 'tradition' in the study of religion" for a book he was editing, and I immediately thought of Rocker's books in that context. Engler's volume was published in 2005, and my contribution to it marked my first venture in the area of Cleveland Jewish communal history.

It would be another several years before my article on Samuel Rocker caused me to receive another invitation that would plunge me headlong into the global contemplation of Cleveland Jewish Orthodoxy and its development. Sean Martin, associate curator for Jewish history at the Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland, where he oversees the Cleveland Jewish Archives,[3] and professor of Jewish studies at Case Western Reserve University was in the process of organizing a scholarly conference that would reconsider the history of the Jewish community in Cleveland, and he wanted to make sure that Cleveland Jewish Orthodoxy was included. At the suggestion of my friend and colleague, Professor Jonathan Sarna of Brandeis University, who was aware of my interest in North American Orthodoxy, Martin asked me to contribute to his conference with a presentation on Cleveland's Orthodox community.

The research for my presentation at this conference, which involved extensive use of the rich resources of the Cleveland Jewish Archives, took place in the fall of 2014, and was greatly facilitated by my appointment as scholar in residence in the Laura and Alvin Siegal lifelong learning program of Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. My thanks go to Professor Martin, Professor John Grabowski of Case Western Reserve University and the Western Reserve Historical Society, Professor Alanna Cooper of Case Western Reserve University, who facilitated my appointment as visiting scholar, to the helpful staff of the Western Reserve Historical Society, and last—and hardly least—to

3 "Cleveland Jewish Archives," Western Reserve Historical Society, accessed March 23, 2022, https://www.wrhs.org/research/library/significant-collections/jewish-american/.

my late brother-in-law, Eddy Moskovitz, and his wife, Iris, for generously hosting Sandy and me during this period. From the research I did at this time, I was able to write the articles that make up chapters one, two, and six of this book.

While my archival research in Cleveland was essential for the creation of this volume, it also impressed on me the knowledge that there existed much more material on my subject than I was able to access in the several weeks I had allotted for archival research on my presentation. It quickly became clear to me that any truly comprehensive work on Cleveland Orthodoxy would require a year or more devoted to research in the Cleveland Jewish Archives alone, let alone important material in private hands.

During my stay in Cleveland as scholar in residence, I became aware through a chance conversation while visiting a house of mourning of the existence of a private archive of the papers of early twentieth-century Cleveland Orthodox activist Abraham Abba Katz, now housed in a home in the suburb of Cleveland Heights. My research in that unique family archive yielded documents that formed the foundation of chapters four and five in this book. My thanks go to Abraham Katz's descendants, who welcomed me into their home and enabled me to mine the riches of the papers they had lovingly preserved.

While a number of scholars have ably presented important parts of the history of Jewish Orthodoxy in Cleveland, Ohio, this book is a first attempt to deal comprehensively with the story of Cleveland Orthodox Judaism. In presenting the results of my research, I am acutely mindful of the fact that, though Jeffrey Gurock has published an important social history of Orthodoxy in America,[4] a comprehensive historical account of Orthodoxy in Cleveland, or, indeed any major North American community has not yet been attempted.[5] I am mindful as well that the primary sources for such a truly comprehensive study, including many rich archival sources housed in the Cleveland Jewish Archives of the Western Reserve Historical Society Library, exist, ready to be exploited. Cleveland Jewish newspapers, including especially the Yiddish-language *Yiddishe Velt*, are also available to the researcher, and stand ready to provide important additional details for the history of Jewish Orthodoxy in

---

4 Jeffrey Gurock, *Orthodox Jews in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

5 Jeffrey Gurock has written a comprehensive history of Orthodox Judaism in a smaller American Jewish community in his *Orthodoxy in Charleston: Brith Sholom Beth Israel & American Jewish History* (Charleston: College of Charleston Library, 2004). Cf. also Ira Robinson, *Rabbis and Their Community: Studies in the Immigrant Orthodox Rabbinate in Montreal, 1896–1930* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007), which partially fills this gap for the Jewish community of Montreal in the early twentieth century.

Cleveland. This means that the chapters presented in this book are necessarily somewhat selective in nature and cannot truly do justice to this complex subject in its entirety.

On the other hand, in this book I feel like the archaeologist confronted with an extensive site, who does not have the resources to dig up the entire site. For that archaeologist, the exploration of a small, but well-considered portion of the entire site will yield useful details that can be extrapolated to create a depiction of the whole, pending the future excavation of further portions. In this spirit, I present the chapters of this book as a preliminary site report that will hopefully accomplish two things. Chapters one and two, taken together, will present for the first time a connected narrative history of the evolution of the Jewish Orthodox community in Cleveland, Ohio from its beginnings to the present. The succeeding chapters, for their part, will present in greater detail persons and institutions of great importance to the historical development of that community.

In chapter one, I attempt to sketch the evolution of Orthodox Jewry in Cleveland from its nineteenth-century beginnings to approximately 1940. This chapter will begin with a short discussion of the Judaic life of the earliest Jewish settlers in Cleveland prior to the coalescence of an "Orthodox" Judaism as a phenomenon of modernity that responded to the rise of a "Reform" Judaism in North America in the mid-nineteenth century. It will then examine the religious life of the Eastern European Jewish immigrant community from the late nineteenth century to roughly the beginning of World War II. Major issues dealt with in this chapter include synagogues, communal organizations, the rabbinate, Jewish education, and kashrut.

The account of the post-World War II period, in chapter two, highlights in particular the long-term significance of the establishment of the Telshe Yeshiva in Cleveland in 1941. It also deals with issues relating to Jewish education, synagogues, kashrut, and relations between the Orthodox community and non-Orthodox Jews. Finally, the article briefly surveys the state of the Orthodox Jewish community in Cleveland at the beginning of the twenty-first century with an emphasis on the impact of Orthodox educational institutions on the community.

Chapter three deals with Samuel Rocker, publisher of Cleveland's Yiddish-language newspaper, the *Yiddishe Velt*. It concentrates on the three books he published, all of which first appeared in the pages of his newspaper. These books include a volume on the Talmudic interpretation of the Bible as well as two books of Hasidic tales. These books show that Rocker served as a cultural mediator not simply between the Eastern European Jewish immigrants and

their new country, but also between these immigrant Jews and their religious past, which included study of the Talmud as a highly valued religious and cultural activity, as well as the religious traditions embodied in the stories he told about the great masters of the Hasidic movement.

Chapter four examines one of the most prominent cases of "Orthodox" synagogues adopting mixed seating—that of the Jewish Center of Cleveland, which adopted mixed seating in 1925. However, a dissenting minority within the congregation refused to concede the principle that their synagogue, founded for the perpetuation of "Orthodox Judaism," had the right to do this. This ensuing legal battle attracted local, national, and international publicity and helped to define what Orthodox and Conservative Judaism in North America represented for an entire generation. This chapter utilizes archival sources not seen by previous researchers, which shed new light on the case and its consequences, particularly from the perspective of the dissident Orthodox minority.

Chapter five gives its attention to the story of the New Haven Yeshiva. The yeshiva was founded in New Haven, Connecticut in 1923, moved to Cleveland in 1929, and went out of existence in 1937. Likely because it had no institutional continuity in the postwar period, the existence of the New Haven Yeshiva has received relatively little scholarly attention. However, it merits our attention as the first Mussar yeshiva in the United States, patterned almost completely after the Slobodka Yeshiva. The New Haven Yeshiva's rise, as well as its demise, has much to tell us concerning the development of Orthodox Judaism in North America in general, and in Cleveland in particular, in the 1920s and 1930s.

Chapter six brings us to 1945, a pivotal year for Cleveland Jewry, which once again was preparing to move its institutions to a new neighborhood, Cleveland Heights. This chapter translates into English Rabbi Israel Porath's 1945 article on this subject, published in the *Yiddishe Velt*, that presented a remarkably clear analysis of the situation of Cleveland's Orthodox Jewry in that era, and a prescient vision of its suburban future.

It is my great pleasure to acknowledge permission to republish the material in this book that has been previously published, and to give the bibliographical details of the original publications, which make up this book. The material from chapter one previously appeared as "'A Link in the Great American Chain': the Evolution of Jewish Orthodoxy in Cleveland to 1940," in *Cleveland Jews and the Making of a Midwestern Community*, ed. Sean Martin and John J. Grabowski (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2020), 14–34. Chapter two appeared as "The Evolution of the Orthodox Jewish Community in Cleveland, Ohio, 1940 to the Present," *Studies in Judaism, Humanities, and the Social Sciences* 2, no. 2 (Spring 2019): 105–119. Chapter three was originally

published as "Hasid and Maskil: The Hasidic Tales of an American Yiddish Journalist," in *Historicizing "Tradition" in the Study of Religion*, ed. Steven Engler and Gregory P. Grieve (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 283–296, and was reprinted in my *Translating a Tradition: Studies in American Jewish History* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2008), 223–240. Chapter 4 appeared as "A 'Jewish Monkey Trial': the Cleveland Jewish Center and the Emerging Borderline between Orthodox and Conservative Judaism in 1920s North America," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 68, no. 2 (2016): 90–118.

Chapter five appeared as "The New Haven Yeshiva, 1923–1937: An Experiment in American Jewish Education," *Studies in Judaism, Humanities, and the Social Sciences Annual Review 2021-2022*, 333-351; and chapter six was published as "'The Second Destruction of Cleveland Orthodox Synagogues': Rabbi Israel Porath and Cleveland Jewry at the Crossroads, 1945," *The American Jewish Archives Journal* 71, no. 1 (2019): 46–56. These chapters were reedited for this book. Footnotes were standardized and, in some cases, new material was added.

My final thanks go to Professor Michael Shmidman, who heads Touro University Press, for his confidence in this volume, and to Professor Simcha Fishbane, also of Touro, for his collegiality and helpfulness over a period of decades.

Montreal, Canada
May 6, 2022

Abbreviations

AJYB: *American Jewish Year Book*
CJN: *Cleveland Jewish News*
ECH: *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*
JTA: Jewish Telegraphic Agency
JW: *Yiddishe Velt / Jewish World* (Cleveland)
KFA: Katz Family Archives, Cleveland Heights, Ohio (photos of these documents are in possession of the author).
OJA: Orthodox Jewish Association
VKC: Vaad ha-Kashrut of Cleveland
WPA 1937: United States Work Projects Administration (Ohio), *Cleveland Foreign Language Newspaper Digest 1937*, vol. 3 (Cleveland, December 1939).
WPA 1938: United States Work Projects Administration (Ohio), *Cleveland Foreign Language Newspaper Digest 1938*, vol. 3 (Cleveland, June 1940).
WRHS: Western Reserve Historical Society Library
YABI: Yeshivat Adath Bnei Israel

CHAPTER 1

The Evolution of Jewish Orthodoxy in Cleveland to 1941

Nineteenth-Century Beginnings

The founders of the Jewish community in Cleveland[1] in the first half of the nineteenth century came to the shores of Lake Erie in Northeast Ohio with hardly any notion that Judaism could mean anything other than the traditional rabbinic Judaism that had existed in their ancestral village of Unsleben, Bavaria. However, they certainly understood that it was possible for Jews, especially in America, to be neglectful of the laws, customs, and mores of that Judaism.[2] Indeed, the "Unsleben document" of 1839 attempted to warn them of this possibility: "Do not turn away from the religion of our fathers. . . . Don't tear yourselves away from the laws in which your fathers and mothers searched for assurance and found it."[3]

When, in the 1840s, Jews in Cleveland began to create their own synagogues, they were designed to adhere as closely as possible to the only model of synagogue these Jews knew. Thus, Lloyd Gartner describes the first Cleveland synagogues in their beginnings somewhat anachronistically as "the two little

---

1 The major account of the history of the Cleveland Jewish community to the mid-twentieth century remains Lloyd Gartner, *History of the Jews of Cleveland* (Cleveland: Western Reserve Historical Society and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978). Cf. Sean Martin and John J. Grabowski, eds., *Cleveland Jews and the Making of a Midwestern Community* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2020).

2 On American Judaism in the nineteenth century see Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 62–134.

3 Sally H. Wertheim and Alan D. Bennett, eds., *Remembering: Cleveland's Jewish Voices* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2011), 196.

Orthodox congregations."[4] However, neither of these then traditional congregations, Anshe Chesed and Tifereth Israel, were "Orthodox" in the strict sense of the word, because "Orthodox" implies the presence of a religious alternative—"Reform" Judaism—which was then coalescing in Europe but which strongly manifested its intellectual and institutional presence in North America only in the mid-nineteenth century. It was in fact the leadership of Reform Judaism that designated those who resisted its claims to represent Judaism as "Orthodox."[5]

When Reform did make its appeal to American Jews as an alternative expression of Judaism that spoke cogently to their social and religious situation, Gartner notes that certain "Reform" tendencies appeared in Cleveland's synagogues (sooner in Tifereth Israel than Anshe Chesed). However, both remained essentially "Orthodox" for several years with Anshe Chesed housing a *mikveh* for ritual purification and both congregations employing *shoḥtim* (slaughterers) to ensure a supply of kosher meat.[6] Thus, in 1857, the anti-Reform traditionalist leader, Isaac Leeser, visited Cleveland and observed that "all communities in Cleveland are Orthodox . . . Reform does not seem to have made rapid progress. There are many who keep it [the Sabbath] holy."[7]

Cleveland's traditionalist community in the mid-nineteenth century included Joseph Levy, who had obtained traditional rabbinic ordination in Europe and settled in Cleveland with an extensive library of rabbinic literature but did not seek a rabbinical position. American Reform leader Isaac Mayer Wise, no friend of Orthodoxy, described Levy as "A learned rabbinical Jew of the oldest stamp . . . he stands firm upon the basis of the rabbinical literature, and commands respect from [sic] his religious position by his simple, firm, and decided language."[8]

In the 1850s Levy administered a Jewish divorce (*get*) in Cleveland that achieved a great deal of notoriety both locally and nationally. Part of the notoriety of this divorce likely stemmed from the fact that the divorce document was

---

4 Gartner, *History of the Jews of Cleveland*, 31.

5 On Orthodoxy as a product of Jewish modernity, see Jacob Katz, "Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective," in *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, vol. 2, ed. Peter H. Medding (Bloomington: Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 1986), 3–17. Cf. Giti Bendheim, Menachem Butler, Jay M. Harris, and Uriel Katz, eds., *Jacob Katz on the Origins of Orthodoxy* (Cambridge, MA: Shikey Press, 2022). On the history of Reform Judaism see Michael Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). For Meyer's account of early Reform in the United States, see especially ibid., 225–263.

6 Gartner, *History of the Jews of Cleveland*, 33–34, 38–39.

7 Ibid., 35.

8 Ibid., 38.

prepared and administered without the participation of Cleveland's only "official" rabbi, Isidore Kalisch. In any event, the *Plain Dealer* in Cleveland and the Jewish newspaper *The Asmonean* in New York opposed the Cleveland *get*, while Isaac Leeser's *Occident* not only supported Levy editorially,[9] but also published a learned responsum Levy wrote in Hebrew in which he defended the halakhic propriety of the *get* he had issued.[10] This constitutes the first published rabbinic responsum in the Hebrew language that was widely circulated in an American periodical.[11]

Orthodoxy and the Wave of Eastern European Migration to Cleveland

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Reform Judaism made important inroads in the Jewish community of Cleveland. Though the degree of liberation from the premodern Judaic tradition that was now defined as "Orthodoxy" varied from synagogue to synagogue and from family to family, two things are clear. The first is that by the end of the nineteenth century nearly all the mid-nineteenth-century German Jewish immigrants to Cleveland and their families had accommodated themselves in one way or another to the rhetoric and the teachings of American Reform Judaism, expressed both in German and, increasingly, in English. The second thing to note is that by the turn of the twentieth century the established German Jewish community in Cleveland had begun to note the increasing, and to them disturbing, presence of Jews stemming from the various countries of Eastern Europe who did not share their cultural, religious, and linguistic orientation. Though the individuals and families who made up the wave of Eastern European Jewish migration to North America in general, and to Cleveland in particular, varied greatly in terms of their geographic origins and their religious beliefs that ranged from militantly Orthodox to militantly atheist, the acculturated German-Jewish establishment of Cleveland Jewry tended to look at all the Eastern European Jewish immigrants, whom they

9 Ibid., 37.

10 *Occident* 10 (1852), accessed January 25, 2015, http://www.jewish-history.com/occident/volume10/jul1852/cleveland.html.

11 Personal communication from Dr. Zev Eleff, February 11, 2015. See Zev Eleff, "Power, Pulpits and Pews: Religious Authority and the Formation of American Judaism, 1816–1885" (PhD diss., Brandeis University, Waltham, May 2015), 91–93.

considered to be marginal to them both economically and religiously, as "Orthodox" regardless of their level of Judaic observance.[12] Thus, in 1895 Emma C. Davis broadly and negatively characterized these Jewish newcomers to Cleveland as: "These bigoted followers of the orthodox rabbinical law . . . whose minds are stunted, whose characters are warped and who have become adepts and who have grown wily in the evasions of law."[13] This mindset on the part of Cleveland's German-Jewish elite made for a situation in which the newly arrived Eastern European Jews felt it necessary to establish their own institutions, which included synagogues as well as a variety of self-help organizations.

Synagogues

The synagogues of the Eastern European immigrant "Orthodox" were characterized in a Cleveland newspaper article of 1887 as showing "the dark side of the European ghetto."[14] What do we know of them in the city that Rabbi Solomon Goldman characterized in the early twentieth century as "the most synagogue-minded city in the country"?[15]

I. J. Benjamin (1818–1864), in his account of his travels through the Jewish communities of North America, passed through Cleveland in January 1862. Beyond the well-established Anshe Chesed and Tifereth Israel congregations, he also noticed "a small Polish congregation, recently founded and as yet without a synagogue."[16] This congregation was undoubtedly Anshe Emeth,[17] which had been founded by Polish Jews in 1857. Other early congregations included Beth Israel Chevra Kadisha (Lithuanian, 1860)[18] and Bnai Jeshurun, founded by Hungarian Jews in 1866.[19] At the turn of the twentieth century, there were, in the words of a *Jewish Encyclopedia* article (1901), "no less than

12 Leon Wiesenfeld, *Jewish Life in Cleveland in the 1920s and 1930s: The Memoirs of a Jewish Journalist* (Cleveland: Jewish Voice Pictorial, n.d.), 61.
13 Cited in Gartner, *History of the Jews of Cleveland*, 110.
14 Ibid., 162.
15 Solomon Goldman, *Crisis and Decision* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1938), 162.
16 I. J. Benjamin, *Three Years in America, 1859–1862* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1956), vol. 2, 281.
17 It is possible that the name of the congregation, Anshe Emeth (Men of Truth) is a dialectical comment on the name of the more established Anshe Chesed (Men of Lovingkindness).
18 Gartner, *History of the Jews of Cleveland*, 50.
19 Wertheim and Bennett, *Remembering: Cleveland's Jewish Voices*, 7.

eleven minor congregations, mostly Russian, with a combined membership of 700—the largest of them, Beth Hamidrash Hagodol Beth Israel, having 600 seat-holders."[20] The list of congregations in Cleveland in the *American Jewish Year Book* [AJYB] 1 (1899–1900) also lists eleven.[21] In 1923, Gartner states the number of Orthodox congregations to have been sixteen,[22] while seventeen Orthodox synagogues were listed in the 1935 Cleveland directory.[23]

The proliferation of Orthodox congregations in Cleveland followed several patterns common to most North American centers of Jewish population. First and foremost, congregations formed on the basis of European place of origin (for example, Lithuania or Hungary). Another criterion was the issue of liturgy.

Some congregations prayed in the Ashkenazic liturgy prevalent in much of Eastern Europe while others, like Nusach Ari, a congregation founded in 1906 that was apparently Hasidic, "a sect entirely new to Cleveland Judaism," prayed with the liturgy of Nusach Sfard or Nusach Ari.[24] Ultimately a Hasidic rabbi, *ha-rav ha-tsaddik* Meir Leifer became the rabbi of Anshe Marmorish Bnei Yaakov and founded a dynasty as the "Clevelander Rebbe" in Cleveland from 1922 to 1934 when he moved to Williamsburg, Brooklyn.[25]

Sabbath observance was another criterion. Whereas, for the most part, the Eastern European synagogues of Cleveland conducted themselves internally in completely traditional ways, many if not most of their members were no longer strict observers of the Jewish Sabbath because of the overwhelming economic reality of America, in which jobs enabling a person to observe the Jewish Sabbath and holidays were few and far between.[26] On the other hand,

---

20 *Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Cleveland," accessed February 10, 2015, http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/4420-cleveland.

21 "Directory of Local Organizations," AJYB 1 (1899–1900), accessed February 10, 2015, https://ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/1899_1900_5_LocalOrgs.pdf.

22 Gartner, *History of the Jews of Cleveland*, 142.

23 Sidney Z. Vincent and Judah Rubenstein, *Merging Traditions—Jewish Life in Cleveland: A Contemporary Narrative, 1945–1975. A Pictorial Record, 1839–1975* (Cleveland: Western Reserve Historical Society and the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland, 1978), 223.

24 Gartner, *History of the Jews of Cleveland*, 177. Cf. Ira Robinson, "Anshe Sfard: the Creation of the First Hasidic Congregations in North America," *American Jewish Archives* 57 (2005): 53–66.

25 JW, July 23, 1923, 2; JW, August 29, 1923, 2; "Cleveland (Hasidic Dynasty)," Wikipedia, accessed February 16, 2015, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cleveland_(Hasidic_dynasty).

26 One of the key issues facing motivated Orthodox Jews was finding work that did not involve working on the Sabbath. Organizations such as Cleveland's Jewish Sabbath Association were founded to help. Brudno's cigar factory, which was owned by an Orthodox Jew and which did not require work on Sabbaths and holidays, thus attracted, among others, "a few young men

some congregations wished to attract members who were strictly Sabbath-observant. Thus members of the Synagogue of the Government of Grodno pledged to strictly refrain from labor on Saturdays and Jewish holidays,[27] and the Hungarian congregation Shomre Shabbos, founded in 1905 on East Thirty-Seventh Street, only accepted Sabbath observers as members.[28]

Still another issue leading to the proliferation of synagogues was internal strife within congregations. Thus the issue of the separate seating of men and women, which came to largely define the difference between Orthodox and non-Orthodox congregations in the twentieth century,[29] arose in Bnai Jeshurun in 1904. The adoption of mixed seating by Bnai Jeshurun led to the founding of an Orthodox breakaway congregation, Ohab Zedek.[30] Anshe Emeth also debated this issue in the late 1880s. In this case, however, the dispute was essentially contained within the congregation until the point in the 1920s when, now united with Congregation Beth Tfiloh and transmogrified into the Jewish Center, the congregation opted for mixed seating in 1924 under the leadership of Rabbi Solomon Goldman amidst tremendous strife and great national publicity.[31]

In response to this momentous change in the Jewish center, Orthodox elements in the congregation led by Abraham A. Katz determined to fight what they regarded as a betrayal of Orthodox Judaism on the part of their

---

who were ordained rabbis and some 'genteel' young men who in the old country had never done a lick of work." These Orthodox men, "dignified, pious Jews with handsome beards," in Joseph Morgenstern's description, sat at one table and discussed Torah. This was a discussion in which Brudno, the owner, would "often" take part. Brudno is described by Rose Pastor as "a picturesque patriarch with his long black beard and his tall black skull-cap. . . . In this godless America he would give them plenty of work in a shop where the Sabbath was kept holy. It was his strength, for they would work in no shop where the Sabbath was not kept holy." Cf. AJYB 14 (1912–1913); Joseph Morgenstern, *I Have Considered My Days* (New York: Ykuf, 1964), 113–114; Wertheim and Bennett, *Remembering: Cleveland's Jewish Voices*, 87.

27 Gartner, *History of the Jews of Cleveland*, 133, 177.

28 "Shomre Shabbos," Jewish Cleveland, accessed February 17, 2015, http://jewishcleveland.weebly.com/shomre-shabbos.html (link not active now). The website of the congregation indicates the founding date of 1904: Shomre Shabbos, accessed October 14, 2022, https://shomreshabbos.com/. Lloyd Gartner presents a founding date of 1906: *History of the Jews of Cleveland*, 177.

29 On this issue from an Orthodox perspective see Baruch Litwin, ed., *The Sanctity of the Synagogue* (New York: Spero Foundation, 1959).

30 Gartner, *History of the Jews of Cleveland*, 168–169.

31 Ibid., 171; Wiesenfeld, *Jewish Life in Cleveland*, 69–70. For an analysis of this incident in more detail, see chapter four of this book: "A 'Jewish Monkey Trial': The Cleveland Jewish Center and the Emerging Borderline between Orthodox and Conservative Judaism in 1920s North America."

congregation. They were initially advised by Rabbi Samuel Benjamin who had opposed mixed seating and had been recently ousted as the congregation's rabbi. They founded a short-lived newspaper as a rival to Samuel Rocker's Yiddish daily, the *Yiddishe Velt*,[32] whose main purpose was to fight Rabbi Goldman and the Jewish Center.[33] The conflict between the Orthodox group, which called itself the "Committee of 100" culminated in a suit against Rabbi Goldman and the congregation, alleging that the constitution of the congregation provided that as long as ten members will insist on the Orthodox ritual, the congregation had to remain Orthodox. The Jewish Center and Rabbi Goldman responded that the congregation's ritual and practice was fully in accordance with traditional Judaism. The issue in the trial became, therefore, what constitutes Orthodoxy.[34]

It is interesting to examine the Congregation's official response to the suit, for in its self-justification it illustrates the extent to which "Orthodox" congregations and individuals in Cleveland had been subject to "reform" influences:

> It is true that our congregation was founded sixty years ago, but for more than a quarter of a century it has been moving in the direction of what is generally known as Conservative Judaism. . . . Some twenty years ago we engaged as our spiritual leader the late Rabbi Samuel Margolis, who was known to shave, to eat without a hat, and seldom if ever attended daily services. Our congregation never pretended to be Orthodox. We have had late Friday evening service for more than a decade. We have had religious school and confirmation of boys and girls together for about fifteen years. . . . Ours was also one of the first congregations to join the United Synagogue of America. In 1921 prior to Rabbi Goldman's coming to our congregation we considered a merger with a well-known Conservative congregation in Cleveland.[35]

---

32 For more on Rocker and his newspaper, see chapter three of this book: "Hasid and Maskil: The Hasidic Tales of an American Yiddish Journalist."

33 Wiesenfeld, *Jewish Life in Cleveland*, 68. This attempt to found a rival newspaper was predictably heavily disparaged in the *Yiddishe Velt*. See JW, October 13, 1922, KFA.

34 "Testimony to Establish What is Orthodoxy will be Presented in Courts," JTA, November 4, 1927, accessed February 16, 2015, http://www.jta.org/1927/11/04/archive/testimony-to-establish-what-is-orthodoxy-will-be-presented-in-courts.

35 "Cleveland Center Leaders Reply to Orthodox Charges in Well-Known Controversy," JTA, November 20, 1927, accessed February 16, 2015, http://www.jta.org/1927/11/20/archive/cleveland-center-leaders-reply-to-orthodox-charges-in-well-known-controversy.

In the original trial in the Court of Common Pleas, which attracted national and worldwide attention, the judge ruled that the court had no jurisdiction over what amounted to a purely religious matter.[36] The Orthodox committee appealed the decision and initially seemed to have won when the Court of Appeals reversed the decision of the Common Pleas Court, and granted a temporary injunction for the Orthodox group against the Board of Trustees of the Jewish Center and Rabbi Goldman, enjoining them from using the synagogue as a Conservative house of worship, as well as a retrial. The decision was based on the plaintiff's contention that the synagogue was a trust, formed for Orthodox purposes, and that its trustees, without violating a trust, could not change the synagogue ritual from Orthodox to Conservative.[37]

However, the Orthodox victory was short-lived, because within a couple of months the Jewish Center leadership brought the issue before another Appellate Court, which concurred with the original court decision that the case centered on "a strictly ecclesiastical question" and again dismissed the suit.[38] The Committee of 100 appealed to the Supreme Court of Ohio, which, in December 1929, upheld the previous decision.[39]

The Jewish Center case ultimately served to more clearly demarcate the then often fuzzy line between "Orthodox" and "Conservative," and caused a great deal of bitterness between the sides. Rabbi Goldman in particular, who was the object of much of the resentment of the Orthodox side, seems to have reciprocated and harbored what Leon Wiesenfeld describes as a virulent hatred of the Orthodox whom "if he had the power, he would have exiled . . . to Siberia, as long as not to have them in Cleveland."[40]

---

36 "Cleveland Jewish Center Case Thrown Out of Court by Ruling of Judge Powell," JTA, January 18, 1928, accessed February 16, 2015, http://www.jta.org/1928/01/18/archive/cleveland-jewish-center-case-thrown-out-of-court-by-ruling-of-judge-powell.

37 "Changing Orthodox to Conservative Synagogue Trust Breach Court Rules," JTA, July 22, 1929, accessed February 16, 2015, http://www.jta.org/1929/07/22/archive/changing-orthodox-to-conservative-synagogue-trust-breach-court-rules.

38 "Court Dismisses Appeal on Cleveland Center Case," JTA, September 30, 1929, accessed February 16, 2015, http://www.jta.org/1929/09/30/archive/court-dismisses-appeal-on-cleveland-center-case.

39 "Appeal to Supreme Court in Jewish Center Dispute," JTA, November 17, 1929, accessed February 15, 2015, http://www.jta.org/1929/11/17/archive/appeal-to-supreme-court-in-jewish-centre-dispute; "Supreme Court Rules for Reform Wing in Cleveland Center," JTA, December 15, 1929, accessed February 16, 2015, http://www.jta.org/1929/12/15/archive/supreme-court-rules-for-reform-wing-in-cleveland-center.

40 Wiesenfeld, *Jewish Life in Cleveland*, 73–74.