

The Menorah journal.

New York, The Intercollegiate Menorah Association.

<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/umn.319510022337450>

HathiTrust



www.hathitrust.org

**Public Domain in the United States,
Google-digitized**

http://www.hathitrust.org/access_use#pd-us-google

We have determined this work to be in the public domain in the United States of America. It may not be in the public domain in other countries. Copies are provided as a preservation service. Particularly outside of the United States, persons receiving copies should make appropriate efforts to determine the copyright status of the work in their country and use the work accordingly. It is possible that current copyright holders, heirs or the estate of the authors of individual portions of the work, such as illustrations or photographs, assert copyrights over these portions. Depending on the nature of subsequent use that is made, additional rights may need to be obtained independently of anything we can address. The digital images and OCR of this work were produced by Google, Inc. (indicated by a watermark on each page in the PageTurner). Google requests that the images and OCR not be re-hosted, redistributed or used commercially. The images are provided for educational, scholarly, non-commercial purposes.

THE MENORAH JOURNAL

Published Bi-monthly by

The Intercollegiate Menorah Association

Publication Office: 300 Adams Street, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Editorial and Executive Offices: 63 Fifth Avenue, New York

Editor: HENRY HURWITZ

Managing Editor: ELLIOT E. COHEN

Associate Editors: ADOLPH S. OKO, HARRY A. WOLFSON, MARVIN LOWENTHAL

VOLUME XIII

AUGUST, 1927

NUMBER 4

CONTENTS

		PAGE
RABBI AND DAUGHTER	<i>Carl Mense</i>	<i>Frontispiece</i>
<i>A Painting</i>		
THE FUTURE OF LOCAL CHARITIES	<i>I. M. Rubinow</i>	335
THE PROSELYTES OF JUDENA	<i>Mendel Elkin</i>	347
A MODERN MYSTERY PLAY	<i>John Cowper Powys</i>	361
LEVIATHAN	<i>Louis Ginsberg</i>	366
<i>A Poem</i>		
SOME RECENT AMERICAN PAINTINGS		
<i>Art Insert</i>		
THE JEW AS A RADICAL	<i>Maurice G. Hindus</i>	367
FUNERAL AT THE CLUB, WITH LUNCH	<i>Lionel Trilling</i>	380
<i>A Story</i>		
ON PALESTINIAN AND RUSSIAN		
COLONIZATION	<i>Israel S. Wechsler</i>	391
THE CHARACTER OF ANCIENT JUDAISM	<i>George Foot Moore</i>	400
LETTERS FROM ABROAD		
BUENOS AIRES: TWO GENERATIONS IN		
THE ARGENTINE	<i>Leon Malach</i>	408
NOTES FOR A MODERN HISTORY OF THE JEWS	<i>E. E. C.</i>	417
COMMENTARIES		
PINCUS STEPS OUT	<i>Louis Solomon</i>	419
BACH AND BEETHOVEN IN JERUSALEM	<i>Y. M. Gavriel</i>	424
YANKELE'S KALEH.	<i>Anita Brenner</i>	426
SPEAKING OF BOOKS	<i>Herman Michelson</i>	430
	<i>Irving Fineman</i>	432
	<i>A. B. Magil</i>	433
	<i>Louis Berg</i>	435
OUR OWN WHO'S WHO.		438

50 cents a copy. Subscription, \$3.00 a year; in Canada, \$3.25; abroad, \$3.50

Copyright, 1927, by The Intercollegiate Menorah Association. All rights reserved.

Entered as second class matter at the Brooklyn, N. Y. Post Office, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Section 417, Act of February 23, 1925.

Letters from Abroad

Two Generations in the Argentine

Buenos Aires

THE first Jews to settle in the Argentine were, not to blink the facts, procurers, who came in the wake of the great European migration about fifty years ago. They enticed girls from the small towns of Eastern Europe into the Argentine and sold them into a life of vice. No wonder that the name "Buenos Aires" became a synonym for shame among the Jews of Eastern Europe or that it was a social stigma to admit to relatives in the Argentine.

These then were the Jewish pioneers of the Argentine: men who made no secret of their disgraceful trade and men who were, curiously enough, chauvinistically proud to call themselves Jews. Taking root in the new land and flourishing, they became wealthy, and with their families whom they brought from Europe established a community which took to itself all the aristocratic airs common to early settlers and first families the world over.

But the Jew apparently had a destiny in Argentina which even this unhappy beginning could not pervert from its true direction. He was to find a home there and to earn it in the sweat of his brow, by honest toil. By the thousands he was to settle upon the land, plow it, till it and reap a rich harvest, establishing colonies perhaps the most fruitful and promising of any in our day. And from these colonies regenerating influences were to spring, which would lift Jewish life in the Argentine, intellectually, morally, spiritually, to a new plane.

SOME thirty years ago the famous philanthropist, Baron Maurice de Hirsch, began to concern himself seriously with the plight of the Jew of Poland and Russia, and to plan for his substantial help. Anti-Semitism was increasing, the position of the Jew was becoming day by day more perilous. Two conclusions seemed to him inescapable: the Jews must leave those lands where they could never have peace and find some more productive occupation than that of *lustmensch*, petty trader. Anti-Semitism and its attendant evils, would disappear, he thought, if the Jews would become artisans, laborers, farmers. No believer in charity, as Moses Montefiore was, Baron de Hirsch desired to help the Jews constructively by teaching them how to be self-supporting, how to work, how to produce. He believed also that the Jews should not huddle in ghettos, but

should spread out and mix with various peoples in various lands, remaining Jews in religion, but in all other respects assimilating with the life of the people with whom they cast their lot.

With these purposes in mind Baron de Hirsch dedicated part of his fortune to the settlement of Jewish colonies in Russia, Canada, in the United States (around Galveston), and in Argentina. Of all these, the colonies in the Argentine have proved by far the most successful, have taken the firmest hold in the country of settlement.

It is little more than three decades since the first colonists, recruited from various corners in Russia, left their homes and took passage to that strange land, Argentina, on the other side of the earth. They had plenty of time in the forty days of their voyage to become disheartened by the stories they heard: they were going, they were told, to an untamed wilderness; their daughters would be sold into vice; they would die in the jungle of hunger and fever. Possessed by these fears the new settlers made their way forward into the "promised land" which the Baron had purchased for them.

Not without reason had they been warned. The land to which they came was savage and wild, totally uncultivated. No plow had touched the acres that had been turned over to them; its surface was unmarked by any furrow. All about was the jungle, inhabited only by wild beasts. The gauchos, the natives of the land, were suspicious, even hostile; the Jews were as strange to them as they were to the Jews. The emigrants found, moreover, instead of the settlements they expected, not even a roof for shelter, protection neither from the heat by day nor from the chill by night. Even if they had known how to bake bread, there were no ovens for baking. With virgin soil to break and a living to wrest from a hostile jungle, they found themselves alone with hunger, thirst, heat. And added to these burdens were those placed upon them by the officials of Baron de Hirsch. The Baron had willed that the Jewish emigrants were not to be objects of charity, and most grimly the terms of his bequest were fulfilled; surely beyond the letter. That from this wilderness proud colonies should blossom forth, that culture could take root in these wastelands, seemed under the circumstances fantastical.

BUT the miracle occurred—perhaps because the emigrants, or most of them, had no means to return. Those who had a little money, and little courage, either returned home at once, or moved to the nearest cities, chiefly to Buenos Aires, where they eked out small livelihoods by peddling or some such occupation, and were the beginnings of Jewish communities. The others, once on the land, had to remain, and make the best of their new environment. These took root and organized a Jewish life in the wild pampas. They were the fathers of the present colonists, estimated as numbering above 3,500 families, or approximately 30,000 individuals, working land their own, or partly theirs.

Of this population, the great majority does not as yet live any too well. True, there are some colonists who have paid the ICA, the organization founded on the Baron's bequest, for their land; for the passage money which the ICA lent them; for the per cent on this money; and the per cent on the per cent. Still fewer have not only been cleared of debt, but are quite well-to-do. A larger part are still heavily mortgaged, but are able to meet their payments, and have hopes for the future. And there is another large group which is so heavily involved in debt that the interest eats up all their profits. Most of the colonists in the last group, it must be said, are not themselves at fault. Their location is bad, and such crops as they are able to raise are destroyed by natural circumstances over which they have no control. They have years of the most heartbreaking struggle before them before they can call their land their own. And the ICA administration makes no move to alleviate their condition; will neither change their lands, nor lighten their payments.

In addition, the colonist has had to struggle against a most outrageous system of exploitation. Coming to the land penniless, he is naturally forced to borrow money during his tenure to enable him to live between the harvests. Accordingly he runs into debt during the year, buying goods on credit, or going to the money-lender for funds. Both merchant and money-lender have considered him fair game, not only overcharging him at every turn on price and interest, but forcing him before they grant him credit to contract with them, on their own terms, for the sale of his crops. If there is a good year, the colonist may manage. But a bad year puts him still deeper in debt, until a time comes when he could be stripped of all his possessions, his farm and his farm implements, if it were not bad business to do so. His creditors content themselves merely with keeping him in a state of virtual peonage, taking his entire profit each year.

To combat this situation, the colonists have organized cooperatives, with remarkable success. These farmer organizations lend money at a reasonable rate, furnish the farmer with his necessities during the year, and market his crops at a fair price.

USURERS may be circumvented, but the Jewish colonist finds his battle with Nature never-ending. He can count on being visited with at least two of the ten Egyptian plagues yearly. First, hail. The stones, sometimes attaining the size of a man's fist, beat upon the growing crops, and destroy in a quarter of an hour the labor of many months. The farmer surveys his ruined fields, and takes hope from the fact that there is yet time for a second crop. After weeks of exhausting labor the second crop shows encouraging signs.

Then the second plague. Suddenly a fierce, smothering heat falls upon the fields. The sky is darkened as by a heavy cloud, the sun is blotted out as if it were night. Locusts! Descending in swarms of millions they blanket the fields, covering every leaf and every tree, consuming whatever

is green within their path. They leave a great swath of devastation through the countryside which looks like the bald streak on a head over which a barber's clipper has passed.

Overnight all trace of vegetation has been consumed. Nor is there hope that the crops may grow again, since six weeks later, when the fields are becoming green again, the young begin to appear from the eggs which the locust has laid and buried in the ground. They cannot yet fly but they are hungry. As hungry, as the saying is, as a locust. The damage is repeated and this time even the roots are devoured. Once their wings are grown, they rise up in swarms, covering the sun again, and are gone, leaving, like an invading army, ruin and desolation in their wake.

The efforts of the Government to fight these visitations have proven in vain. The colonist can do nothing but hope that the swarm may miss his fields this year—and ruin those in neighboring colonies instead.

But the colonists manage not only to survive somehow but are actually able to lead in the organized life of the Jews in the Argentine. And it is their children who, having for various reasons left the farms and drifted into the cities, form the Jewish intelligentsia in the Argentine today. The larger proportion of the Jewish students, doctors, lawyers, journalists, and officials in Jewish institutions, are children of the colonies. Not that any great part of the youth of the colonies has deserted the farms for the cities. The majority have remained in the camps and colonies, and work in the fields with their parents. Many study at the universities during the term, and return home in the summer when the crops demand their presence.

These children of the farms are the richest treasure of the colonies. They form the intellectual part of the Jewish life; they are the maintainers of Jewish culture, the sustainers of our racial creativeness. How it rejoices the heart of a Jew to ride over the great stretches of Jewish farm land and be greeted there by Jewish boys and girls, their faces tanned by the wind and sun, riding their horses with the grace and ease of the gauchos. Clad in the cape and sombrero of the gaucho, dirks and revolvers in their belts, they make a gallant picture. They whoop as they ride, perform tricky stunts with the lasso, to all appearances wild Indians rather than respectable Jewish boys and girls, students of medicine, of political economy, of literature.

Pleasant also it is to see the little children, four or five years old, riding two by two on patient, sleepy burros, on their way to school. Or their mothers, riding with them on horseback, miles through the pampas wilds, to the library to keep the young ones in books.

In the strength and richness of their Jewish social life the colonies form a living proof of the soundness of Baron de Hirsch's theories. The cooperatives of the colonies are the finest of all the Jewish institutions of Argentina. Their hospitals, schools, libraries and cultural centers are also exemplary.

Jewish life in the cities of Argentina has, I have already said, received a new impetus from the spirit of the colonies. What is the character of this life?

BUENOS AIRES alone has 160,000 Jews, who in a total population of 2,000,000 are naturally very much in evidence. And the Jewish population of Buenos Aires and the other cities of Argentina is rapidly increasing, due to the steady emigration from Eastern Europe. Faced with political discrimination and economic ruin and with the doors of the United States closed against them, South America has become the most obvious haven of refuge.

If the past is any criterion, the prospects of the new emigrants into the cities are none too hopeful. The fact is that the Jews in the cities have not prospered particularly. Argentina is an agrarian country, supplying the meats and wheat of a world, and there are few industries. Jews are for the most part city dwellers, to some extent workers in small industries, very seldom on the soil, and for the most part engaged in peddling or in some petty business.

Even though a large proportion of the new emigrants are trained in some useful trade, like that of carpenter, tailor, weaver, shoemaker, they will not find much opportunity in Argentina today. Predominantly, as said, an agrarian country, with few and scattered cities, a population at least six times as great as at present would be required for the prosperity of them all. There are in all only 8,000,000 people to an area of 3,000,000 square kilometers.

Only a small part of the Jewish population in the Argentine is wealthy, or can hope to be in the near future. These are chiefly manufacturers of furniture and office furnishings (for Jews enter either the furniture or clothing business in the Argentine, as elsewhere). The majority is composed of petty merchants, peddlers and workers at trades who at best make a comfortable living. The few Jewish millionaires are swallowed in the larger number of native capitalists, who have amassed riches from the natural resources of the land.

If, however, from an economic standpoint, the Jews do not fare so well, their social and cultural life is of a high quality and has contributed much to the civilization of the country as a whole.

There are many well-organized Jewish societies, both in the *Juden-gasse* and throughout the land. The Jewish intellectuals, for the most part children of colonists, or of the earlier arrivals, who have been in the land long enough to become, as it were, "Argentinized," play a large role in the cultural life of the land. They are well represented in Argentine-Spanish journalism, in the arts and sciences, in the schools and on the stage.

There is an imposing array of Jewish poets, authors, dramatists and painters, all prominent in the Argentinian world of art. To mention only

a few: A. Eichelbaum, whose plays are produced on the Spanish stage with great success; the writer of fiction, Samuel Glusberg, whose sketches appear regularly in the best journals and newspapers; Dr. Gershonoff, son of an emigrant, is one of the most promising of Argentine poets, and is one of the editors of the largest Spanish newspaper, *La Nacion*, for which Max Nordau wrote for many years, and which pays his family royalties to this day. The two brothers Dickman, sons of a poor farmer, are the leaders of the Argentine Socialist party, which ranks as the largest single party in Argentine. They have been deputies to Congress for many years, and have great political influence.

Jews are also well represented in the professional world. There is no lack of Jewish lawyers, doctors, dentists. Dr. A. Zhabitsky is professor of the dentological faculty, and many other doctors have excellent posts with the Government, and in the universities.

THE student youth is intensive and eager and, as in Europe, is the spiritual nerve of the country. It is highly organized and is for the most part concentrated in three representative societies. The first and largest student organization is the "Athenia Estudiantile." Its members are the nationalistic youth of the high schools and universities. The second is a fraternity, mainly for students, but admitting non-students also, the "Cubentud Israelite" (Jewish Youth). The third is the aristocratic fraternity "Association Hebraica," composed for the large part of the more assimilated elements. In Rosaria, the second city in size to Buenos Aires, there is still another student organization, known also as the "Athenia Estudiantile," which publishes in Spanish a monthly journal called "Athenia." In addition to these there are other societies composed wholly or partly of students, in various cities, mainly in university towns, such as Cordova, La Plata, Tucuman and others.

Three Jewish weeklies in Spanish are published in Buenos Aires: the *Munda Israelite* (The Jewish World), by the more assimilated Jews of the "Association Hebraica"; the *Seminaria Hebria*, Zionist in intent; and *Israel*, the organ of the Sephardic Jews.

Spurred on by the activities of these organizations and newspapers, there is intense controversy on Jewish subjects in city, town and field. Zionist organizations, philanthropic societies, the youth movement, workers' cultural institutions, all participate actively in Jewish affairs. The Jewish press reflects this activity and the Jewish consciousness of the community on a high plane, and is both interpreter and influence.

Argentine Jews may boast of charitable institutions surprisingly modern in equipment and organization. The first-class hospitals which the Jews maintain, the huge orphan asylums, so competently managed, the equally efficient occupational schools, with classes in Yiddish, Hebrew and Spanish, the children's orchestras, all add greatly to the high regard in which the Jews are deservedly held in Argentina.

The Home for the Hebrew Aged is one of many other admirably conducted institutions. The *Chevrah Kadisha*, a large and wealthy organization, spends thousands of *pesos* in establishing schools, Talmud Torahs, cemeteries, libraries, cultural organizations, and schools for vocational training. The whole community life is so well established as to give the impression that Jewish life in the Argentine is much older than actually it is.

BUT one should not think that this fine Jewish community life with its admirable spirit was built up in less than thirty years without great struggles. Perhaps the bitterest of the conflicts was that for the control of Jewish life between the new emigration and the established early Jewish settlers, whose fortunes were founded on white slavery, who were more numerous, wealthy, and wielded considerable social and political influence. The new emigrants saw with horror the identification of the Jewish name in the Argentine with open commercial vice, and from the beginning felt that this must not be tolerated.

The time soon came when war was literally waged. Blood ran in the streets. Jewish workmen armed themselves with clubs and iron pipes, and invaded the brothel quarters, determined to drive their debased brethren by force from the city or at least from the Jewish community. The war was carried on in the streets, in the cafés, in the theaters, until finally the Jewish section at least could be said to be cleansed, made fit for honest Jews to come to build, to work, to live in a Jewish manner.

From that day there has been a wall between the two elements which time has served only to make stronger. An unofficial but nonetheless effective excommunication has been put in force against all who traffic in vice, and all who deal with them. No Jew who cares for his position in the community would as much as care to speak to one of them. They are unclean. Though they cannot be forced to wear the warning bell of the leper, they are as segregated as if they did. Everyone knows who they are, and who constitute their families. For the excommunication extends even to their children and their children's children. The Jewish home, the Jewish *shul*, the Jewish cemetery are all closed to them. They are completely cut off from their race.

The edict has naturally worked hardships upon the innocent children of the "cadets," who, often unaware of the nature of their fathers' trade, do not know why they are everywhere avoided. Their fathers, having long despaired of entering into the society of decent Jews themselves, yet make every effort to gain entrance for their children. But neither their money nor their protestations are of any avail. The community is stern in its insistence that there be no weakening.

In self-defense the "excommunicated" have been forced to organize a community life of their own. They have their own synagogues—each with the requisite rabbi, *cbazan*, *shammes*, "vessels of the Holy House," their own schools, their own social and cultural institutions.

One of their congregations recently moved to a new building. There wended through the street the ceremonial procession customary in Jewish communities. But on this occasion what a mockery! At the head, the rabbi of the panderers, concerning whose *smichas* not too great an examination had been made. Followed in order the *gabbai*, the *shammes*, the *chazan*, the *shul* officers and holy men, all bearing the Scrolls of the Law, the *shul* fixtures, the decorations and ornamentations. And behind them their flock, the pimps, the brothel keepers, the prostitutes.

The last stronghold of these worthies was the theater, which they attended largely, and which accordingly deferred to their patronage. They occupied boxes and the choicest seats, and the respectable element found their flaunting of themselves in public acutely distasteful. The attempt was made to close the theater to them, which was naturally bitterly resisted both by the undesirable element and the theatrical managers, who found in them a most fruitful source of revenue.

The decent element took recourse in boycott, which at first met with no great success since the public, hungry for entertainment, persisted in attending surreptitiously or openly. But when it was revealed that the theater was so closely controlled by the vicious element that no play could be produced except at their pleasure the respectable public was aroused to a high pitch of fury. All the Jewish institutions, the writers' guilds and the daily press, opened war against the theater itself, until finally one theater surrendered and posted this announcement: *Our Entrance is Forbidden Immoral Persons*.

Others followed the example and today all three Jewish theaters in Buenos Aires have this sign: *No Admittance to White Slave Dealers*.

With the capitulation of this last stronghold, the victory of the new element in Argentina was complete. The story of the conflict has been told in detail, because it is significant of the high moral standards of the colonists. And it takes on a greater significance when it is realized that this was waged at a time when the colonists, in a strange country and beset with thousands of material difficulties, were economically below or just upon the subsistence level. It speaks volumes for the fine spirit of the colonists that they could not let the problems of making a living blind them to the traditional duties of Jewish life. Here rather than in statistics, however promising, are the most eloquent auguries for the future of Jewish colonization in Argentine.

THIS future lies no longer in the clouds. A healthy Jewish life has already been developed which will gain in strength as other avenues of emigration are closed. Argentina is today a civilized country, soon to take its place among the great powers of the world, with a Jewish life appropriate to its rank. The emigrant in Argentina is finding that there he may now satisfy not only his material needs but also his spiritual impulses. He finds an excellent Jewish press; a small but excellent Jewish

literature. The Jewish theaters are perhaps on a higher plane than elsewhere. The community life is warm and gracious.

Economically, the Jew still has problems. The country as a whole has been undergoing an economic crisis for the past few years and naturally the Jew has suffered too. But there have been better times; and probably will yet be. After all the emigrants did not leave homes of luxury when they came.

Argentina, in a word, gives splendid promise as a haven for a large part of the Jewish people. It will perhaps not be long before it will become a second America, or rather assume the role that America once had—a refuge for a persecuted people.

LEON MALACH

A second letter from the Argentine, devoted more particularly to the intellectual life of the country, by Samuel Glusberg, critic and writer of fiction, will appear in an early issue of THE MENORAH JOURNAL.