

## THE HEBREW UNION COLLEGE.

BY RABBI ISAAC M. WISE.

The Hebrew Union College, located in Cincinnati, 494 W. 6th Street, was established in 1846 by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. A majority of all Hebrew Congregations in this country, including the largest, are members of this "Union," and contribute to it one dollar annually for each member. The "Union" elects in its bi-annual conventions, a Board of Directors, who govern the College in all affairs not left to the Faculty.

The Faculty elected by the Board of Examiners, consists of the following gentlemen :

Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, President and Professor of Hebrew Philosophy and History.

Rev. Dr. Mielzener, Professor of the Talmud and Rabbinic jurisprudence.

Solomon Eppinger, Esq., Preceptor of the Talmud, and Professor of Exegesis p.t.

Ignatius Mueller, Esq., Assistant in Hebrew.

Henry Berkowitz, Esq., Assistant in History.

Two of the teachers, Rev. Dr. M. Lilienthal and Louis Aufrecht, Esq., died this year, and no successors have been appointed yet.

The session extends from the first Monday of September to the last week in June, annually, from 3 to 6 p. m., daily except Sunday, with liturgical exercises every Saturday afternoon.

There are registered this year forty-two students, one female, all Jews, although the law of the college excludes none on account of their religious confessions. The college is perfectly free, no fees whatever are exacted. All text books are furnished gratuitously to the students, and the indigent are furnished with all the common necessities of life.

The library in the college building of about 8,000 volumes comprises the principal works of the Hebrew literature, Biblical, Rabbinical, historical, philosophical, poetical, etc., together with Syriac, Arabic and other Semitic works, Lexica, grammars, etc., and a fair selection of English, German, French, Italian and other works. It is at the disposal of the students and teachers, and of all outsiders who seek information.

The college is divided in two departments, preparatory and collegiate. One of its preparatory departments is in New York City, under the superintendency of Rev. Dr. Gottheil. The pupils of the preparatory departments must be graduates or students of the Cincinnati high school, or any similar institute, must know some Hebrew and the Bible History, to be registered. The curriculum of this department is this :

*1st year.*—Hebrew etymology ; exercises in translation from English into Hebrew ; reading the original of one book of the Pentateuch, Joshua and Judges, two chapters with *Rashi's* rabbinical commentary ; also two books of Mishnah, usually *Aboth* and *Sanhedrin*, history from 536 to 167 B. C.

*2nd year.*—Hebrew Grammar completed, exercises continued ; Bible reading, one book of Pentateuch, I. and II. Samuel, and a number of Psalms memorized ; four books of Mishnah, twenty pages of Talmud, and history from 167 to 20 B. C.

*3d year.*—Aramaic Grammar, Hebrew exercises continued ; Bible reading, one book of the Pentateuch, I. and II. Kings with the *Targum* and *Rashi* to some chapters ; Psalms memorized ; thirty pages Talmud ; Casuistics in the code of Moses Maimonides ; History to 70 A. C.

*4th year.*—Aramaic Grammar, rabbinical dialect ; Hebrew exercises continued ; Bible reading, one book of the Pentateuch, Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah ; Psalms memorized ; thirty pages of the Talmud ; the first book (with the exception of *Akkum*) in the code by Moses Maimonides ; literary history to 70 A. C.

Graduates of this department receive the degree of Bachelor of Hebrew, or *Chaber*, and may enter the rabbinical or collegiate department.

Students of the collegiate department are required to be graduates or students of the academical course in the Cincinnati University, or a similar institute, and must be graduates of the examination in the above curriculum.

The collegiate department takes four years. Its curriculum comprises besides the usual theological studies, the Hebrew and Aramaic also the Syriac and Arabic languages. The test for graduation is, 1st, the ability to read and expound critically and historically any given passage in Bible and commentaries, Talmud and Casuists, philosophers and poets of the Hebrew ; 2nd, sufficient knowledge of literary history, casuistics and jurisprudence of the synagogue, the various forms of worship, and the historical development of Jewish doctrine. 3d, Homiletic and liturgic competency, and 4th, a university degree. He receives the degree of Rabbi and may receive two years later the degree of D. D.

The students of this department read steadily the Bible with ancient and modern paraphrases and commentaries, the Talmud with commentaries and casuists, and *Midrashim* or homiletics. Of the Jewish metaphysicians, they read chiefly the works of Maimonides, Bechai, Halevy, Albo and Saadia. In history they follow Graetz and Jast, Zunz, Munk and Dukcs, Geiger and Steinschneider.

The first class of Rabbis will graduate in July, 1883, composed of seven students.

Annually the Union of American Hebrew Congregations appoints three commissioners to examine the classes. The most prominent Rabbis of America have alternately discharged this duty. Their reports, published with the proceedings of the Union have been unanimously very favorable.

Similar institutions exist, two in Berlin, one in Breslau, one in Pest, and one in Paris, besides private institutions not connected with academical studies, which are very numerous in Europe, especially in Hungary, Poland and Russia ; also in Asia and Africa.

There were, as I recall, seven or eight boys of varying ages in the Eighth Street house. I had never been away from home and a thoroughly homesick boy cried himself to sleep in the new environment. The other boys who were sleeping in the same room dubbed the newcomer, "Cry baby." This did not add to the boy's happiness. But that first night passed. With what joy the morning was greeted! A member of the Board of Governors of the new institution came to the Eighth Street house to escort the incoming students to the high school. This experience was all so new that it seemed strange to me. I often wondered why I did not return home. But as Kipling says, that is another story. Hughes High School at that time was situated at Fifth and Mound Streets. And thither the kindly gentleman escorted us.

### Opening of College

I soon accommodated myself to the new life. September passed rapidly. October dawned and we boys were all keyed up to great excitement, for the Hebrew Union College was to open Sunday, the third day of that month. On that momentous day seventy years ago, we, the neophytes, were called for and taken to Plum Street Temple where the opening exercises were to take place. I have frequently described that great occasion. Even today, seventy years later, the memory of that great day thrills me. The brilliantly illuminated temple was crowded, for the people sensed that a historic event was taking place. All the participants in that service, of course, have gone to the great beyond. We boys, numbering about fifteen, were seated in front pews. Dr. Wise having embarked on this great adventure could not know what success it would have. To make sure that it would not be an entire failure, he prepared a number of his own scholars for entrance into the new institution - Edward L. Heinsheimer, Louis D. Marks, David Eichberg, and Fred Strasburger. These boys attended the College a few years and then dropped out.

Only four of the entrants persevered until ordination. Of those four, I am the only survivor. Israel Aaron, Henry Berkowitz, Joseph Krauskopf - the other three did fine service. I am the last leaf on the tree planted by Isaac M. Wise on that October day in the long ago. The College was without funds. There was no building. The two temples, the Plum and Mound Street, offered their school rooms. The opening sessions were held in the Mound Street Temple. What a turn of fate! Thirteen years later, I became the rabbi of the congregation in whose vestry I began my rabbinical training. The College opened with three teachers, two of these, Doctors Wise and Lilienthal, volunteering their services, and the third, Solomon Eppinger, the only paid instructor and very poorly paid at that. We attended the public high school in the morning and the College in the afternoon.

Two girls were in the opening class, one a granddaughter of the instructor, Solomon Eppinger, and the other a niece of Dr. Wise. The boys rather resented the presence of these girls. One day, one of their number hid the books of Julia Eppinger, the granddaughter of the instructor. When the matter came to the attention of Mr. Eppinger, he flew into a rage. He reported

the matter to Dr. Wise who threatened to dismiss the class unless the books were returned. The culprit, thoroughly frightened, managed to get the books to Julia without betraying his identity, and the matter became a closed incident.

One of the students, and a very bright one at that, was Nathan Cohn, of Nashville, Tenn., who later became one of the leading Jewish citizens of Nashville. Nathan, one day, was rather inattentive. Mr. Eppinger asked: "Cohn, what is the matter with you?" "Oh, Mr. Eppinger, I have the blues." "Oh, you have the blues, well, I will give you the blacks," and promptly he put two black marks opposite Nathan's name. This was rather serious for the boy. He enlisted the sympathy of several members of the class; we appealed to Mr. Eppinger and succeeded in appeasing the affronted teacher, and he removed the black marks. But our freshman class was studious. Our teachers were Dr. Wise, who taught us Mishnah; Dr. Lilienthal, who taught us Jewish history; and Mr. Eppinger, who taught Deuteronomy and Hebrew grammar.

From these small beginnings the Hebrew Union College grew into the great institution that it is today.

### 2. AFTER FIFTY YEARS

[In the May, 1944, *H.U.C. Monthly*, the perennial Secretary of the Central Conference of America Rabbis who graduated in the Class of 1894 printed the following memoir.]

To live again in the atmosphere sanctified by the presence of Isaac M. Wise, Moses Mielziner, Ephraim Feldman and Sigmund Mannheimer cannot but be a happy experience. The old building (on West Sixth Street), though it lacked the external beauties of the present College (on Clifton Avenue), glowed with warmth and affection. I miss hallowed presences. In Sunday School I had as my teachers (Joseph) Krauskopf, (Henry) Berkowitz and (Joseph) Stolz. The last two were saintly souls that could not but awaken the enthusiasm of their pupils and inspire them to give their best. I was scarcely thirteen and entered high school at the same time.

We used to have mixed classes. The D-grade took some studies with the older boys and of course we were the goats. When pranks were played at the expense of dear old Doctor (Heinrich) Zirndorf, Bill Rosenau, of blessed memory, made it his business to prove that we, the younger students, were to blame for it, though we were sitting thirty or forty feet away at the end of a long table. When the book-marks, which Dr. Zirndorf had meticulously placed in his dozen or more volumes which he habitually brought to the class and from which he would read, were mysteriously pulled out and lay scattered over the table, it was always the youthful D-graders who were told to "leef the room," in spite of the fact that we were quietly seated far, far away from either Dr. Zirndorf or the books; and it was usually Rosenau who, with a serious face, would calmly say: "Marcuson, why did you pull out those bookmarks?" And then Marcuson left the room.

But there was a happy side to these pranks. Dr. (Samuel) Schulman

be held on the Sunday of *Hol Hamoed Sukkoth*, following upon my coming to the pulpit.

Rabbi Mischkind had been nearly twice my age, and I appeared about five years younger than I really was. When I came to the pulpit along with the fifteen-year-old confirmands, I seemed no older than the eldest looking of them. In fact, when I officiated at the lectern in leading the services and reading from the Torah, one of the dim-sighted octogenarian grandmothers turned to her daughter-in-law whose child was in the class and nudging her said, "Why that boy is the best of all! Whose child is he?"

Fact is, I had been interviewed by the committee of one congregation that had come to the College in search of a rabbi, but was quite summarily eliminated by the committee chairman who took pains to explain to Dr. Bettan that his committee did not feel it could call a youngster who looked like he was seventeen or eighteen to lead adults who were as old as seventy and eighty.

However, when I was under consideration by Wilmington's Board of Trustees, one of the members is reported to have counseled, "Look no further! Take this man. He is young. We are young. He will grow. We will grow with him!"

### 37. "TRIPPINGLY ON THE TONGUE"

It was Dr. Jacob Mann who revealed to us some of the treasures of the Genizah that had been discovered in the secret chamber of a synagogue in Cairo, Egypt, by Dr. Solomon Schechter. He gave us many of these in his monumental work, *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine Under the Fatimid Caliphs*.

But it was the Hon. Alfred M. Cohen, then President of the Board of Governors of the College, who in a graduation address made the most public use of the Genizah. He pronounced the word: "Gezinah," and some of us murmured, "Gesundheit!"

[At a later date, Mr. Cohen nearly broke up the solemnity of the Chapel each time he tried to insist: "The doors of Avondale, boys, are always open to you." More reassuring was his warmhearted remark that he "loved to see the students gamboling on the green." - Ed.]

### 38. "WHICH OF THEM SHALL I TAKE?"

The admissions policy of the J.I.R. was always a butt of student jokes. Our men "went to town" especially on Chanukah when the evening dance was always preceded by skits. The master among us was Coleman Zwitman, *zecher livrachab*. One skit that he staged was a scene portraying the Faculty interviewing two prospective candidates. In order to judge whether they were admissible, they were weighed. The first one mounted the scales (was it Harold Kamsler who played the role?), and he registered 130 pounds. "Dr. Tchernowitz" reported, "*B'gimatriah Kal*" - and he was rejected.

The next one, (probably played by Wendell Phillips) mounted the scales, and he weighed 202 pounds. "Dr. Tchernowitz" judged him, "*Rav b'gimatriah*" - and, of course, he was admitted! As the scene ended, it was revealed that the one who had been admitted was really the telephone man who had come in answer to a complaint that the phone was out of order.

### 39. ANOTHER C.C.A.R.?

In the late Spring of 1930, the Hebrew Union College Faculty became very critical of a number of students. With unprecedented aggressiveness this august body issued dismissal notices to twelve Preparatory Department students.

The Faculty's daring move caused concern and consternation among the entire student body. A quickly convened meeting designated a three-member committee to call upon the president in protest over action deemed precipitous and generally nefarious.

The president granted the committee an audience which lasted more than an hour, during which the three members argued, wheedled and cajoled. Dr. Morgenstern tactfully and patiently but firmly turned aside all pleadings with the rejoinder that the College had to maintain academic standards to guard *K'lal Yisroel*.

The committee returned to the Dormitory and reported the substance of the conversation. Gloom and dejection etched the faces of all the men, but most deeply, those of the twelve dismissed.

But the gloom was relieved a few hours later, and laughter took over, as we noted a new item on the bulletin board:

### NOTICE

The Central Conference of Almost Rabbis  
will meet at 8 P.M. tonight in Room 113.

### 40. "WHEN YOU FIND HIM OUT"

Since in the early 1930s I was an expert stenographer and typist, I actually had a near-monopoly on typing during my first two years in Cincinnati, not only of the Faculty output, but for seniors' dissertations and students' term papers. Out went the monopoly when I took on the agency for certain "portables" and had to promise a course in typewriting to every purchaser. After a year, I gave up the agency. I had produced too many competitors.

Dr. Lauterbach, however, held on to me, literally and physically, as his private secretary. He never let me select a room away from the second-

# 1ST WOMAN RABBI IN U.S. ORDAINED

She May Be Only the Second  
in History of Judaism

By ELEANOR BLAU  
Special to The New York Times

CINCINNATI, June 3—Sally J. Priesand was ordained at the Isaac M. Wise Temple here today, becoming the first woman rabbi in this country and, it is believed, the second in the history of Judaism.

Miss Priesand, who is 25 years old, and 35 male rabbinical candidates were ordained by Rabbi Alfred Gottschalk, president of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, from which they received master's degrees last night.

Before the ceremony, Rabbi Gottschalk hailed Miss Priesand's ordination as "historic." Addressing 1,200 relatives and friends of the students from the altar of this Byzantine temple, he said, "It attests to the principle of reform Judaism long espoused—of the equality of women in the congregation of the Lord."

Then the candidates were called one by one to the altar, where the rabbi spoke privately to them, his hands on their shoulders, before presenting the certificate of ordination.

When Miss Priesand was called, her fellow graduates rose, and she wept as Rabbi Gottschalk spoke to her.

#### Fate of Predecessor

Although a number of women have studied for the rabbinate during the last 20 years in the one-million-member reform branch of Judaism in the United States, Miss Priesand is the first to be ordained.

Her sole known predecessor, Regina Jonas, was ordained by a rabbi in Offenbach, Germany, in the nineteen-thirties after a Berlin Judaic academy had refused to do so. She practiced, primarily in old-age homes, until 1940, when she was interned in a concentration camp and died there.

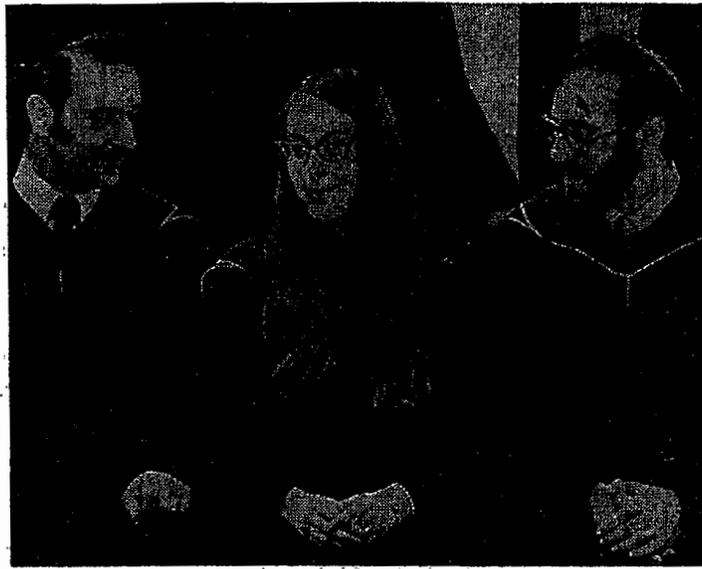
Miss Priesand will begin her work in August as assistant rabbi at the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue at 30 West 68th Street in New York, a temple with a tradition of social reform. She will preach, teach, officiate at weddings and funerals and perform other duties as assistant to Rabbi Edward E. Klein.

Equality of the sexes is one of the fundamental principles of reform Judaism, which developed in Germany in the 19th century. For example, the branch does not follow Orthodox practice of seating men and women separately in synagogues. Fifty years ago, the American Reform rabbinate declared that women could not be denied ordination.

However, it was not until the 1950's that women were admitted by theological schools as rabbinical candidates. Two women are currently participating in the five-to-six-year graduate program for ordination at the New York branch of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. The college, which also has campuses in Los Angeles and Jerusalem, is the major reform theological school.

Another woman candidate is at the Philadelphia College of the Jewish Reconstructionist movement. Neither the Conservative nor Orthodox branch of Judaism allows women to become rabbis.

In an interview yesterday,



ORDAINED RABBI: Sally J. Priesand with classmates at Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati

Rabbi Gottschalk said that Miss Priesand's ordination "breaks the stereotype" of a father figure, allowing Jewish women to consider seeking the rabbinate. And, he said, it gives the role a "new dimension," which he described as "an intuitive sense and kind of graciousness" that he said women appear to have to a greater degree than men do.

However, he stressed that he was interested in individuals regardless of their sex and dismissed any notion of seeking an equal number of men and women rabbis.

Miss Priesand, who is known as Rabbi Sally, was born in Cleveland and graduated from the University of Cincinnati, where she majored in English.

She decided to become a rabbi when she was in the 10th grade and said that she would always be grateful to her parents because "they didn't throw up their hands and say 'What kind of a job is that for a nice Jewish girl.'"

#### Hopes to Marry

Fellow seminary students at first assumed that she merely intended to find a husband, but they have come to respect her sincerity, she says.

Miss Priesand does hope to marry some day. If she marries another rabbi, an event she considers unlikely, she would want to be his assistant rather than an equal, she says.

Nevertheless, she backs what

she calls the fundamental position of the women's liberation movement in support of the right of all human beings to fulfill their potentials in any meaningful way.

Convinced that a rabbi "must take stands on all the issues," Miss Priesand angered a congregation in Hattiesburg, Miss., where she was a student rabbi a few years ago, by denouncing the Vietnam war.

She expresses delight with her forthcoming position in New York but says that she always knew she would get at least a

few job offers "because I'm a curiosity."

"They could say they're the first ones to hire me," she said.

Search Main Menu. Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion. Prospective Students. Current Students. Hebrew Language Resources and Distance Learning. Preparing for the Hebrew Capacity Exam. Policies and Expectations. Suggested Reading and Resources. The Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (also known as HUC, HUC-JIR, and The College-Institute) is a Jewish seminary with three locations in the United States and one location in Jerusalem. It is the oldest extant Jewish seminary in the Americas and the main seminary for training rabbis, cantors, educators and communal workers in Reform Judaism. HUC-JIR has campuses in Cincinnati, Ohio, New York City, Los Angeles, California and Jerusalem. The Jerusalem campus is the only seminary in Hebrew Union College Annual is the flagship journal of Hebrew Union College Press and the primary face of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion to the academic world. From its inception in 1924, its goal has been to facilitate the dissemination of cutting-edge scholarship across the spectrum of Jewish Studies, including biblical studies, rabbinics, history, liturgy, literature, philology, law, philosophy, and religion. The "moving wall" represents the time period between the last issue available in JSTOR and the most recently published issue of a journal. Moving walls are generally represented in years.