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MarkKBauman@aol.com

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bstone@delmar.edu

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sclangston@charter.net

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swhitfie@brandeis.edu

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jrkatz@thebreman.org

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srabin@oberlin.edu

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rheimovics@cfl.rr.com

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# Moshe Cahana, Ethical Zionism, and the Application of Jewish Nationalism to Civil Rights Struggles in the American South

by

Timothy R. Riggio Quevillon\*

**B**y the time he left Congregation Brith Shalom at the end of the 1970s, Conservative rabbi Moshe Cahana had crafted a stellar reputation as a civil rights leader in Houston, Texas. From his arrival in the city in 1959 to his semiretirement in 1979, Cahana centered his rabbinical career around ensuring racial equality in Houston and across the South. While not always well received by his congregants, Cahana believed that Jews had a unique role to play in African American civil rights struggles and should use their history as colonial subjects to inspire continued activism.

Although one of many Jewish civil rights activists in the 1960s, Cahana's background sets him apart. As a Jew from Palestine, he conceived of his activism differently from his American Jewish contemporaries. Cahana grew up in a war-torn Safed, Palestine, suffering under the yoke of British imperialism. Responding to colonial pressures, Jewish and Arab nationalism in Palestine grew violent and ultimately claimed the lives of several members of Cahana's immediate family. In response, Cahana joined the Revisionist Zionist paramilitary organization Etzel and spent the 1940s engaging in anti-British violence, including taking a lead role in the 1946 bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

Upon his arrival in the United States, Moshe Cahana drew connections between British imperialism in Palestine and the treatment of African Americans in the South. Responding to the social inequality, political disenfranchisement, and continued racial violence prevailing in southern states, Cahana argued that Zionist Jews who pushed for Israeli

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\* The author may be contacted at [trquevillon@gmail.com](mailto:trquevillon@gmail.com).

statehood had a duty to act on behalf of beleaguered African Americans. Around this idea, Cahana crafted a political philosophy that blended the teachings of the *Musar* movement in Jewish ethics, which treated Talmudic law as a pliable set of principles rather than immutable regulations, with anti-British Revisionist Zionism, which stressed political enfranchisement and an end to colonial oppression. What resulted was his theory of ethical Zionism, which treated Zionism as a pliable framework, or set of ethical standards, applicable to both Jews and non-Jews seeking political freedom and equality. This grounding framed his political activism throughout his rabbinical career in the United States.

Moshe Cahana's activism represents an often-overlooked facet to Jewish civil rights activism: the impact of anti-imperialism and anticolonialism. The intersection among race, nationalism, and colonialism for black activists in American civil rights struggles has long been discussed in historical literature. Early scholars on the issue, such as Gerald Horne, John Dower, and Reginald Kearney, examined the ways in which black activists viewed American wars overseas, arguing that black activists often either rejected American imperial efforts or sympathized with enemy combatants, believing them to be people of color fighting against white imperialism.<sup>2</sup> These works primarily addressed the ways in which black activists viewed American foreign policy, particularly when dealing with countries deemed nonwhite, such as Japan, Vietnam, and the decolonizing world, through the lens of their own subjugation at the hands of the American racial hierarchy. Conversely, scholars such as Mary Dudziak and Thomas Borstelmann explore how anxieties over foreign policy decisions during the Cold War informed how Americans approached complex questions around race and civil rights.<sup>3</sup> Like earlier scholars, these new works focused on how African American activists engaged with top-down foreign policy decisions. Most recently, however, scholars have increasingly explored the ways in which civil rights activists engaged with decolonial struggles around the world that often did not factor into official U.S. foreign policy.<sup>4</sup> While these studies often addressed decolonization struggles in the Middle East, with Keith Feldman's book *A Shadow Over Palestine* directly addressing postcolonial struggles in Israel and Palestine, they do so solely through the examination of Arab struggles for autonomy. Jewish ambition for statehood is either ignored or treated as an extension of European colonialism.

*Rabbi Moshe Cahana, c. 1972.*  
*(Unknown photographer, digital enhancement by Janice Rubin.*  
*Courtesy of Janice Rubin.)*

As a native of Mandate Palestine and someone who grew up under the yoke of British imperialism in the Middle East, Moshe Cahana's experiences highlight the ways in which non-European Jews viewed their relationship to traditional colonialism. For Cahana, Zionism and the eventual creation of a Jewish state was the fulfillment of decades of anticolonial nationalism in the Jewish community of Palestine.<sup>5</sup> Moshe Cahana's civil rights activism demonstrates the ways in which many Jewish activists harbored a national identity divorced from traditional whiteness that instead often conflicted with western imperialism and colonialism. Jewish activists often navigated their identity as colonial subjects, both in relation to antisemitic violence and European imperial control over the region, to respond to American political issues. Moshe Cahana responded to the second-class citizenship forced on African Americans with the same anticolonial outrage that inspired his Zionism as a British subject in Mandate Palestine. Like many American Jews in the 1960s, Moshe Cahana's colonial identity caused him to embrace political movements focused on racial minorities outside the Jewish community, equating their struggles for representation and autonomy with his own.<sup>6</sup> As such, Cahana's deep involvement in African American civil rights struggles in the American South adds complexity to our understanding of the movement and the Jewish activists who participated in it.

Moshe Cahana's activism also challenges the way scholars address the relationship between black and Jewish activists in the 1960s. Previous authors conflated attachment to Zionism with a Jewish trend toward political conservatism. Scholars on Jewish racial activism such as Murray Friedman, Jonathan Kaufman, and Michael Staub credit the breakdown of interethnic political coalitions, in part, to the fervent embrace of Zionism by American Jews in the wake of Israel's 1967 and 1973 wars.<sup>7</sup> American political scholars have gone a step further in arguing that the embrace of Zionism led to a rightward shift in American Jewish politics.<sup>8</sup> Recently, however, this view of American Zionism has shifted. In his 2006 book, *American Jewish Political Culture and the Liberal Persuasion*, Henry Feingold argues that Zionism's relationship with American liberalism was more complicated than previous scholars suggested. Instead of a rightward shift in American Jewry, Feingold shows that American Jews have consistently negotiated the contestations between Zionism and liberalism to achieve a balance between the two in their identity.<sup>9</sup> In *City on a Hilltop*, Sara

Hirschhorn pushes the connection a step further, arguing that settler Zionism was a political outgrowth of American liberalism in the 1960s, as settlers used the language and ideals of the New Left to justify increased settlement in the West Bank and Sinai.<sup>10</sup>

Moshe Cahana's activism adds to this historiography by repositioning Zionism's role in American Jewish alignments in civil rights politics. Cahana placed Zionism at the center of his political ideology, seeing it as a branch of American political liberalism. Instead of Zionism serving as the catalyst for political severance between black and Jewish Americans, Cahana's activism in the American South demonstrates that, for many Jewish activists, Zionism emboldened their civil rights liberalism.

### *Ethical Zionism*

Moshe Cahana's political ideology stems from his interpretation of Revisionist Zionism. Born in the wake of perceived failings of traditional Zionism in the 1930s, Ze'ev (Vladimir) Jabotinsky crafted Revisionist Zionism as a means for pressuring the British to grant Jewish statehood. At the core of Revisionism was Jabotinsky's belief that British and Zionist goals for Palestine were antithetical. He argued that Great Britain would never allow for a fully independent Jewish state in Palestine and crafted Revisionist Zionism to counter imperialist influence over the development of a Jewish state. As a result, Jabotinsky believed that Jews in Palestine needed to privilege their goals over those of Arab nationalism and British foreign policy and seek immediate independence from the British Empire.

*Postcard of Ze'ev Jabotinsky, 1930.*

*(Wikimedia Commons.)*



Despite Revisionism traditionally being seen as a rigidly right-wing ideology, many of its adherents believed it otherwise. When crafting Revisionism, Jabotinsky spoke in broad anti-imperial language in an effort to try to attract the largest number of adherents possible so his movement could rival traditional forms of Zionism prominent in the British Mandate. Consequently, Revisionist Zionism in the twentieth century was far from a monolithic movement. Numerous activists within right-wing Zionist organizations, such as Maxim Ghilan, Boaz Evron, and Natan Yellin-Mor, were radical in their fight against British occupation but became the backbone of Israeli leftism after independence. These men, like Cahana, embraced Revisionism through the lens of its revolutionary and anti-British core and believed it congruous with traditional left-wing ideologies. Thus Revisionist Zionism must be addressed as a diverse and nuanced political movement rather than a strict, monolithic ideology.<sup>11</sup>

Revisionism's growth in Palestine inspired a young Moshe Cahana into Zionist politics, as he grew increasingly impatient with delayed British promises of sovereignty. Cahana believed Revisionism, and the militancy that often accompanied it, to be a necessity to counter continued British imperialism in Palestine. As an avid reader of anticolonial literature throughout his early life, in particular anti-British nationalists like Mohandas Gandhi, he believed Revisionism to be in dialogue with concurrent nationalist movements around the world. By the time he reached adulthood in 1940, Cahana joined the paramilitary organization Etzel, working up the hierarchy to become its district commander in Jerusalem—where he played a key role in the planning and implementation of the King David Hotel bombing in 1946—and commander of the northern district during the Acre Prison Break and Altalena affair. Both roles found Cahana pursued by British authorities throughout the 1940s.<sup>12</sup>

At the core of Cahana's activism was his belief that an anticolonial Zionism was not merely a Jewish political ideology, an idea that stemmed from his early education in the *Musar* movement within Jewish ethics.<sup>13</sup> This movement arose among Orthodox Lithuanian Jews as a reaction to the social changes brought about by the Enlightenment and the corresponding *Haskalah*.<sup>14</sup> *Musar* responded to growing antisemitism, the assimilation of many Jews into Christianity, and the impoverished living conditions in the Pale of Settlement that caused severe tension and disappointment. By the 1700s, Jewish institutions in Lithuania began to

*Damage to King David Hotel in  
Jerusalem, 1946.*  
(Library of Congress.)

*Irgun (Etzel) forces training in  
Tel Aviv, 1947.*  
(Wikimedia Commons.)

dissolve, and religious Jews feared that their way of life was slipping away from them; observance of traditional Jewish law and custom was on the decline. To remedy this decline, *Musar* emphasized moral teachings based on the ethics taught in traditional rabbinic works. Instead of focusing solely on the rigidity of Jewish law, *Musar* approached the law as ethical guidelines that could be molded to modern Jewish life, both religious and secular.<sup>15</sup>

Moshe Cahana believed that the central *Musar* principle of abandoning halachic rigidity in favor of pliability could be applied to political ethics as easily as it was to religious law. Despite Zionism's original intent being the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine and the resurgence of a cultural Jewish identity in the face of increasing assimilation, Cahana believed that the ideology could expand its focus in the wake of the creation of Israel as a Jewish nation in 1948. If Zionism solely had the goal of state building, it became obsolete in 1948. Instead, Cahana argued for a Zionism that "recognizes Jewish peoplehood and the centrality of *Eretz Yisra'el* in

[Jewish] life” and served as an outward inspiration “for the Jewish people and for all nations” in equal measure.<sup>16</sup> Thus Cahana saw Zionism as a core ethical framework that should apply to all peoples, Jewish and non-Jewish alike.

The resulting ethical Zionism offered a way for Cahana to adapt anticolonial and revolutionary Revisionist Zionism into other nationalist and civil rights struggles around the world. Since ethical Zionism was a political framework rather than a strict ideology, Cahana was able to fold his revolutionary interpretation of Zionism into political movements around the globe. For Cahana, a framework of ethical Zionism urged Jews to act against discrimination, disenfranchisement, and oppression across the world, whether in “Birmingham or Bombay, Jackson or Jerusalem, Oxford, Miss. or Odessa.”<sup>17</sup> Cahana believed that the values of anticolonialism, political autonomy, and cultural freedom, which he saw as the core of his Revisionist Zionist beliefs, could serve as an example for broad-spectrum political activism and spiritual refinement. In this interpretation, Zionism became a universalist political framework that not only pushed for Israeli statehood but demanded decolonization in India, Palestine, Vietnam, and across Africa and Asia.<sup>18</sup>

*Synagogue in Hebron damaged  
by Arab rioters, 1929.  
(Library of Congress.)*

Cahana's Zionism, particularly his attachment to anti-British Revisionism, arose from his experiences growing up in Palestine. Under the British Mandate, Cahana witnessed the struggles that befell Jews because of their statelessness and lack of political control. Growing up in Safed in the 1920s and 1930s, Cahana witnessed the immense interethnic violence in northern Palestine that arose in response to British imperialism in the region, and it colored his childhood and formative years. He experienced the violence of the 1929 Palestine riots firsthand when Arabs set fire to his family home, causing him and several of his young cousins to run through the street seeking any form of safe haven. Cahana further suffered personal loss during the Arab Revolt of 1936 when eight members of his family, including his mother, grandmother, and sister, died at the hands of a band of protesters.<sup>19</sup> Cahana tied this violence to a natural outcropping of British imperialism and blamed the harsh realities of foreign occupation and disproportionate responses to ongoing violence for the resulting thousands of deaths of Jews and Arabs in Palestine between 1919 and 1947. Without adequate political power, Jews and Arabs in Palestine were forced to fight one another for what little political favor they thought they could curry from the British.<sup>20</sup>

Cahana saw similar oppression in the American South. He argued that "every sovereign nation [had] the right to live by the political structure of its choice and under its system of law." However, in the South, African Americans neither possessed political autonomy nor could they live under a system of law that in any way benefited them. Instead, he believed, southern governments treated black citizens as colonial subjects, denying them any influence in the government they lived under or any political recourse. The risk of this, he argued, was that "the [southern] struggle could become fiery and bloody," just as the struggle in Palestine had been earlier. African Americans would grow more desperate the longer they were denied political rights. When this desperation coupled with a feeling of personal empowerment, violence was an inevitability if oppressive systems were not abolished.<sup>21</sup> Ultimately, this was because "long-lasting vulnerability [invited] devastating aggression." For Cahana, violence always accompanied discrimination and bigotry, while "[social] brotherhood inevitably followed justice, reason, [and] good will."<sup>22</sup> Thus the only way to solve the issues in the South was to strive for racial justice and equality.

By the time Cahana began his civil rights activism in the early 1960s, the roots of black militancy were present across the South. In 1957, Robert F. Williams applied for a charter with the National Rifle Association (NRA) in hopes of arming the black citizens of Monroe, North Carolina, who faced numerous violent attacks from the large Ku Klux Klan (KKK) population in the city. Williams named Monroe's new NRA chapter the Black Armed Guard, and it consisted of fifty to sixty black men who were determined to defend the local black community by violent means if necessary. This came to a head in summer 1957 when the Black Armed Guard helped fortify and defend the house of Dr. Albert Perry. When numerous Klansmen appeared, the two sides exchanged fire before the Klan members ultimately fled.

In his book *Negroes with Guns*, Williams advocated responding to violence with violence: "It has always been an accepted right of Americans, as the history of our Western states proves, that where the law is unable, or unwilling, to enforce order, the citizens can, and must, act in self-defense against lawless violence." He further wrote, "racists consider themselves superior beings and are not willing to exchange their superior lives for our inferior ones. They are most vicious and violent when they can practice violence with impunity."<sup>23</sup>

Williams's brand of violent activism worried Cahana. Scarred by the violence he endured in Mandate Palestine, Cahana was determined not to see the same violence occur in the United States. Since Cahana believed that such anticolonial violence was an inevitable outgrowth of continued oppression, he argued that Americans had a duty to ensure that black southerners never reached the same point of no return that Jews and Arabs had reached under British occupation. To this end, Cahana believed that activists should embrace an approach of nonviolence in African American civil rights struggles for as long as they could. Cahana held that resorting to violence would only harm the movement and undermine what civil rights activists sought to achieve.

Cahana decried the violence that accompanied white southerners' oppression of African Americans. White Americans used racial violence and lynching as a means of social control and intimidation. This violence existed outside of the due process of law by self-appointed commissions, mobs, and vigilantes in retaliation for what they viewed to be legal and

social slights committed by African Americans.<sup>24</sup> Disgusted with this violent oppression, Cahana spoke out against the killing of black civil rights activists across the South. He urged that “[his] prime concern [was] not about who pulled the trigger.” Instead, Cahana focused on “the poisoned climate that could produce a murderer.” The murders of civil rights activists in the South did not arise in a vacuum. Instead, Cahana argued, these murders were emblematic of a larger culture of hostility and torture. He believed that southern society as a whole was responsible for these heinous acts. Even “the church and the synagogue [could] not wash their hands and say they did not shed this blood,” because they were complicit through continued silence. By not actively working to prevent the violence and change the culture around racial prejudice, southerners, even those who opposed such discrimination, condemned black activists to continued violence.<sup>25</sup>

The next goal of Cahana’s ethical Zionism was to ensure the political equality and autonomy of African Americans, particularly how blacks related to the American government and how the government related to them. Peace and safety, he argued, could only be advanced by economic and political justice. This, he maintained, was the goal of Revisionist Zionism. While under British control, neither Jews nor Arabs in Palestine had political power or civil rights. Cahana argued that without autonomy or rights the ethnic conflict between the two disempowered groups would continue. It was only through the capitulation of political control on the part of the British that peace would come, for, with political control, ultimately both sides could be in an adequate position of power to deal with each other and come to a peaceful resolution of their conflict.<sup>26</sup>

Although he did not argue for African Americans in the South to possess autonomous territory, as he had for Jews in Palestine, Cahana believed that Revisionism’s demand for political power was translatable to southern society. He argued that the “highest level of democracy [was] based on a scrupulous respect for the rights, the welfare, the dignity of others, along with trust in every individual’s ability to make right decisions.”<sup>27</sup> Thus it was the federal and state governments’ duty to ensure equal political rights for African Americans. This meant an end to voting restrictions, the creation of open primaries, and the type of voting protections ultimately present in the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The final aspect of ethical Zionism was the assurance of cultural and familial stability for African Americans living under the yoke of southern oppression. Cahana believed that building up Israel and rejuvenating Jewish culture were the paramount mitzvot of the modern era. These could be achieved by encouraging Jews to strive to live in Israel and help to develop the country economically, culturally, morally, and spiritually. Cahana's philosophy stemmed from his reading of Ahad Ha'am and cultural Zionism. Ahad Ha'am was an early Russian Zionist who opposed traditional political Zionism. He believed that political Zionism failed to account for the *hitpardut*, or debilitating fragmentation, of Jewish communities in the Diaspora. Merely gathering Jewish communities in Palestine would not fix this fragmentation. Rather, the key to countering the fragmentation was creating a "cultural domicile" within Palestine. This cultural center, built around a shared language and history, would serve as a unifier for all Jewish communities migrating to Palestine.<sup>28</sup>

Cultural Zionism was crucial to Cahana's Zionist thinking. Although he believed in political Revisionism and advocated for the creation and strengthening of a distinctly Jewish state in Palestine, he believed that political freedom was only half of the final goal. Israel could not survive as an independent nation without the continued rejuvenation of the Jewish spirit through spiritual and ethical refinement. The main pursuit of Jewry, he argued, should be the "moral, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional growth" that could ensure an "amicable, noble, and pure" Israel for future generations.<sup>29</sup> Cahana's emphasis on cultural rejuvenation echoed the teachings of many American Jews, particularly as it allowed for attachment to Zionism while maintaining attachments to and remaining in the United States. However, while many American cultural Zionists were often pacifist proponents of a binational state, such as Reform leader Judah Magnes, Cahana believed cultural and political Zionism were congruous with one another.

In this way, Israel could serve as an example for the whole of world civilization. He argued that "ethnic and cultural subgroups should be encouraged to preserve and foster their distinctive voices and colors, and to present their distinctiveness to the cultural rainbow of society." Cahana believed that black life in the South must be allowed to flourish, something that was not happening under segregation. The way to achieve this, Cahana believed, was to build up black cultural institutions and end

segregation in all areas of southern society. To this end, Cahana frequently hosted community events with black churches, organized student life events with Texas Southern University, the local historically black college in Houston, and worked with black civic organizations when planning civil rights demonstrations in Houston. This participation, he believed, would strengthen black institutions and embolden political activism.<sup>30</sup>

*Moshe Cahana's Arrival in Houston*

Following the end of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Moshe Cahana declined an offer from Menachem Begin to serve in the Knesset as a member of the new Herut party and chose instead to aid the immigration of Jewish refugees to Israel in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It was through this work that he met his wife, Alice Lok, a Hungarian Holocaust survivor emigrating from a displaced persons' camp in Sweden where Cahana worked to foster dignity among the survivors of the Shoah. By the mid-1950s, Cahana chose to revive his religious studies and work toward a rabbinical career. While he was raised in the Sanz Hasidic dynasty, he remained unable to reconcile his political leanings with the anti-Zionism of Hasidic Judaism. After meeting Wolfe Kelman, executive vice president of the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly (RA), Cahana moved to the United States and received ordination as a rabbi in 1957. He had previously received a degree in social work from the Sorbonne. When a position opened at Houston's Congregation Brith Shalom, which was seeking their first rabbi, Kelman recommended Cahana to fill the vacancy, believing that his commitment to anticolonial ethics and civil rights were perfectly suited to service in deeply segregated Houston.<sup>31</sup>

As an increasingly diverse migration city, Houston occupied a unique position within wider Jim Crow politics. The mass influx in the first half of the twentieth century of both African Americans from rural East Texas and Mexican Americans from the Rio Grande Valley gave the city a multiracial character absent in other areas in the American South. Despite this ethnic diversity, a binary color line dominated Jim Crow politics, leaving Latinos, Jews, and Creoles in racially amorphous positions. As migrant populations, these communities often found themselves segregated into similar neighborhoods. For example, when Mexican migration to Houston began in large numbers during the 1920s, most immigrants settled in Houston's Second Ward, where, according to one



*Alice Lok Cahana in 2006.*  
(Courtesy of Janice Rubin, © 2006.)

Houston historian, half of the residents were Jewish and a third were black.<sup>32</sup> The concentration of blacks, Jews, and Latinos in these neighborhoods was so high that *Colonel Mayfield's Weekly*, a pro-Klan newspaper in Houston, repeatedly labeled the neighborhoods the source of all of Houston's social ills.<sup>33</sup> Mayfield argued that the cultural relationships cultivated by black, Latino, and Jewish migrants to the city in the decades following World War I inspired pushes for racial equality and threatened the integrity of the color line in Houston. This perception led to white backlash against Jewish merchants and boycotts of Jewish-owned stores, increasing the importance of black and Latino customers.<sup>34</sup>

Following World War II, the abolition of restrictive covenants and economic growth allowed Houston's Jewish community to assimilate into middle- and upper-class white neighborhoods. With this new upward mobility, Houston's Jews increasingly reaped the benefits of whiteness under Houston's binary racial system. This whiteness, however, was tenuous, and local Jews remained increasingly weary of losing their newfound status. As a result, many Jews in the city actively abstained from involvement in the racial politics of the 1950s.

Cahana's arrival in Houston in 1959 marked a change in how many Jews in the city, particularly Conservative Jews, approached civil rights activism. Although some Reform Jews in Houston championed integrationist politics, notably the prominent Reform rabbi Robert I. Kahn, the dominant voice in Conservative Jewish civil rights politics was William Malev, the rabbi at Temple Beth Yeshurun, one of the largest Conservative synagogues in the South. In an article he wrote for *Conservative Judaism* in 1958, "The Jew of the South in the Conflict on Segregation," Malev argued for Jewish noninvolvement in local civil rights efforts. Although Malev

*Rabbi William Malev in 1948.*  
(*Congregation Beth Yeshurun Records,*  
*MS 711, courtesy of the Houston Jewish*  
*History Archive/Woodson Research*  
*Center, Rice University, Houston.*)

believed that integration "morally and religiously [was] the only way of solving the problem [of racial inequality]," he felt that the issue of civil rights activism should not follow a uniform pattern, as the "conflict on the issue of segregation [was] different in each community." Above all, Malev objected to large northern organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League acting on behalf of American Jews in issues related to racial equality in the country. These organizations, he argued, could not understand the intricacies of each community in the South and, thus, could not fully appreciate the social and economic position each Jewish community occupied in their respective cities. As a result, the national pronouncements

against segregation made by these organizations often had little regard for the effect they had on southern Jewish communities.<sup>35</sup>

Malev's view arose from the belief that prominent civil rights activism would "invite resentment and anti-Semitism, if not violence, towards the Jewish community." He understood that Jews in the South achieved a favorable social position by being accepted as white and considered a faith with the same religious lineage as the dominant Christian community. By seeing Judaism as one of the "three great faiths," Malev argued, southerners would view the Jewish community as an offshoot of the dominant white society. It was in this social position, Malev believed, that southern Jews could exert the most political influence, citing his experience in which he was one of three white clergymen who were asked to speak on the issue of desegregation before the Houston school board. Despite Jews constituting less than 2 percent of the population of Houston, he argued that he was able to exert influence as one-third of the religious population. National Jewish civil rights efforts, however, highlighted the ethnic character of the Jewish community, causing white southerners increasingly to identify Jews as an ethnic minority that belonged on the other side of the color line, putting them at increased risk of discrimination and negating their political influence.<sup>36</sup>

As soon as Moshe Cahana arrived in Houston, he began bucking against this dominant narrative. Cahana joined the Houston Rabbinical Council, where he eventually became an officer and leading voice within the organization. From his role in the council, Cahana impacted the trajectory of rabbinic activism in the city and used his influence to help convince Jewish-owned businesses to integrate quietly. This was done to avoid the violence and bloodshed that visited much of the South during the 1960s. In 1961 Cahana also helped found the Houston Biracial Committee on Race and Religion. This committee brought together various white, black, and Latino religious leaders in the hopes of ending segregation and solving the divisive racial issues that were rampant across the city.<sup>37</sup> Cahana spent many years speaking at various churches, attending demonstrations around Houston, and fighting segregation in his everyday life, even going so far as sitting in sections designated for black Houstonians when he went to cinemas or theaters. For Cahana, "living what you believe" was the underpinning principle of a moral and ethical life.<sup>38</sup>

*Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Albany Movement*

Moshe Cahana's first foray into civil rights activism outside of Houston came in Albany, Georgia. By 1960, Albany was a moderately sized and deeply segregated city in the heart of rural southwestern Georgia. With a population of about fifty-five thousand, Albany was split along a binary color line, with blacks comprising roughly 40 percent of the population. Unlike the surrounding region, Albany was home to a diverse group of black professionals, including military personnel, college professors, doctors, nurses, and entrepreneurs, due to the city's hosting of Turner Air Force Base and Albany State College, one of Georgia's three historically black state colleges.<sup>39</sup>

Albany had a long history of antiblack violence. The sheriff of neighboring Baker County, Claude Screws, made news when, aided by a police officer and a special deputy, he arrested and lynched Robert Hall, handcuffing and beating him to death in front of the county courthouse. Like many contemporary lynchings, Screws and his accomplices faced no local charges or punishment. The three men were convicted in federal court of denying Hall his Fourteenth Amendment civil rights, but the U.S. Supreme Court eventually overturned these convictions. Screws's successor, Warren Johnson, continued the practice of extrajudicial violence, savagely beating a handcuffed prisoner, Charlie Ware, before shooting him four times, although Ware survived the attack.<sup>40</sup>

In this environment of racial violence, activists from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) sought to unify multiple civil rights organizations to combat segregation and the poor treatment of African Americans in Albany and the surrounding counties. After the Interstate Commerce Commission's ban on racial segregation at interstate bus terminals went into effect on November 1, 1961, activists saw an opportunity to test these new integration policies. Nine students from Albany State College staged the initial sit-in at a segregated Albany bus terminal. Although none of them were arrested for violating segregation ordinances, their actions inspired the involvement of other local civil rights leaders. Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., arrived in the city on December 15 and was soon arrested on charges of parading without a permit and obstructing a sidewalk. Following the arrest, Reverend Ralph Abernathy called for a nationwide pilgrimage of civil rights supporters to

Albany in response. At the same time, local leader Marion Page issued a public statement that the Albany Movement was an effort “by and for local Negroes.”<sup>41</sup>

Just two years into his tenure at Brith Shalom, Moshe Cahana heard of the continuous violence Albany’s black population faced at the hands of local authorities, as well as King’s arrest, and was compelled to act. The extrajudicial violence in Albany worried Cahana, who had been the victim of extrajudicial violence at the hands of British authorities in the 1940s, including imprisonment and torture.<sup>42</sup> Thus, upon learning of the violence against blacks in Georgia, Cahana decided to take time away from Houston to participate in Albany’s protests.

Cahana was one of only a handful of outside religious leaders, many of whom were rabbis, who traveled to Albany to visit King in prison and offered their assistance in the protests. Given sparse attendance in Albany of outside religious leaders, Cahana’s presence struck a chord with Dr. King and sparked a friendship between the two that endured until King’s assassination in 1968. Over the course of their friendship, Cahana attended numerous protests and marches led by King, helped facilitate King’s trips to Houston, and invited King to speak before Congregation Brith Shalom on multiple occasions.<sup>43</sup>

The two men had much in common, and King provided constant inspiration for Cahana. Cahana believed King to be “a remarkable man [and] a pure soul.” For the black freedom movement to succeed, he argued that a man of King’s caliber and temperament was essential. For Cahana, the “powers of justice take a long time to mobilize and speak as one voice,” and critical to achieving this necessary unity, he felt the movement needed a strong, moral, and just leader. King, for Cahana, embodied all these qualities and was someone who could easily galvanize the people around him into action.<sup>44</sup>

What drew Cahana and King together strongest was their mutual commitment to nonviolent protest and their belief that religion should play an active role in civil rights activism. The two shared admiration for Mohandas Gandhi, a nonviolent activist and the public face of the Indian campaign against continued British imperialism in South Asia. Born to a merchant family and trained in law, Gandhi began organizing peasants, farmers, and industrial laborers to protest excessive land taxes and discrimination in 1915. By the early 1920s, Gandhi

assumed a leadership role in the Indian National Congress and led nationwide campaigns against discrimination and for achieving *swaraj*, or self-rule.<sup>45</sup>

King drew comparisons to Gandhi early in his activist career. Following the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955 and 1956, supporters likened the movement to Gandhi's Salt March, noting the commitment pervasive in both to passive resistance in the face of discrimination. However, King's commitment to nonviolence was never a guarantee. The minister admitted that he came to nonviolence in response to the racial violence he experienced as a child. He routinely passed spots where African Americans had been lynched, watched the KKK ride through his neighborhood at night, and witnessed police beating innocent black citizens. He admitted that on multiple occasions this consistent threat of violence almost hardened his heart against white southerners. However, while in college King read Thoreau's "Resistance to Civil Government" (or "Civil Disobedience") and was deeply moved by the idea of refusing to cooperate with a societal system that he believed was evil.<sup>46</sup> As he continued his studies at seminary, King learned of Gandhi's activism from Mordecai Johnson, then president of Howard University, who had just returned from a trip to India. As he studied more, King was moved by Gandhi's Salt March to the Sea, numerous fasts, and the concept of *satyagraha*, which Gandhi employed.<sup>47</sup> King's discovery of Gandhi's philosophy inspired him to base his movement around the principles of nonviolence and an ethic he conveyed as a "'turn the other cheek' philosophy."<sup>48</sup>

Cahana's journey to nonviolence echoed that of King. The struggle for Jewish autonomy in Palestine cost the lives of his family members and friends. It also pushed Cahana's commitment to his religious ideals. He began reading Gandhian literature in earnest after he lost his home during the Meora'ot Tarpat in 1929, an Arab pogrom against the Jews. In the wake of subsequent lockdowns, curfews, and increased British military presence in Palestine, Gandhi's blueprints for an independent India gave a young Cahana hope for eventual Jewish independence. Consequently, Gandhi became Cahana's first childhood hero, and Cahana even obtained a pair of glasses for himself that resembled Gandhi's. As Cahana endured the British occupation of Palestine, Gandhian anticolonialism slowly replaced Hasidic Orthodoxy as the central guiding principle in his life. As an Etzel militant, Cahana embraced violent resistance to British rule,

believing the Indian model of nonviolence to be unavailable to Palestinian Jews.<sup>49</sup>

When he arrived in the United States, Cahana embraced Gandhi's ideas of nonviolence. Although a colonized population in the American political system, Cahana believed that African Americans had not yet reached a point where nonviolence was impossible. As a result, he championed satyagraha and risking personal safety to embrace nonviolence. This decision drew him and King together and served as the basis of their friendship throughout the 1960s.<sup>50</sup>

Ultimately, the civil rights struggles in Albany proved a failure. A year of intense activism yielded few tangible results. The movement ultimately began to deteriorate by late 1962. King later argued that the failure of the movement stemmed from the vagueness of the protests and that the movement made a mistake in opting to protest against segregation generally rather than against a single and distinct facet of it. A tighter concentration, such as focusing on integrating buses or lunch counters, would have allowed for more tangible results, even if they were merely symbolic, and bolster activist morale throughout the movement.<sup>51</sup> Cahana's trip to Albany also caused an uproar among a Conservative population in Houston that had been supporters of Malev's policy of non-involvement.<sup>52</sup>

#### *Trip to Birmingham*

Moshe Cahana built on his friendship with King and remained active on the national civil rights stage throughout the 1960s. Two years after his trip to Albany, Cahana joined King in protests as an emissary of the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly. Since he joined the RA in 1958, Cahana was a stalwart at annual meetings, led committees, and spoke as a prominent philosophical voice in the organization. He advocated for civil rights, Zionism, feminism, and strong ethical education.

In May 1963, Cahana attended the annual RA conference in Greenfield Park, New York, with his wife, Alice. Alice advocated before the group for the creation of an American center dedicated to researching righteous gentiles during the Holocaust.<sup>53</sup> She spoke passionately of the appreciation she had for those who risked everything to save European Jews. She also recalled the debt she owed to thirteen Italian men for helping her escape the death camps. They saved her and her family's lives and,

she argued, restored her hope for and faith in humanity and the basic goodness of man.<sup>54</sup> Alice Cahana's speech sparked a resounding debate over the importance and impact of righteous Europeans and the best way to honor their legacy.

After lengthy discussion, the conference broke for lunch, during which Cahana dined with fellow rabbis Everett Gendler and Andre Ungar, both of whom were prominent civil rights activists he met in Albany the year before.<sup>55</sup> As they ate, the three turned their attention to a television broadcasting the news, in which the horror facing African Americans in Alabama was the lead story. Birmingham, Alabama, was in the throes of the increasingly violent Birmingham campaign, and all three men were mortified and outraged by the Birmingham Police Department's violent treatment of peaceful black protesters.

The Birmingham campaign was a desegregation movement organized in early 1963 by King's organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), to bring attention to the integration efforts of African Americans in the city. In 1963, Birmingham was one of the most segregated cities in the United States. Some 40 percent of the city's population of 350,000 was black, but it had no black police officers, firefighters, salesclerks, bank tellers, bus drivers, or store cashiers. Jobs available to African Americans were limited to manual labor in the local steel mills, work in household service, and lawn care and maintenance. Racial segregation permeated all aspects of public life, and only 10 percent of the city's black population was registered to vote in 1960.<sup>56</sup>

Learning from their failures in Albany, King and the SCLC focused primarily on desegregating downtown stores and public parks and pushed for fair hiring practices in city employment and the creation of a biracial committee that would ensure the desegregation of Birmingham's public schools. Like previous efforts, the Birmingham campaign relied on nonviolent protest methods and a march to the Jefferson County administration building as part of a voter registration drive. Many protesters were arrested throughout the campaign, which was a key strategy for King. The goal was to fill jails with protesters and strain police resources, forcing the city government to negotiate as protests grew long. Ralph Abernathy, a leader in the SCLC and confidant to King, spoke at a mass meeting of Birmingham's black citizens arguing that "the eyes of the world are on Birmingham tonight. [Attorney General] Bobby Kennedy is



looking here at Birmingham, the United States Congress is looking at Birmingham, the Department of Justice is looking at Birmingham. . . . I am ready to go to jail, are you?" Abernathy and King were among fifty protesters arrested on April 12, 1963.<sup>57</sup>

As jails filled with protesters, Birmingham's Commissioner of Public Safety, Bull Connor, who oversaw the city's police and fire departments, changed police tactics to keep demonstrators from congregating downtown. Arriving at police barricades, they met high-pressure spray from fire hoses and attacking police dogs. While police increasingly resorted to brutality, television cameras broadcast the scene to the nation.<sup>58</sup>

Seeing these events unfold offered an opportunity for Cahana. He went to the conference expecting that at some point he would leave for Alabama. Cahana said of the situation, "When I came to the convention, I came packed, and I made all necessary arrangements in the congregation for probably this Friday night I will be in jail in Alabama."<sup>59</sup> As King's friend, Cahana was fully aware of the gravity of the situation in Birmingham and attended the RA in the hopes of gathering a larger group to join him in the protest. This was not the first time Cahana prepared to be jailed for forms of protest. He had spent much of his time in British Palestine as a militant wanted by British authorities. In Cahana's estimation, protest and revolt could flout laws and ordinances so long as these were vehicles for legitimate and ethical change. In Birmingham, he believed that black activists were seeking fair political change and thus had the moral authority to do whatever was needed within ethical boundaries to achieve their goals.<sup>60</sup>

In the wake of this news coverage, Gendler and Cahana reached out to King and the SCLC to see if their presence would be helpful. King and his strategists believed the protests to be at a crucial stage in their development and that a delegation of non-African Americans from the North could mark a tipping point in their publicity battle with the city government. Thus King not only welcomed the idea of a group joining in the Birmingham protests, he encouraged it. Following their conversation with King, Gendler and Cahana brought their plan to assembly president Theodore Friedman. Friedman set forth a motion not only to support a group of rabbis traveling to Birmingham but to endorse them and send them as an official delegation representing the RA.<sup>61</sup>

In Cahana's endorsement of the Birmingham resolution, he hearkened back to his wife's speech from that morning: "This morning we condemned the non-Jewish people who were silent when our brothers in Germany were chased by dogs. We will also be condemned for doing nothing."<sup>62</sup> Cahana believed that Jews had a responsibility to act on behalf of oppressed African Americans in the South, just as the thirteen Italian gentlemen had acted to save Alice Cahana's family only twenty years earlier.

Cahana also drew on ethical Zionism in his push for a delegation to Birmingham, invoking the Talmudic ideal of *kol Yisrael areivim zeh lazeh*, or all of Israel is responsible for one another. Although an Aramaic phrase from the Talmud, the expression gained new life in the twentieth century as Zionist leaders invoked it as a central tenet in how the Diaspora was to relate to Jews in Israel. They argued that Jews in the Diaspora had a Talmudic responsibility to support and assist in the creation and sustainment of a Jewish state. Cahana, in his speech before the RA, argued that this mandate extended beyond a responsibility for other Jews. He argued that Jews should instead see the ethic as *kol b'nai adam areivim zeh lazeh*, or a responsibility to protect all peoples, just as it was their responsibility to protect the Jews. Thus if Jews would take to the streets to march and protest in support of Israel, they should likewise be willing to march and protest in support of African Americans in Birmingham.<sup>63</sup>

This resolution built on the conference's yearly declaration of support for civil rights efforts. Beginning in 1960, the RA recommitted itself to supporting "the peaceful mass demonstrations by Negro and White youth in the South, and the picketing in other regions of the country." It also called on all members, both North and South, to support and engage in civil rights efforts in their hometowns. They further urged members "to recognize the value of racially mixed neighborhoods, and to accept those of racial minorities who move into their localities on the same basis as other neighbors [and] strongly counsel against panic selling of homes and flight from sections where racial heterogeneity develops." These positions focused on what individual congregations should do to solve racial inequality. Before 1963, the RA refrained from large group actions or protests that would represent the organization as a whole.<sup>64</sup>

Despite objections from several southern Conservative rabbis including Houston's William Malev, the Birmingham Resolution passed

resoundingly, and the assembly endorsed the nineteen rabbis who decided to travel to Alabama, even taking up a collection of fifteen hundred dollars to pay for the rabbis' travel.<sup>65</sup> The volunteering rabbis primarily came from the Northeast, with only Cahana and Arie Becker, rabbi at Memphis's Beth Sholom Synagogue, representing southern congregations. The group made last-minute flight plans and arrived in Birmingham at 3:30 A.M. the next morning, where they were immediately met by representatives of SCLC and the local Jewish community. While King's delegation arrived at the airport to welcome the rabbis to Birmingham, the local Jewish leaders arrived in hopes of convincing the rabbis to return to the RA.<sup>66</sup>

The traveling rabbis opted against contacting the local Jewish community before they began their trip. After a large debate at the conference, members of the RA felt that the local Jewish community would not only discourage them from making the trip but could also potentially be imperiled by white supremacist backlash as a result of the visiting rabbis' actions. This debate was magnified by the fact that the Birmingham Conservative community did not have representation at the assembly. Abraham Mesch, the rabbi at Birmingham's only Conservative synagogue, Temple Beth El, died in November 1962, and by May 1963 the congregation had yet to fill his position, leaving Birmingham unable to send a delegate to the assembly.<sup>67</sup>

The rabbis' arrival in Birmingham angered members of the local Jewish community who believed that their mere presence would be needlessly incendiary. The Jewish community in Birmingham during the 1960s was small, accounting for one half of one percent of the total city population. Although Jews were prominent in civic, cultural, and business activities, they were often kept from leadership positions. Consequently, issues related to segregation were largely out of their control, and most of the Jewish community's leaders believed that Jews should stay out of the desegregation debate as it was a "Christian problem" between black and white Alabamians that did not affect local Jews.<sup>68</sup>

Further, many local Jews worried that civil rights activism would cause the Jewish community harm by allowing segregationists to draw connections between Jews and the racial violence in the city. This was manifested a few months prior to the rabbis' trip when the KKK conducted a large mass meeting on the outskirts of Birmingham to step up a

Montgomery (AL)  
Advertiser, May 9, 1963.  
(*Newspapers.com.*)

campaign to distribute anti-Jewish and antiblack hate literature by the National States Rights Party, including fifty thousand copies of the racist and antisemitic newspaper the *Thunderbolt*. The threats against the community became so strong during the early 1960s that the Jewish Community Center and many of the local synagogues were placed under twenty-four-hour police surveillance.<sup>69</sup>

The local community learned of the rabbis' travel plans at 10 P.M. on May 7, when *New York Times* reporter Irving Spiegel reached out to Alex Rittenbaum, president of Birmingham's Jewish Community Council, for comment on the group's travel plans. Following this, Rittenbaum contacted each congregation's leaders, convincing a group to join him to meet the arriving rabbis at the airport. However, when they arrived at the airport, the rabbis refused to meet with them, adhering to their desire not to involve the local community in their protest. A delegation of two of the rabbis eventually met with local Jewish officials who urged the group to leave for fear of upsetting the balance of a truce between black leaders and

city officials that had been agreed on the prior day. Following the rabbis' refusal to turn back, the local Jewish leaders urged them at least to refrain from any dramatic participation in the integration marches, or if they would not refrain, then participate without any markers that would make them identifiable as Jews. The visiting rabbis also rejected this request.<sup>70</sup>

In his recollection of their trip, Andre Ungar noted that their refusal stemmed from their presence to assist the black community rather than local Jews and that was to remain their focus. The rabbis also felt that the purpose of their actions was specifically to be provocative. Their goal was, in part, to upend the comfort of the local Jewish community, which still shared the "evanescent advantages of an antebellum society," and to keep them from merely acting out of reaction to racial injustice but rather to be proactive in the fight for racial equality. These actions angered local Jews who felt that the group was needlessly imperiling them. The anger of Birmingham Jews, in turn, frustrated the rabbis, who felt that local Jews' reaction was a betrayal of their Jewish values and history. The two groups shouted tense words at one another across the conference table they met around. As Ungar recalled, Birmingham's Jews demanded of the rabbis, "Boychiks, we know you are right, but still, how could you do this to us, your brothers?" The rabbis followed with charges of "Jews, dear scared little Yidden, how can you side with racism, with Hitler's heritage?" Eventually, both sides parted, having come no closer to agreement with one another.<sup>71</sup>

The rabbis arrived in Birmingham intent on "employing a unique and highly imaginative way" to assist the civil rights protesters.<sup>72</sup> To this end, the group insisted on staying at the A. G. Gaston Motel, which was zoned as a segregated hotel for African Americans. Staying there was an immediate violation of city ordinances, but the rabbis chose this hotel because of its importance as a base of operations for the SCLC. This brought an abundance of reporters to the hotel, many of whom were stationed there for an extended stay and highlighted the gravity of the image of a large group of Jewish men staying at an African American hotel. Because the hotel lacked the necessary number of rooms to house everyone in their group, the rabbis shared rooms, brought in temporary beds, and found a way to ensure that everyone in their party could stay at the hotel. If they could not, members in their group would have been forced to stay at a

*Martin Luther King, Jr., gathering with marchers in the parking lot  
of the Gaston Motel in Birmingham, 1963.  
(Courtesy of the Birmingham Public  
Library Archives.)*

white, segregated hotel, which the rabbis understood would undercut what they hoped to achieve by their trip to Birmingham.<sup>73</sup>

A political truce between black activists and city officials greeted the rabbis when they arrived, causing King to temporarily call off public demonstrations. Although little visible action took place, tension remained throughout the city as black activists remained ready to resume protests at any stage at which their usefulness would be felt. Despite not taking part in protests, the rabbis' presence in the city brought added attention to Birmingham, and their deliberate visibility put added pressure on the city to negotiate with black leaders.<sup>74</sup>

With protests on hiatus, the visiting rabbis were able to meet with local civil rights leaders and learn about the struggle and what their congregations could do to assist. The first morning, the rabbis said the *Shema*

and held morning worship with their SCLC escorts, and Andre Ungar noted that the prayers had increased relevancy. “‘*Barkhu!*,’” he said, “enjoined not mere verbal profession but a challenge that concretely and perilously surrounded us there. ‘*Sim shalom*’ spelled out Viet Nam . . . but above all Birmingham, Alabama.” Ungar noted that many in the Birmingham delegation echoed Cahana and viewed their activism as part of wider postcolonial struggles. They were fighting for civil rights, but also for positive political change that could inspire wider political change, which was a central tenet of Cahana’s ethical Zionism.<sup>75</sup>

Contrary to the wishes of local Jewish community leaders, the visiting rabbis attended each event wearing outward symbols of Jewish identity. During meetings and rallies at local churches, the entire contingent donned *kippot* and often wore *tallit*. This clearly identified them as Jews and colored all of their activism as part and parcel of their Jewish identity. It also clearly marked these men as separate from the white power structures that subjugated blacks in the American South. The rabbis thus positioned themselves as part of a nonwhite and often marginalized group, allowing for greater solidarity with black activists.<sup>76</sup>

With this wider view of Jewish activism, Israel loomed large in the minds of the rabbis who traveled to Birmingham. Richard Rubenstein argued that the rabbis’ presence “[handed] down a kind of ‘apostolic’ succession” to the black community. Their presence said that “the flesh and blood children of Israel were behind them in their struggle, that [they] had gone from slavery to [political autonomy], and [they] knew [African American Alabamians] would as well.” During their time in Birmingham, black church leaders echoed Cahana and spoke of Israel as a great triumph for the Jewish people and the progress of democracy. During a church rally for teenage activists the rabbis attended, the preacher urged the young people to read Leon Uris’s book *Exodus* as an inspiration for continued activism and as evidence of the successes possible.<sup>77</sup> Published five years earlier, *Exodus* focuses on the struggles of Jewish refugees escaping to Palestine and their experiences fighting for a burgeoning Jewish state. These elements of their trip allowed Moshe Cahana an outlet for both his civil rights and Zionist missions. He was able to speak to black activists about his experiences in Israel as well as share the ways in which these experiences ultimately informed his decision to join the civil rights struggle. In such situations, Cahana passed along his framework of ethical

Zionism to other activists and impressed upon them the interrelatedness of both struggles.

Throughout their trip to Birmingham, the rabbis were met with ovations from Birmingham's black community. During their first day in the city, the group attended numerous rallies as guests of honor. Ungar noted that when they entered one church, the crowd sang "We Shall Overcome" but changed the chorus to "With our rabbis, we shall overcome." At each rally, the rabbis held near-celebrity status, and people clamored to meet them and shake their hands. They spoke before crowds, met with parishioners throughout the day, and led black activists in singing Jewish songs including "*Hine Ma Tov*" and "*Hevenu Shalom Aleichem*." Members of Birmingham's black community regaled them with choruses of clapping and shouts of "'Amen' and 'Halleluya' and 'Yes, man!'"<sup>78</sup>

In the end, Cahana and his colleagues were unable to partake in protests due to the political truce reached between activists and city officials that halted large-scale demonstrations. Instead, their trip focused on garnering publicity for the movement, particularly in the North, and meeting with civil rights leaders to see what ideas and tactics they could bring back to their home states.

Following the rabbis' departure from Birmingham at the end of the week, Temple Beth El, Birmingham's Conservative congregation, sent an official letter of protest to the RA. In the letter, Arnold Royal, the synagogue president, chastised the RA and stated that it was "regrettable that the Rabbinical Assembly convention did not see fit during its deliberations to seek the advice and counsel of Birmingham Jewry and particularly the leaders of Temple Beth El, the only Conservative Temple in Birmingham." He protested the rabbis' refusal to meet with community leaders and said they felt insulted by the demeanor with which the rabbis greeted them. Royal argued that despite the goodwill the rabbis garnered among the black community, Alabama's Jews and the larger white community harbored an "ill will and hostility" that would take a long time to dissipate.<sup>79</sup>

As the rabbis returned home, many were treated as heroes. Some communities literally rose to their feet at the entrance of their rabbi, and several congregations passed formal votes of support or congratulations. During and after the Birmingham trip, most of the rabbis' local newspapers carried articles about them and subsequently interviews with them.



The rabbis returned with a new sense of urgency and strength that added to local efforts to broaden civil rights. Many of their congregants understood that if it was a rabbi's task to travel south to ensure civil rights protections, then they had an equal task to fight for integrated housing and job opportunities in northern cities and suburbs as well.<sup>80</sup>

*Civil Rights Activism in Houston*

Between his trips across the South to participate in movements led by Martin Luther King, Jr., Cahana led civil rights efforts in Houston. Perhaps his largest local accomplishment was the Houston Conference on Race and Religion. Cahana devised this organization upon returning from the National Conference on Religion and Race held in Chicago in January 1963. The national event brought together representatives from more than seventy of the major American Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant organizations to discuss the racial divide in the United States. Nearly one-third of the eight hundred participants were Jewish and represented twenty separate Jewish American religious, civic, fraternal, and defense organizations. The four-day conference, organized by a coalition of the National Council of the Churches, the Synagogue Council of America, and the National Catholic Welfare Conference, convened to commemorate the one-hundredth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. Some of the most prominent civil rights leaders in the country, including King, presented speeches.<sup>81</sup>

Austin American,  
June 26, 1963.  
(Newspapers.com.)

Following his trips to Chicago in January and Birmingham in May, Cahana met with several local white, black, and Latino religious leaders in Houston to discuss ways they could plan a large civil rights demonstration in the city. Cahana believed that given Houston's quiet acquiescence to integration in the early 1960s, the best way for religious leaders to demonstrate in favor of civil rights was a large-scale conference bringing together speakers to address issues of race relations and integration.<sup>82</sup>

The Houston conference held in June 1963 followed the same format as the national conference, albeit on a smaller scale. Planned and organized by Cahana and Stanley Hauser, an Episcopal minister and president of the Association of Ministers of Greater Houston, the one-day conference brought together ministers and lay leaders from around the city to discuss the continued problem of racial discrimination in Houston. One of four major speakers, Cahana delivered a presentation titled "Confession and Repentance," in which he discussed his recent trip to Birmingham and the necessity of civil rights activism on the part of religious leaders. Cahana probed the role of religion in attacking racial discrimination in the South: "We speak in the Name of God. God entrusted in our hands his precious flock. God called us to shepherd, to rule his children. Let us say what God and our conscience tell us to say. Let us be involved with this freedom fight as God wants us to be involved. Let us be involved without fear, without swift excuse and without dangerous caution."<sup>83</sup> For Cahana, it was not possible to be observantly Jewish and support continued segregation. In his mind, as a religious leader it was his moral responsibility to do everything he could to reform southern society through integration. This was central to his ethos as a spiritual leader and something he strove for throughout his time as a rabbi in Houston, even in the face of adversity and pushback from congregants and Houstonians.

Almost as soon as he began his activism in Houston, Cahana met resistance from white segregationists. He received threatening phone calls, had racial and antisemitic slurs hurled at him, and on numerous occasions was mailed photographs of Hitler attached to threatening letters. One morning at about 3:00 A.M., the Cahanas awoke to a cross burning on their front lawn. Soon thereafter, a man claiming to be the Houston Grand Dragon of the KKK called and threatened the family's safety in response to the rabbi's activism. When he returned from Birmingham, Cahana received a slew of hate mail and derisive comments, including "[N-]lover,

wait we'll get you," "Why don't you go back to Palestine," and "Why not teach the Bible to your members instead?"<sup>84</sup>

With each threat, Cahana remained strong in his core methodology of nonviolence. One man called the rabbi and asked him to "please help [him] pronounce the Doom Written on the Wall," *Mne Tkel Upharsin*, which translates to "God has numbered thy kingdom and brought it to an end. Thou hast been weighed in the balances and found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided and given to others."<sup>85</sup> The passage, from the legend of Belshazzar's Feast, served as a warning of the impending striking down of an increasingly arrogant King Belshazzar. Thus by citing these words, the caller threatened Cahana with violent retribution should he continue his "arrogance" and activism. Cahana, emulating Gandhi's satyagraha, allowed the man to finish his message and sat on the phone with him for several minutes helping him learn the proper Hebrew pronunciation. When the Houston Grand Dragon called the Cahanas, Moshe's wife Alice answered the phone and challenged the man, "What kind of man calls a family at three in the morning? Does your wife know that she's married a coward?" In response the man stammered out an apology, not expecting to be challenged in such a manner.<sup>86</sup>

At the height of his activism during the 1960s, not even Brith Shalom was a place of refuge for Cahana. Upon his return to the pulpit following his trip to Albany, Cahana faced criticism from many members of his congregation and direct conflict with the congregation's president. The conflict between the two men became so severe that the president attempted to have Cahana fired on multiple occasions between 1962 and 1966.<sup>87</sup> This tension between Cahana and congregational leadership continued throughout Cahana's time as a prominent activist. Though many members of his congregation eventually softened to and even embraced Cahana's political activism, several congregation board members remained opposed, fearing the backlash that could befall the Jewish community. Many members of Brith Shalom also questioned the effectiveness of Cahana's activism, believing that despite his noble aspirations, he would not be able to effect change through his chosen forms of protest. One member asked Cahana in 1963, "there are one thousand people already jailed and dogs were loosed upon them; so, one more person will be there and will be bitten by a dog. What good will it be?"<sup>88</sup>

The struggles between Cahana and congregational leadership finally came to a head in 1965 after Cahana returned from the marches in Selma, Alabama. The congregation's leadership became so resolute in their opposition to his continued activism that Cahana chose to resign instead of continuing to butt heads with them. Cahana spent much of the summer of 1965 away from the pulpit before returning after many members of Brith Shalom voiced their support for his activism and what he hoped to achieve by marching with King.<sup>89</sup>

*Returning to Alabama*

Two years after his trip to Birmingham, Moshe Cahana again traveled to Alabama to partake in civil rights protests. While at a luncheon for local Houston religious leaders in March 1965, Cahana followed local television coverage of the Selma protests and the images of bloodied and injured marchers trying to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Cahana became indignant, as the actions of Selma's police resembled those of British troops in Palestine. Cahana immediately decided to travel to Selma to offer his assistance to the protesters. He reached out to his good friend and fellow clergyman John Stevens to accompany him on the trip. At a luncheon held by the Episcopalian diocese of Houston, Stevens additionally recruited fellow Episcopalian ministers Herbert Beadle and Jack Bosman to join him and Cahana in Alabama. The four clergy left the next day and arrived in Selma early Tuesday morning.<sup>90</sup>

The Selma marches originated shortly after the successes of the Birmingham campaign when the African American activist organization Dallas County Voters League sought to overcome widespread voter suppression and push for large African American voter turnout in local elections.<sup>91</sup> James Bevel and the SCLC planned a voter registration march to the state capital in Montgomery to take place on Sunday, March 7, 1965. During the morning of March 7, nearly six hundred protesters, led by John Lewis and Bob Mants of SNCC and the SCLC's Hosea Williams and Albert Turner, gathered on U.S. Highway 80 and marched southeast out of Selma. When protesters crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge, they faced a wall of state troopers and deputized locals waiting for them armed with nightsticks and tear gas. The contingent's commanding officer, John Cloud, urged demonstrators to disband and return home, and deputies began shoving protesters, knocking many to the ground and beating

*Moshe Cahana marching with fellow clergymen in Selma, Alabama, March 1965.*

*Left to right: John Stevens, Jack Bosman, Moshe Cahana, and Herbert Beadle.*

*(Richard Pipes / © Houston Chronicle. Used with permission.)*

them. Other deputies shot tear gas into the crowd, while some charged through the crowd on horseback, trampling protesters. By the end of the melee, seventeen protesters were hospitalized and fifty more were treated for lesser injuries.<sup>92</sup> This demonstration became known as “Bloody Sunday.”

Following these unfolding events, King and the SCLC planned a second march for two days later. King specifically called on clergy to participate, believing that the presence of religious officials would add more weight to what the demonstrators hoped to achieve. Several hundred more protesters—for a total of approximately 2,500 marchers including Cahana and his Houston contingent—showed up to march alongside Selma’s activists.<sup>93</sup>

This march turned out to be merely symbolic, with leaders forgoing a full march to Montgomery and instead only crossing Selma’s Edmund Pettus Bridge. Only SCLC leaders knew this plan in advance, leaving many marchers confused and annoyed. Cahana was among those upset by the change in plans, noting that it was disappointing to have driven all night just to march to the arch of the bridge and turn back. His mood changed, however, when one movement leader told him that their presence was greatly appreciated, as the inclusion of white ministers helped ensure that police would not harm the protesters, something they would not have been guaranteed otherwise. Throughout the rest of the day, the four men took part in other protests and rallies around Selma. Cahana met with several movement leaders and spent much of the evening walking the streets of Selma and meeting with both black activists and white Alabamians. While many white Alabamians treated Cahana with hostility and anger, he noted that others offered quiet support for what they were doing, hoping only to find a peaceful end to the injustices faced by black residents.<sup>94</sup>

### *Conclusion*

By the late 1960s, much of the initial vitriol that had accompanied Cahana’s activism subsided. As he continued civil rights pushes in 1966 and beyond, Cahana routinely experienced a groundswell of support from his congregation. Over the next few years, temple leadership changed hands, and, by the end of the decade, the congregation president was one of Cahana’s biggest supporters. Cahana continued political activism

throughout the following decades, marching in favor of farmworkers' rights in South Texas in the mid- to late 1960s, championing American disengagement from Vietnam in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and working in support of Jews migrating out of the Soviet Union, Syria, and Ethiopia during the 1970s and 1980s. The changes in leadership allowed Cahana wider latitude to implement his ethical teachings into Hebrew school and adult education curricula. By the time he retired, congregants at Brith Shalom lionized his career and saw their congregation as the "activist temple" in Houston.

In 2000, Moshe Cahana turned his philosophy of ethical Zionism into his book *Ethics for the 21st Century*. Although not widely distributed, Cahana's book served as a core work in Brith Shalom's adult education curriculum. Cahana served as rabbi emeritus at Brith Shalom, delivering regular lectures and teaching various adult education courses during this tenure. He died in May 2004, survived by two children who adopted Cahana's ethical Zionism for their own congregations in Portland and Montreal and ensuring that his ideology survives well into the twenty-first century.

Throughout all of his activism, Rabbi Moshe Cahana kept his identity as an Israeli-American Jew at the forefront. His crafting of the concept of ethical Zionism was crucial to maintaining this. In ethical Zionism, Cahana was able to shift political Zionism beyond the boundaries of Israeli politics and its focus on a Jewish state. Cahana adapted it into a political ethic applicable to various movements around the globe.

Ethical Zionism offered Cahana a framework by which he could translate his colonial identity, forged under the British Mandate, to American frameworks that similarly disenfranchised a large portion of its population. African Americans' lack of political power, social inequality across the American South, and institutional violence against black Americans resembled the worst of British colonialism in Palestine and allowed Cahana to draw firm connections between the two struggles. This compelled him to civil rights activism throughout the 1960s, bringing him to Albany, Birmingham, and Selma along the way. By implementing ethical Zionism in all of his activism, civil rights activism became a natural extension of his identity as a Jew, Israeli, and former colonial subject.

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 NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The paramilitary organization Irgun Zvai Leumi b'Eretz Yisrael is typically referred to by its acronym Etzel in Hebrew but is alternatively referred to as the Irgun in English. This paper uses Etzel, as it is the term Moshe Cahana used, highlighting his identity as an Israeli first and American second.

<sup>2</sup> See Gerald Horne, *Black & Red: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944–1963* (Albany, NY, 1986); John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War* (New York, 1986); Reginald Kearney, *African American Views of the Japanese: Solidarity or Sedition?* (Albany, NY, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> See Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, 2000); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA, 2001). See also, Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935–1960* (Chapel Hill, 1996); Kate A. Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters between Black and Red, 1922–1963* (Durham, NC, 2002); Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944–1955* (New York, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> See Brenda Gayle Plummer, *In Search of Power: African Americans in the Era of Decolonization, 1956–1974* (New York, 2013); Keith P. Feldman, *A Shadow Over Palestine: The Imperial Life of Race in America* (Minneapolis, MN, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Many Palestinian Jews at the time viewed the Ottomans as an imperialist force in the Middle East on par with the English and French.

<sup>6</sup> For more on Jewish colonial identity in the United States see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (Berkeley, CA, 2002). For more on Jewish colonial identity as a whole, see Ethan B. Katz, Lisa Moses Leff, and Maud S. Mandel, eds., *Colonialism and the Jews* (Bloomington, IN, 2017).

<sup>7</sup> Murray Friedman, *What Went Wrong? The Creation & Collapse of the Black-Jewish Alliance* (New York, 1995); Jonathan Kaufman, *Broken Alliance: The Turbulent Times Between Blacks and Jews in America* (New York, 1988); Michael E. Staub, *Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America* (New York, 2002). See also, Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century* (Princeton, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> A prime example of this trend is Nancy MacLean, *Freedom is not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (Cambridge, MA, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Henry L. Feingold, *American Jewish Political Culture and the Liberal Persuasion* (Syracuse, NY, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Sara Yael Hirschhorn, *City on a Hilltop: American Jews and the Israeli Settler Movement* (Cambridge, MA, 2017).

<sup>11</sup> For more on Jabotinsky's broad framing of Revisionism, see Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* (Berkeley, CA, 2001).



<sup>12</sup> Moshe Cahana National Service Card, Etzel Service Card Applications, Letters Kaf, K4h-11, Archive of Revisionist Zionism, Jabotinsky Institute in Israel, Tel Aviv, Israel.

<sup>13</sup> Sometimes this is also spelled *Mussar*.

<sup>14</sup> The *Haskalah* pursued two complementary aims: to preserve the Jews as a separate, unique collective and to work for a cultural and moral renewal, most notably a revival of Hebrew for secular use.

<sup>15</sup> Dov Katz, *The Musar Movement: Its History, Leading Personalities and Doctrines* (Tel Aviv, Israel, 1975); Hillel Goldberg, *The Fire Within: The Living Heritage of the Musar Movement* (Brooklyn, 1987); Immanuel Etkes, *Rabbi Israel Salanter and the Mussar Movement: Seeking the Torah of Truth* (Philadelphia, 1993); Ira Stone, *A Responsible Life: The Spiritual Path of Mussar* (New York, 2006); Geoffrey D. Claussen, *Sharing the Burden: Rabbi Simhah Zissel Ziv and the Path of Musar* (Albany, NY, 2013); Chaim Zaichyk, *Sparks of Mussar: A Treasury of the Words and Deeds of the Mussar Greats* (Jerusalem, Israel, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Moshe Cahana, *Ethics for the 21st Century* (Houston, 2001), 7.

<sup>17</sup> Moshe Cahana, "Civil Rights and Human Rights are the Same," *Jewish Herald Voice* (Houston, TX), April 25, 1963.

<sup>18</sup> Although he distrusted Yasser Arafat and Palestinian leadership, Cahana ultimately believed that Israelis and Palestinians could work together and achieve a compromise that would ensure political independence for both. Thus Palestinian independence was not antithetical to Cahana's vision of Revisionist Zionism.

<sup>19</sup> Moshe Cahana, interview conducted by Michael Cahana, 2000. VHS, titled *Saba Moshe: Memories*, in possession of author.

<sup>20</sup> Cahana, *Ethics*, 46.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>22</sup> Cahana, "Civil Rights and Human Rights."

<sup>23</sup> Robert F. Williams, *Negroes with Guns* (New York, 1962), 4.

<sup>24</sup> For more on racial violence in the American South, see Amy Louise Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill, 2011); David F. Krugler, 1919, *The Year of Racial Violence: How African Americans Fought Back* (New York, 2014); Ersula J. Ore, *Lynching: Violence, Rhetoric, and American Identity* (Oxford, MS, 2019).

<sup>25</sup> Moshe Cahana, "Confession and Repentance," Metropolitan Houston Conference on Religion and Race Papers, 1963, SC-2850, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH (hereafter cited as Metropolitan Houston Conference Papers).

<sup>26</sup> Cahana's hopes for peace ultimately proved erroneous despite relinquishing of political control to Jews and Arabs in 1947. Cahana, *Saba Moshe: Memories*.

<sup>27</sup> Cahana, *Ethics*, 50.

<sup>28</sup> Steven J. Zipperstein, *Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha'am and the Origins of Zionism* (New York, 1993).

<sup>29</sup> Cahana, *Ethics*, 7.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 6, 49.

<sup>31</sup> Michael Cahana, interview with author, November 10, 2015; Rabbi Moshe Hillel Cahana obituary, *Houston Chronicle*, May 30, 2004, accessed June 3, 2020, <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/houstonchronicle/obituary.aspx?pid=2278180>.

<sup>32</sup> Tyina L. Steptoe, *Houston Bound: Culture and Color in a Jim Crow City* (Berkeley, CA, 2015), 103–104.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 105–108.

<sup>34</sup> For more on Houston under Jim Crow, see Michael R. Botson, Jr., *Labor, Civil Rights, and the Hughes Tool Company* (College Station, TX, 2005); Bernadette Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration: The Movement of Rural African Americans to Houston, 1900–1941* (College Station, TX, 2013); Steptoe, *Houston Bound*.

<sup>35</sup> William Malev, “The Jew of the South in the Conflict on Segregation,” *Conservative Judaism* 13 (Fall 1958): 35–46.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 36–37.

<sup>37</sup> Despite including representatives from three ethnic groups, the committee was called the “Biracial Committee” because Latinos in Texas were often seen as white. See George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900–1945* (New York, 1995); Edward E. Telles and Vilma Ortiz, *Generations of Exclusion: Mexican Americans, Assimilation, and Race* (New York, 2009); Natalia Molina, *How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley, CA, 2014); Julie A. Dowling, *Mexican Americans and the Question of Race* (Austin, 2015); Lori A. Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farmworker Movement* (New Haven, 2018).

<sup>38</sup> Michael Cahana, “Alice Lok Cahana,” obituary, *Jewish Herald-Voice*, December 14, 2017, accessed June 6, 2020, <http://jhvonline.com/alice-lok-cahana-p23616-124.htm>.

<sup>39</sup> Maurice C. Daniels, *Saving the Soul of Georgia: Donald L. Hollowell and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Athens, GA, 2013), 132.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 132–36.

<sup>41</sup> David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York, 1999), 184–85. For more on the Albany Movement, see Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA, 1995); Michael Chalfen, “‘The Way Out May Lead In’: The Albany Movement Beyond Martin Luther King, Jr.,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 79 (Fall 1995): 560–98.

<sup>42</sup> Cahana, *Saba Moshe*.

<sup>43</sup> Moshe Cahana, interview conducted by Michael Cahana, 2000. VHS, titled *Saba Moshe: MLK and Gandhi*, in possession of author.

<sup>44</sup> “Our Side of the Tracks,” *Bellaire & Southwestern Texan*, March 31, 1965.

<sup>45</sup> *Swaraj* generally means self-governance or self-rule. The term has been used synonymously with *home-rule* by Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati and by Gandhi, but the word typically references Gandhi’s concept for Indian independence from British imperialism. Simone Panter-Brick, *Gandhi and Nationalism: The Path to Indian Independence* (London, 2012).

<sup>46</sup> “Resistance to Civil Government” was an essay written by Henry David Thoreau in 1849 in which he argues that individuals should not permit governments to overrule their consciences and that they have a duty to avoid allowing such acquiescence to enable the government to make them the agents of injustice.

<sup>47</sup> *Satyagraha*, literally “truth-force,” was a policy of passive political resistance, especially that advocated by Mohandas Gandhi against British rule in India.

<sup>48</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., "My Pilgrimage to Nonviolence," *Fellowship* (September 1958): 473–78. For more on King's journey to nonviolence, see Michael J. Nojeim, *Gandhi and King: The Power of Nonviolent Resistance* (Westport, CT, 2004) and Bidyut Chakrabarty, *Confluence of Thought: Mahatma Gandhi And Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York, 2013).

<sup>49</sup> Moshe Cahana, *Saba Moshe: MLK and Gandhi*.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Clayborne Carson, ed., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York, 2001), 151–69.

<sup>52</sup> Michael Cahana, interview with author, November 10, 2015.

<sup>53</sup> Righteous Among the Nations is a designation by Yad Vashem to honor non-Jews who helped save persecuted European Jews during the Holocaust.

<sup>54</sup> "The 'Birmingham Resolution,'" *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America* 27 (Greenfield Park, NY, 1963), 117.

<sup>55</sup> Everett Gendler was rabbi at the Jewish Center of Princeton, New Jersey, and a close confidant to Martin Luther King, Jr. Andre Ungar, rabbi at Temple Emanuel of the Pascack Valley in Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey, came to the United States after being exiled from South Africa for fighting apartheid. Those who knew him disagree about whether Cahana was arrested in Albany along with the other rabbis, with Ungar believing that he was but Cahana's sons believing he arrived after their arrest. For more on Ungar, see Adam Mendelsohn, "Two Far South: Rabbinical Responses to Apartheid and Segregation in South Africa and the American South," *Southern Jewish History* 6 (2003): 63–132.

<sup>56</sup> David J. Garrow, *Birmingham, Alabama, 1956–1963: The Black Struggle for Civil Rights* (Philadelphia, 1989), 166.

<sup>57</sup> Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York, 2000), 90.

<sup>58</sup> "Fire Hoses and Police Dogs Quell Birmingham Segregation Protest," *Washington Post*, May 4, 1963.

<sup>59</sup> "Birmingham Resolution," 118.

<sup>60</sup> Cahana, *Saba Moshe: Memories*.

<sup>61</sup> Irving Spiegel, "20 Rabbis Head for Birmingham," *New York Times*, May 8, 1963; Andre Ungar, "To Birmingham and Back," *Conservative Judaism* 18 (Fall 1963): 1.

<sup>62</sup> "Birmingham Resolution," 116.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> "Resolution on Civil Rights" *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America* 24 (Grossinger, NY, 1960).

<sup>65</sup> The eighteen rabbis who travelled with Cahana were Arie Becker, Memphis, TN; Jacob H. Bloom, Fairfield, CT; Kenneth Bromberg, Pittsburgh, PA; Moshe Davidowitz, Greenwich, CT; Morris Fishman, Margate, NJ; Isaac Freeman, Newburgh, NY; Seymour Friedman, Spring Valley, NY; Everett Gendler, Princeton, NJ; Stanley Kessler, West Hartford, CT; Richard L. Rubinstein, Pittsburgh, PA; Moses B. Sachs, St. Louis Park, MN; Sidney D. Shanken, Cranford, NJ; Alexander Shapiro, Philadelphia, PA; Paul Teicher, Trenton, NJ; Andre Ungar, Westwood, NJ; Eugene Weiner, Hamilton, ON; Richard Winograd, Chicago, IL; and Harry Zwelling, New Britain, CT.

<sup>66</sup> In all recountings of their trip to Birmingham, the visiting rabbis agreed to discuss their actions as a group and leave out specific names, so as not to highlight the contributions of one rabbi over another. This remained something they desired during author interviews of surviving rabbis. Consequently, specifics on who did what remain sparse. This unfortunately causes Cahana to shrink in favor of a collective narrative.

<sup>67</sup> Mark H. Elovitz, *A Century of Jewish Life in Dixie: The Birmingham Experience* (Tuscaloosa, 1974), 173.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 165. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" was aimed partially at Reform Rabbi Milton Grafman and targeted local Jewish department stores. See S. Jonathan Bass, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Martin Luther King Jr., Eight White Religious Leaders, and the "Letter from Birmingham Jail"* (Baton Rouge, 2001).

<sup>69</sup> Elovitz, *Century of Jewish Life*, 170.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>71</sup> Ungar, "To Birmingham and Back," 10–11.

<sup>72</sup> Elovitz, *Century of Jewish Life*, 170.

<sup>73</sup> Ungar, "To Birmingham and Back," 4.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>76</sup> Richard Rubenstein, "The Rabbis Visit Birmingham," *The Reconstructionist* (May 31, 1963).

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Ungar, "To Birmingham and Back," 8.

<sup>79</sup> Elovitz, *Century of Jewish Life*, 172–74.

<sup>80</sup> Ungar, "To Birmingham and Back," 15.

<sup>81</sup> "National Conference on Religion and Race Opens Today in Chicago," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, January 14, 1963.

<sup>82</sup> Report on Houston Conference on Race and Religion, Metropolitan Houston Conference Papers.

<sup>83</sup> Cahana, "Confession and Repentance."

<sup>84</sup> "Our Side of the Tracks."

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Cahana, "Alice Lok Cahana."

<sup>87</sup> Michael Cahana, interview with author, November 10, 2015.

<sup>88</sup> "Birmingham Resolution," 116.

<sup>89</sup> "Rabbi Cahana to Remain at Brith Shalom," *Bellaire & Southwestern Texan*, August 11, 1965.

<sup>90</sup> "Our Side of the Tracks."

<sup>91</sup> Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 372.

<sup>92</sup> "Testimony of John Lewis from a hearing resulting from the March 7, 1965, march from Selma to Montgomery in support of voting rights." Records of District Courts of the United States, National Archives – Southeast Region, Morrow, Georgia.

<sup>93</sup> Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*, 400–405.

<sup>94</sup> "Our Side of the Tracks."