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## Orthodoxy as a Means of Becoming Good Jewish Americans: Two Jewish Orphanages in Chicago

### Abstract

This article compares and contrasts the two Jewish orphanages in Chicago—the Chicago House and the Marks Nathan Home. It focuses on the differences between the German Jewish immigrants and the Eastern European Jews and how these differences affected the orphanages.

**Orthodoxy as a Means of Becoming Good Jewish Americans:  
Two Jewish Orphanages in Chicago**  
*Nattie Burda*

Abraham Cahan's novel *The Rise of David Levinsky*, published in 1917, is a classic "rags to riches" story set in early twentieth-century America. David is an Orthodox Russian Jew who immigrates to the New World. Although he was raised in a very strict and orthodox fashion in Russia, upon arrival to the United States he soon realizes that his skills, such as knowing Hebrew and reciting the Torah, are unnecessary for survival in America. In order to make money, David has to learn English and study the American way of doing business, such as using persuasive words or finding cheap labor. In doing so, David became a very successful businessman. At the end of the novel, David reflects on his life, and he finds that "the poor lad swinging over a Talmud volume at the Preacher's Synagogue, seems to have more in common with my inner identity than David Levinsky, the well-known cloak-manufacturer."<sup>298</sup> David realizes that despite all the money that he had made, he is still the David that studied the Torah in Russia.

The novel characterizes the struggles Jews faced upon arrival in America. Like David, recent Jewish immigrants faced a dilemma: retain their ethnic identity or forego it to become American culturally. Each immigrant group resolved this dilemma differently. German Reform Jews, who came to America starting in the 1830s, were more likely to become fully Americanized than their later counterparts, the Eastern European Jews. By examining two Jewish orphanages that were established in Chicago in the early 1900s, one established by the German Jews and one by the Eastern European Orthodox Jews, the struggle between retaining an Orthodox Jewish identity or creating an American one becomes more evident: while Reform German Jews chose to assimilate, Eastern European Jews were able to create a link between becoming American while retaining a part of their Orthodox Jewish identity.

The German Jews were the first of the two groups to immigrate to America. Growing German nationalism in the early to mid-1800s, manifesting itself in "official government discrimination and economic restrictions, including special 'Jew-taxes,'" finally pushed the German Jews out of Europe to America.<sup>299</sup> While they were being pushed out a reform movement was sweeping the community of German Jews. Reform Jews wanted synagogue to be more modern, service to be in the German language instead of Hebrew, and even questioned the authority of the Talmud.<sup>300</sup> They also considered themselves to be German citizens.<sup>301</sup> The reform movement faced obstacles and there was "terrible opposition and hatred on the part of the strictly orthodox who thought that these people were hurting Judaism."<sup>302</sup> The movement was suppressed by the German government because they believed that anything new, even in religion, would be a

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<sup>298</sup> Abraham Cahan, *The Rise of David Levinsky* (New York: The Modern Library, 1917), 518.

<sup>299</sup> Irving Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 6.

<sup>300</sup> Tobias Brinkmann, "'We are Brothers! Let us Separate!': Jewish Immigrants in Chicago between Gemeinde and Network Community before 1880," ed. Chistof Mauch and Joseph Salmons, *German-Jewish Identities in America* (Madison: Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies, 2003), 47.

<sup>301</sup> Rabbi Lee J. Levinger, *A History of the Jews in the United States* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1930), 212.

<sup>302</sup> Levinger, *History of Jews*, 212.

"seed for another French Revolution."<sup>303</sup> This, combined with the defeat of the revolutionary movements in Europe in 1848, caused the German Jews to leave in mass numbers. Upon arrival to the United States, many of the German Jews migrated from the east coast further inland, establishing a community in Chicago. In Chicago the community of Reform German Jews found that they could continue to evolve their ideas of modernizing Judaism.

As soon as the German Jews reached Chicago in the late 1840s, they discovered that there were no state-funded welfare programs available. This forced the newly arrived immigrants to "form special networks to protect themselves from poverty, sickness, and a variety of social ills."<sup>304</sup> The community of German Jews established the United Hebrew Relief Association in 1859. It was formed with the goal of creating a hospital for the sick and an asylum for Jewish widows and orphans. But the attempt to organize the asylum in 1863 failed.<sup>305</sup> Because the Jewish population was not yet large enough, nor had the means to sustain such an institution, the Board of Directors of the Hebrew Relief Association was upset at this failure because they believed that "the only beneficial asylum for an orphan is within the circle of a private [Jewish] family."<sup>306</sup>

It would be the Great Chicago Fire in 1871 that prompted the German Jews to establish institutions to help their community. The fire destroyed many of the Jewish establishments, but as the "devastating effects of the fire faded into the past, many Jews, through hard work, began to gain a measure of affluence." Many members of the community who had been "virtually penniless backpacker peddlers . . . became small store owners" after the fire.<sup>307</sup> As their financial status improved, the German-speaking Jews and their families migrated further south into newly developed prime residential areas. With this transition south, the German Jews began building not only synagogues, but facilities for the sick, aged, and orphaned.<sup>308</sup>

As the German Jews were establishing themselves in Chicago's South Side, some became concerned that the community needed to build a place that would educate the Jewish children in Hebrew. A few Reform German Jews wanted to establish an educational program that would "instill a knowledge and love of Judaism in the growing number of Jewish youth."<sup>309</sup> As a result, the Jewish Educational Society was founded in 1876 to help create an institution to teach Hebrew to children. The Society pleaded for community support with an appeal:

True, you have raised your children as Jews, but do you believe that they, after having attended the Sabbath school up to the time of their confirmation, will be able to expound and to defend Judaism before the world?...Indeed, indifference and dissention, ignorance and shallowness have long enough eaten the very marrow and root of our sacred inheritance...Christian mission societies send forth their soul-hunting agents to ensnare Jewish young men and tear them away from the breast of their religion, while the Jewish community, for want of religious education and protection, leaves them to spiritual starvation.<sup>310</sup>

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 213

<sup>304</sup> Brinkman, 'We are brothers!,' 57.

<sup>305</sup> Nathan Berman, "A study of the Development of the Care of the Dependent and Neglected Jewish Children in the Chicago Area" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1933), 4.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Cutler, *Jews of Chicago*, 34.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid., 37

<sup>309</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid., 38-39.

But, the "reasoned call did not arouse the various, often divergent, elements in the community to action."<sup>311</sup> In the 1870s, the community was in the process of creating hospitals and asylums, but they were not inspired to create institutions that taught "Jewishness." By the 1890s the German Jews created an orphanage that taught some Jewish traditions to its Jewish children.

The German Jewish community was "ripe numerically and organizationally to set out on a program of child care of its own" in the 1890s.<sup>312</sup> The 1890s also marked the beginning of the Progressive Era in America, which focused on the child as the future of the nation. Children of immigrants were not exempted from this belief. Reformers pondered and worried about how to deal with the problems of rapid industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. These problems gave rise to "urban congestion, poverty, nativism and xenophobia."<sup>313</sup> In their struggles to cope with the changing society, Progressives looked to children as the "key to a brighter national future."<sup>314</sup> Even President Theodore Roosevelt regarded the youth as the nation's most precious natural resources.

Within this context, it is easy to understand why children's institutions became a focus during the Progressive Era. "Within the walls of the asylums, children of the poor could be made over in the image of their benefactors, and shaped into loyal, productive American citizens" by the reformers.<sup>315</sup> Historian Reena Freidman argues that "of all Progressive programs for children, the orphanage was the Americanizing agency par excellence."<sup>316</sup> The German Jews had been sufficiently established in America to help contribute to the goal of the Progressive Era by creating their own institutions to help raise good citizens for the country.

Creating an institution to care for Jewish dependents was the first step for the community. Before 1893 there was no Jewish orphan home in Chicago. Instead, Chicago Jewish orphans were sent to either the Jewish orphanage in Cleveland, Ohio, or the secular local Home for the Friendless and Chicago Orphan Asylum. But, by the 1890s, two events helped push the Chicago community of German Jews to establish their own home for Jewish orphans. First, the Cleveland Asylum became overcrowded; second, the parents and guardians of the community in Chicago began to object to Jewish children being placed in non-Jewish institutions.<sup>317</sup>

During the winter of 1893 a group of local Jewish women decided it was time to create a local Jewish orphanage, and formed a society with that as its sole purpose.<sup>318</sup> At their first meeting, the women resolved that "'a permanent society which will create an asylum, Home or Homes for the care, education and maintenance of those helpless ones' be established." In order to help create the orphanage, the women invited some affluent men in the community to their next meeting. As a result, at the second meeting one month later, about 300 people signed up as members. It was resolved during this second meeting that the Jewish children would be kept in the institution and not placed out to families, and that the organization would function independently.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>312</sup> Berman, "Study of the Development," 5.

<sup>313</sup> Reena Sigman Friedman, *These Are Our Children: Jewish Orphanages in the United States, 1880-1925* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1994), 95.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>317</sup> Berman, "Study of the Development," 32.

<sup>318</sup> Hyman Meites, ed. *History of the Jews of Chicago* (Chicago: Chicago Jewish Historical Society and Wellington Publishing, Inc., 1924), 607.

<sup>319</sup> Berman, "Study of the Development," 33.

On October 7, 1894, the Chicago Home for Jewish Orphans opened its doors at 3601 Vernon Avenue.<sup>320</sup> This Home would be able to accommodate 30 children, and people in the community donated food, bedding, and furniture to the Home.<sup>321</sup> But the Chicago Home quickly outgrew its space and later moved to a larger building located at Drexel and 62<sup>nd</sup> Street. This new site was dedicated April 23, 1899.<sup>322</sup> While establishing a suitable building, the Chicago Home for Jewish Orphans considered the social values that they wanted the Jewish children to be taught. The staff of the Home stated, "In giving the children an environment where they are trained in these social virtues (honesty, industry, respect for law and authority) we are doing our part to perpetuate and strengthen the country which we are proud to claim as our own." This statement by the Chicago Home for Jewish Orphans represents a fairly common sentiment of the German Jews in the early 1900s. Sixty years had passed and the German Jews were established in the South Side of Chicago, and the community had sufficient amount of time to feel connected to the American way of life. Furthermore, they had gained enough wealth to feel a part of the American society. Because of this, the community of German Jews felt that the Chicago Home for Jewish Orphans should primarily teach the children about the social values of America. They wanted their Jewish children to "perpetuate and strengthen the country" which they were proud to claim as their own.<sup>323</sup>

While the German Jews of Chicago were establishing their institutions to serve the community, a massive influx of Eastern European Jews was taking place. Two million Jews from Russia, Romania and Austria-Hungary came to the United States from 1881 to 1914. Mass emigration began with the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881. In the aftermath of the assassination, the new tsar encouraged "an orgy of anti-Jewish hatred [that] swept over Russia." Jews were expelled from Moscow altogether in 1891. The culmination of the pogroms, "overpopulation, oppressive legislation, economic dislocation, forced conscription, wretched poverty, and crushing despair, coupled with tales of wondrous opportunity in America and offers of cut-rate tickets from steamship companies" led to the exodus of millions. The Russian Jews wondered where they should immigrate to and a Russian Hebrew newspaper, published in 1882, seemed to have the answer. "Every intelligent and far-seeing person," it argued, "realizes that in order to preserve the welfare of our people there are no other places in the world to which we can migrate other than the Holy Land or America."<sup>324</sup>

Proponents of going to America believed that religious freedom and political equality was waiting for them. They assumed that the Russian Jew would finally be able to experience "social and religious liberty, economic opportunity, cultural advancement, and the right to maintain Jewish identity intact."<sup>325</sup> However, not all were enthusiastic about going to America; some rabbis feared immigration to the United States would lead the Russian Orthodox to "fall prey to German 'Reformers'."<sup>326</sup>

Eastern European Jews began to pour into Chicago. Beginning in the 1880s, the general population of Chicago doubled in size to over one million people by 1890, of which 80 percent were immigrants or children of immigrants.<sup>327</sup> The Yiddish-speaking Jews from Eastern Europe

<sup>320</sup> Meites, *History of the Jews of Chicago*, 607.

<sup>321</sup> Berman, "Study of the Development," 35.

<sup>322</sup> Meites, *History of the Jews of Chicago*, 607.

<sup>323</sup> Berman, "Study of the Development," 42.

<sup>324</sup> Jonathon Sarna, *American Judaism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 152-53.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>327</sup> Cutler, *Jews of Chicago*, 56.

were usually learned in Hebraic studies, but most did not have the opportunity for secular education.<sup>328</sup> As a result, most of them were crowded into the poorest parts of the city, the area southwest of downtown—the same place the German Jews had first settled before migrating to the South Side. This area where the Eastern European Jews were quartered became known as Maxwell Street, and an estimated 55,000 Jews were crowded into this area between 1880 and 1910.<sup>329</sup> Because of the tight living arrangement, the Eastern European Jews were able to transplant the atmosphere of village life and recreate it in the new world a situation that provided the "security of the temporary, transitional culture within the Maxwell Street community, with its myriad familiar to Jewish institutions and traditions, served to ease the pain of accommodation into the New World, even though the ghetto like settlement was itself a small and limited world."<sup>330</sup>

Thus, the Eastern European Jews were able to recreate an atmosphere similar to the one in the Old World in a way that the German Jew never did. Despite being surrounded by familiarities, some Eastern Europeans Jews were disappointed in America. Maxwell Street and the surrounding neighborhoods did not have the "legendary streets paved with gold . . . [and] earning a livelihood was difficult and living conditions were poor."<sup>331</sup> But it was not the economic situation that distressed the Eastern Europeans the most. They were shocked to find that their German Jewish counterparts were so far removed from the values of their shared religion. The German Jews took up new religious ideas, most often combining elements of the Christian ceremonies. Many of the prosperous German Jews, who were practically assimilated, used Sunday like the Gentiles as their major day of worship, used organs for worship, and condoned men and women sitting together in temple. One immigrant wrote about his disgust of the German Jews in his autobiography:

I left the old country because you couldn't be a Jew over there and still live, but I would rather be dead than be the kind of German Jew that brings the Jewish name into disgrace by being a goy. That's what hurts! They parade around as Jews, and deep down in their hearts they are worse than *goyim*, they are *meshumeds* (apostates).<sup>332</sup>

Upon arrival, the Eastern European Jews were generally disturbed by the changed behavior of the German Jews. But part of their shock was because religion in America was entirely different from that at home. While their lives in Eastern Europe revolved around religion, in America religion was a "purely private and voluntary affair, totally outside the state's purview."<sup>333</sup> The Eastern European Jew came to America for religious tolerance, but they were shocked to see religion treated as such a private affair.

Most of the community of Eastern European Jews wanted to continue the old Orthodox traditions. They were "devoted to the Torah and its study, to daily attendance at the synagogue if at all possible, and to strict observance of the Sabbath, religious holidays, and the dietary and other laws set forth in the Code of Jewish Religious Law and Practice."<sup>334</sup> The Orthodox Jewish males wore skullcaps and did not sit with women in temple, both practices the German Jews did not observe.

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>333</sup> Sarna, *American Judaism*, 159.

<sup>334</sup> Cutler, *Jews of Chicago*, 75-6.

Given that the Eastern European Jews were disgusted with the practices of the German Jews, they created their own institutions. The Orthodox community was able to establish several Hebrew schools which instructed children in the Torah, beginning in 1883, and almost every block in the Maxwell Street area had private Hebrew classes.<sup>335</sup> In addition to creating Hebrew schools, the community gained interest in establishing an Orthodox orphanage.

Within this community of Orthodox Jews, a will was filed in Cook County of Marks Nathan, who passed away the previous November. In his will, Nathan left \$15,000 for the erection of either an orthodox hospital or orphan home in Chicago.<sup>336</sup> Nathan specified in his will that if the money went to orphan home, then it must be "conducted with a kosher . . . kitchen in the city of Chicago."<sup>337</sup> After several meetings at the Grand Pacific Hotel in Chicago, it was decided that an orthodox orphanage would be more beneficial for the community. A committee was formed to represent the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home and it selected the first building on North Wood Street, which opened on May 13, 1906 with 29 children admitted.<sup>338</sup> But shortly afterward, it was decided that a bigger facility was needed, so the Nathan Home moved to 1550 South Albany Avenue. This building opened its doors to 186 children on November 17, 1912.<sup>339</sup>

Section One of the By-Laws of the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home stated that this institution "shall at all time be conducted in accordance with the orthodox Jewish rites [sic]." Section Two stated that the objectives of the Nathan Home were to "own and maintain a home for the care, maintenance, education and protection of Jewish children deprived of either or both parents, and without adequate means of support."<sup>340</sup> These By-Laws articulated the need for the Orthodox Jews to separate from the German Jews in order to create institutions that practiced orthodox rites. The Superintendent of the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home, Saul Drucker articulated this feeling with a speech at a conference of Jewish Charities in 1909, titled "Reasons for Separate Orthodox Institutions." He stated that his purpose for speaking was not to defend or condemn the practices of either the Orthodox or Reform Judaism. But it quickly became evident in his speech why Drucker believed that it was necessary that the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home be built according to orthodox practices. He said that charity was to give necessities to someone in need, "without violation or interference with one's religious opinions or beliefs," and accordingly, the German Jews were consciously violating the religion of the Eastern European Jews by giving assistance not in accordance to Orthodox laws. Drucker asked his audience, "have the benefactors and supporters of Reformed Institutions... [considered] the conscience of the [Orthodox] recipient [which] is often rent with the anguish or submission to a Judaism regarded as strange and un-Jewish?" The German Jews did not observe general religious practices in their institutions. By overlooking the practices that Orthodox Jews revered, the community found it necessary to separate from the German Jews.<sup>341</sup>

Although the Reformed German Jews were generous with their charity to the newly arrived Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, their institutions were almost like a different

<sup>335</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>336</sup> Meites, *History of the Jews of Chicago*, 616.

<sup>337</sup> Berman, "Study of the Development," 81.

<sup>338</sup> Meites, *History of the Jews of Chicago*, 616-17.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid., 621.

<sup>340</sup> Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home. *By-Laws of the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home* (Chicago: Modern Printing House, 1916), 1.

<sup>341</sup> Saul Drucker, *Reasons for Separate Orthodox Institutions*. (Address delivered at the Section of Social Workers for the Conference of Jewish Charities, at Buffalo, New York, June 13, 1909. Speical collections, Chicago Jewish Archives, Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies, Chicago), 6.



religion because they did not apply orthodox practices. For example, the institutions run by the German Reform Jews did not keep a kosher kitchen. Orthodox Jews, Drucker argued, believed that eating unkosher foods would "hasten their end."<sup>342</sup> The "anguish" of submitting to the charity of the Reformed Jew was too much for some Orthodox Jews. They would have rather died in the streets than submit to the "strange and un-Jewish" practices of the Reformed institutions.

Even an Orthodox guardian would rather let his or her child roam the streets starving and neglected than be "made a 'goy,'"<sup>343</sup> according to Drucker. He spoke to the Jewish audience when he acknowledged that he understood that the "hope, aim and ambition of the orthodox parent, or grand-parent [was] to bring the child up in accordance with his views on religion." But, the practices of the Reformed institutions did not satisfactorily help the orthodox guardians transmit the religion. The solution, as Drucker argued, was to build an institution that practiced all orthodox traditions and laws.<sup>344</sup>

Another reason for wanting to create separate orthodox institutions rested on the belief that children living in a non-Orthodox orphanage would have a difficult time reuniting with their families. Drucker worried that if children from an Orthodox home were raised in an institution that did not practice orthodox traditions, then the religion of their family would be forgotten. If children were reunited with his family, they would be an alien to their family because they would not understand the same religion. Drucker summarized:

Then there is always the tragedy of the reunion of parent and child, after the latter finds that the fundamental principles of the child's religion are directly opposed to those cherished and practiced for generations, till they have come to be regarded as sacred. The parent thus finds an alien in the child, the child cannot understand the parent, nor the time-honored ceremonies, which, from the neglect of observance, have no significance in its mind, with the result, that filial love and respect are gradually uprooted on account of the religious disagreement that is inevitable.<sup>345</sup>

In sum, Drucker articulated the fears of many Orthodox Jews: the religion that had been so defining would be lost if it was not taught to children.

Fear of losing a religion was not the only reason why the Orthodox community wanted separate institutions. The Eastern European Jews did not want their children to marry non-Jews. Drucker related to his audience that the superintendent of a Reformed Orphan Home recently publicly lamented that his graduates intermarried at the rate of 45 percent. Drucker followed by asking, "Does this not prove that Reformed Judaism does not teach enough of Jewishness in a Jewish institution...?"<sup>346</sup> To help prevent the orthodox Jew from falling prey to the practices of the Reformed Jew, such as the practice of the "intermarriage evil,"<sup>347</sup> it was decided that creating separate institutions was not "advisable," but an "absolute necessity."<sup>348</sup>

While the Orthodox Jews found it necessary to build separate institutions, there were some similarities between the Reformed Chicago Home for Jewish Orphans and the Orthodox Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home. The two main similarities were that both orphanages sent the

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<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> goy in Hebrew means non-Jewish person

<sup>344</sup> Drucker, *Reasons for Separate*, 9.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., 16.

children to public schools and taught them a vocation or skill. According to the Marks Nathan Home, each child was to receive the "fullest amount of education from which it can benefit," which the public schools provided.<sup>349</sup> The Chicago Home similarly stated that they placed an emphasis on formal education, which they believed could be gained "with few exceptions" at the public schools.<sup>350</sup> The superintendent of the Chicago Home for Jewish Orphans said, "The best heritage we can give our children is a good education. . . . We send out children to the regular public schools, firmly believing that they are the mold wherein is fashioned American citizenship."<sup>351</sup> In addition to the mandatory public education, both the Orthodox and Reform orphanages expected the children to learn a vocation or skill. For example, both orphanages allowed boys to play in a band or participate in sports; however, more importantly, they were to learn industrial and mechanical skills.<sup>352</sup> Girls in both Homes learned how to play the piano, dance, and art, with an emphasis on table manners, conduct, sewing, and cooking.<sup>353</sup> The training programs were preparing the children to be "productive laborers and loyal citizens who would contribute their energies and talents to the American economy and society."<sup>354</sup> The goal of both the Reformed and Orthodox orphanages was to graduate children with some sort of skill or training that they could use to become successful in American society.

Additionally, both orphanages taught Hebrew classes, but the amount and depth of instruction differed. The Chicago Home taught children under sixteen "instruction in Bible, Jewish history, Hebrew reading, and Translation."<sup>355</sup> According to the published weekly program of the Chicago Home, the children under the age of sixteen had this type of Hebrew training only one day a week, not including Saturdays. On Mondays the children had Sinai lectures from 7:15 a.m. until 10:30 a.m. On Saturdays the children had Bible classes from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m., and Chapel from 11:00 to 11:45 a.m.

The Hebrew education in the Marks Nathan Home was more extensive. While it was only required of children under sixteen years old in the Chicago Home, *all* children in the Marks Nathan Home were required to attend. Beginning students attended Hebrew classes for 6 hours a week, while advanced students attended classes for four and a half hours.<sup>356</sup> According to the published weekly program, children said prayers in the morning, every day of the week for fifteen minutes.<sup>357</sup> Grace was said before and after every meal, and boys were required to wear their "caps while doing so."<sup>358</sup> In contrast, boys in the Chicago Home were not required to wear the traditional skull cap or say grace before and after every meal.

The Marks Nathan Home conducted Synagogue on Friday nights and Saturday mornings, while the Chicago Home only conducted services on Saturday mornings. It is important to note how the Chicago Home called it "chapel" and the Marks Nathan Home called it Synagogue. The word "chapel" was used by Christian Americans as a synonym for church. The German Jews, more established and Americanized, used American words for their Jewish ceremonies. But it

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<sup>349</sup> Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home, Board of Directors. Illustrated pamphlet about the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home, printed September 14, 1916.

<sup>350</sup> Berman, "Study of the Development", 64.

<sup>351</sup> Freidman, *These are Our Children*, 102-103.

<sup>352</sup> Berman, "Study of the Development," 118.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>354</sup> Freidman, *These are Our Children*, 106.

<sup>355</sup> Berman, "Study of the Development," 42.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

was not only because the community of German Jews was more established in American society that they adopted American words for Jewish ceremonies. The Reform movement also helps explain why the Protestant model was adopted by the German Jews.<sup>359</sup> The Reform Jews wanted to modernize Judaism, and one way to accomplish this was to use Protestant American words. The Orthodox Jews, on the other hand, did not adopt American words for their ceremonies; they kept the Jewish word, synagogue, for their services.

The Marks Nathan Home did not only have more required Hebrew education, Synagogue, and prayers; the children also learned how to remember departed parents or loved ones through reciting kadish (prayer). The home actually built a Memorial Hall for children to reflect on the lives of the departed and recite kadish.<sup>360</sup> The Home thus helped preserve Orthodox traditions by teaching the children about ceremonies like this. The Marks Nathan Home boasted in a pamphlet about the orphanage, while the children are in the "most impressive age, our children are taught through actual practice, to understand and respect the traditional Jewish ceremonies."<sup>361</sup> The Board of Directors was proud to be educating the children in cherished Orthodox ceremonies.

Another important distinction between the two orphanages was that the Marks Nathan Home kept a kosher kitchen. In a pamphlet published in 1916, the Board of Directors included a picture of the kitchen with the following caption, "Our diet is plain, but the food is wholesome and nutritious and, of course, kosher."<sup>362</sup> This was probably the main reason why the Orthodox Jewish community created their own institutions separately from the German Jews. Eating kosher foods was one of the most important rituals for Orthodox Jews. When they immigrated to the United States and discovered that the German Jews did not eat kosher foods, they were appalled. This is evidenced in a pamphlet that Drucker wrote in 1909, titled, "Reasons for Separate Orthodox Institutions." The Eastern European Jewish community in Chicago was concerned about teaching their children about the ceremonies and rituals of their culture and religion. Although they did want the children to be successful in America and sent them to the public schools to learn English, Orthodox Jews also wanted them to retain their Jewish identity. That is why the Marks Nathan Home kept a kosher kitchen, held Synagogue and taught Hebrew extensively.

Through the traditions of eating kosher foods, wearing a skull cap, reciting prayers, and the more general practices of Orthodox Judaism, the Marks Nathan Home sought to transmit an identity to the children within the American context. But if those practices were taken out of a child's education, the question was, could they still learn about their Jewish heritage and religion if they did not practice the traditions? According to the Marks Nathan Home, children had to practice the orthodox rites in order to "understand and respect the traditional Jewish ceremonies."<sup>363</sup> The Chicago Home did not believe that it was essential for the Jewish children to extensively learn traditional Jewish ceremonies because the Reformed philosophy revolved around modernity.

While the Chicago Home did teach some Hebrew, it was not the primary focus. The Chicago Home did not make the children recited prayers or eat kosher foods. The boys were not required to wear skull caps. The overall amount of time spent teaching the children Hebrew or

<sup>359</sup> Brinkmann, "We are Brothers!," 52.

<sup>360</sup> Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home, Board of Directors. Illustrated pamphlet about the Marks Nathan Jewish Orphan Home, printed September 14, 1916.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

## *Constructing the Past*

Jewish culture, through classes and chapel, was not nearly as extensive as it was at the Marks Nathan Home. The concern of the Reformed Jews was helping the children learn how to live and prosper in American society. In contrast, the Marks Nathan Home's primary concern was transmitting the Jewish culture and religion to mold children who would also prosper in American society while retaining their Jewish identity.

By comparing the Orthodox Marks Nathan Home to the Reform Chicago Home, the link between Americanizing and retaining a Jewish identity is revealed. The creation of two Jewish orphanages in Chicago represents the struggle that many immigrant groups faced upon arrival to the United States. Should one focus on becoming American, or should one retain the values of the Old World? Through highlighting the similarities and differences between the two Jewish orphanages, a glimpse is seen of how the Orthodox Jews tried to find the intricate balance of raising children who would be successful in the United States while retaining a part of the identity that was so defining to earlier generations.

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