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Two Far South: Rabbinical Responses to Apartheid and Segregation in South Africa and the American South

by

Adam Mendelsohn

From the 1950s through the 1960s, South Africa and the American South were moving in opposite directions. While in the South segregationists were engaged in a forlorn fighting retreat against the advance of integration, apartheid legislation steadily entrenched and extended racial separation and inequality in South Africa.¹ Constituting minorities within the white populations of both societies, the majority of Jews responded to these parallel racial crises by assuming a quiescent and largely inactive role.² The explanations offered for Jewish behavior during the civil rights struggle and apartheid are nearly identical, focusing on the insecurities and fears of the two communities.³ Jews in both locations were aware of the parallels between the two situations and, in both cases, the local Jewish press reported extensively on the responses of the counterpart community to the racial crises.⁴

Beyond the overlap in the timing and nature of the societal crises, the South African and southern Jewish communities also shared similar histories. Both communities were formed by the same waves of immigration, first a steady trickle from central and western Europe in the mid-nineteenth century, later and in larger numbers from eastern Europe.⁵ In both cases Jews headed south chasing opportunity or following chain migration patterns. Although by the 1960s the bulk of the Jewish communities were concentrated in a few large cities, Jewish populations were still present in small towns and rural areas as well.⁶ Jews in South Africa were prominent in the retail trade in these small towns,

matching their counterparts in the American South. Often isolated in a deeply religious population (Calvinist in South Africa, Baptist and Methodist in the South), Jews encountered philosemitism and limited antisemitism. More importantly, they were forced to engage with questions of race and power.⁷

The stories of two rabbis provide a bridge between the Jewish communities in the South and South Africa, revealing parallel and intertwined experiences and suggesting the differences and similarities between the two contexts. André Ungar and David Ben-Ami, both young foreign-born rabbis, were committed to social justice causes. Their rabbinical careers in South Africa and the South followed a similar path. Ungar spent two years in South Africa between 1955 and 1957. Ben-Ami replaced Charles Mantinband, a rabbi popular for his charm but not for his outspoken opposition to segregation, in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, from August 1963 until February 1965. Aside from the close parallels between their experiences, Ungar and Ben-Ami's paths crossed. Ungar resurfaced at the protests in Birmingham, Alabama, in May 1963, and again in Hattiesburg a year later as the town became a focal point of the 1964 Freedom Summer. Ungar was present in Ben-Ami's story, participating in an incidental role in a drama nearly identical to his own in South Africa.

Beyond highlighting broad similarities between Jewish responses to apartheid and segregation, David Ben-Ami and André Ungar's experiences suggest a tentative model for civil rights activism among rabbis in the South and South Africa. Their stories are a springboard to explore the factors that shaped the responses of southern and South African rabbis to apartheid and segregation. This article focuses on frontier rabbis, those who served the scattered and isolated Jewish communities dotted across the South and South Africa. The nature and extent of rabbinical involvement will be traced to a set of underlying conditions specific to frontier pulpits, and it will be argued that a common set of factors limited, sometimes dictated, and often inhibited the civil rights options of frontier rabbis.⁸ The examination of the varied responses in both contexts reveals broad schools of rabbinical behavior, ranging from that of the crusading outsiders, transient newcomers, and

*Rabbi David Z. Ben-Ami.
 (The Papers of Rabbi David Z.
 Ben-Ami, McCain Library and
 Archives, University of
 Southern Mississippi
 Hattiesburg, Mississippi.)*

entrenched veterans. The clustering of common rabbinical responses across this loose spectrum suggests the differential exposure and impact of frontier conditions on their worldview, ambitions, and options.

The Frontier Rabbi

Pulpits in the South and South Africa, particularly outside the larger cities, offered few attractions to rabbis. Positions in small southern towns were regarded as a "rabbinical graveyard."⁹ These were often poorly paid, isolated backwater postings that lacked prestige and opportunities for advancement, but that came with a taxing job description including the roles of religious leader, Hebrew school teacher, prison chaplain, and itinerant rabbi, in the case of the circuit rider. South African Reform pulpits were little more attractive for similar reasons. The salaries offered by South African synagogues paled next to those of their American counterparts.¹⁰ South Africa was distant from home, family, and jobs, and its political situation off-putting.¹¹ However, the frontier congregation had its own attractions and compensations,

often providing stability, local prominence, freedom from hierarchy, and latitude for innovation and independence.¹²

Despite the difficulties of recruitment and retention experienced by many frontier communities, frontier congregations offered rabbis enhanced status, although not necessarily increased leverage. Paradoxically, the scarcity and isolation of the rabbis magnified the role and power of the temple board. Sparsely represented, frontier rabbis were scattered over large distances, making interaction and practical cooperation difficult. Moreover, the kind of rabbis that these congregations attracted often ensured that the temple board dominated the minister. Frontier rabbis were often those who had been unable to find success elsewhere, whether because of personality factors or lack of training. With few ambitions and even fewer prospects, many such individuals were content to settle into long-term service. Moses Cyrus Weiler, the chief minister of the South African Progressive movement, thought that recruits to South African temples were "little more than mediocre," an evaluation shared by commentators on rabbis in the South.¹³ Rabbi Balfour Brickner of the Union of American Hebrew Congregation (UAHC) despaired at the number of southern pulpits occupied by men with "mediocre skills or [who had] drifted from congregation to congregation throughout a tortured career."¹⁴

This imbalance of power between pulpit and pew tended to stress more parochial issues and was less significant prior to the civil rights struggle. Most frontier congregations were satisfied so long as their rabbi performed his duties, calculating that his scarcity value outweighed his idiosyncrasies. The civil rights struggle altered this equation, producing acute sensitivity to the rabbi's political stance and simultaneously reducing his already limited leverage. Some congregations concluded that it was better to go without a rabbi than to be stuck with one who was embarrassing and who generated anxiety and insecurity. The rabbi could be pressured by resignations as well as by withdrawal of financial support from the congregation. The prospect alone was often enough to inhibit a rabbi.¹⁵ This pliability in turn increased the dependence and vulnerability of frontier rabbis, a group that was

Rabbi André Ungar.
(Courtesy, Rabbi André Ungar.)

already immobilized by the absence of alternative work prospects, long service, low salaries, and consequent reliance on a hard-earned pension typically payable by the congregation for future support. The position of the frontier rabbi was further weakened by his isolation, as physical distance placed him beyond the reach and protections of rabbinical associations and support organizations. Conversely, congregations were shielded by the principle of non-intervention. For example, the UAHC was restricted by a constitution that guaranteed congregational autonomy and prohibited interference in the affairs and management of individual congregations.¹⁶ Moreover, national Jewish organizations were often wary of inflaming their sensitive southern members. David Ben-Ami reproached these national Jewish organizations for abandoning southern rabbis, leaving them to “stand utterly alone” while convening “conferences where like-minded liberals pat each other on the back.”¹⁷ During the civil rights struggle these factors

militated towards rabbinical passivity, as the imbalance of power enforced a dependent relationship between congregation and rabbi, and raised the cost of nonconformity.¹⁸

In a few cases, this web of constraining features was counteracted either wholly or partially by a set of liberating factors, specifically, financial independence, celebrity, youthfulness, mobility, and alternative job prospects. While these mitigating factors on their own did not propel rabbis to activism, they served as crucial preconditions that freed some rabbis, who were already inclined toward activism, to speak out. Not all rabbis who became involved in civil rights activities benefited from these buffers. Some, like Perry Nussbaum, the rabbi of Temple Beth Israel in Jackson, Mississippi, who engaged in activism despite the absence of these protections, suffered the consequences of the exposure of the frontier condition. Nussbaum's example suggests the costs for those who chose to act despite the absence of liberating factors, in circumstances representative of the frontier norm.

*The Cost of Courage: Perry Nussbaum and
the Consequences of Frontier Activism*

In his career trajectory and temperament, Perry Nussbaum epitomized the frontier model, illustrating the constraining effect of frontier dynamics on rabbinical activism.¹⁹ As a peripatetic mid-career rabbi with seemingly few prospects, burdened by a cantankerous personality and a series of pulpit failures, Nussbaum lacked mobility.²⁰ His relationship with his congregation was never easy. Thin-skinned and easily offended, Nussbaum's abrasive style and fondness for feuding alienated many potential supporters. His congregational skills did not help matters. By his own admission, he was a poor sermonizer.²¹ He lacked finesse, often adopting a blunt, confrontational approach in private affairs, from the pulpit, and lectern.

Inclined towards outspokenness, itself rare among rabbis in the South and South Africa, but constrained by his vulnerability, Nussbaum was initially reluctant to become involved in civil rights activities and steered clear of significant commitment.²² His initial reluctance partly stemmed from his belief that the bulk of

*Rabbi Perry Nussbaum, April 1967.
(Courtesy, the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the
American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.)*

his congregation was “indistinguishable in ideology” from other whites, “as racist as any non-Jew.”²³ These racial attitudes were “not the by-product of antisemitism, but an honest conviction.”²⁴ The local *Jackson State Times* concurred, approvingly noting in 1958, “Today many a Jewish leader is part of the Southern resistance. Jackson’s Citizens Council, outstanding in south and Nation, points to them with pride.”²⁵ His limited early forays confirmed his judgment, producing a backlash from his congregation, intended, to Nussbaum’s mind, to “cut me down to size.”²⁶ Ideological incompatibility was at the core of this conflict, but the rabbi’s opponents harbored a diverse range of grievances.²⁷ His political stance became the rallying point for his opponents. He expected that any further controversy would result in being given “walking papers by a drumhead court martial of my Board of Trustees.”²⁸

This circumspection evolved into activism prompted by events within Mississippi. The imprisonment of the first wave of freedom riders in 1961 pushed Nussbaum into the engagement that he had previously sought to avoid. The rabbi took on the responsibility for the jailed activists but felt obliged to conceal this work from his congregation, fearing recriminations.²⁹ Prior to this point Nussbaum’s tenure was indistinguishable from that of other frontier rabbis sympathetic to the goals of the civil rights movement but immobilized by the fear of sanctions from both inside and outside his congregation. Rabbi Moses Landau of Cleveland, Mississippi, typified this mindset, balking at Nussbaum’s requests for help in assisting freedom riders incarcerated in Parchman Penitentiary: “I am paid by my Congregation, and as long as I eat their bread I shall not do anything that might harm any member of my congregation without their consent.”³⁰

Nussbaum emerged as a vocal proponent of tolerance and racial change in Jackson, allying himself with sympathetic liberal clergymen. This local public prominence produced an uneasy coexistence with his congregation. Nussbaum’s wife, Arene, a native of Texas, shared the misgivings of the congregation about her husband’s activities. She, like many others, had a “sincere conviction that Blacks were not ready for

integration," a belief rooted in "well founded private doubts (never in public, but only to her husband) about the path of racial integration."³¹

As long as Mississippi remained the focus of national attention, Nussbaum was provided with some temporary measure of protection from his temple board. Such visibility, however, did not spare him from radical segregationists who bombed Temple Beth Israel and Nussbaum's home in two separate incidents in 1967. The bombings undermined his already shaky relationship with the local Jewish community, inviting an "inevitable backlash from those racist and assimilated Baalhabteem [*sic*] here whose harassment and nitpicking [became] fierce."³² Crucially, the incidents restored an imbalance of power in his relationship with the congregation. In the wake of the bombings, the temple board tightened its hold over the rabbi. It demanded a loyalty pledge from the president and vice-presidents "that they would resign rather than involve the congregation in any future racial crises."³³ The temple board was hostile, vindictively acting to "keep [the rabbi] under restraint."³⁴

Nussbaum was unhappily forced to wait out his contract, unpopular, frustrated, and fearful of the violence of white supremacists. His latter years in Jackson were spent haggling over his meager salary and pension with an unsympathetic and domineering temple board, clutching on to the "tenuous degree of support" and vainly searching for a pulpit elsewhere.³⁵ He had few allies and fewer prospects. The Placement Commission of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) offered as an alternative "the worst of pulpits," those rejected even by newly-ordained rabbis. He did not want, nor could he afford "to sink . . . away in a small, isolated town, at a salary less than I get here."³⁶ He felt abandoned and betrayed, resentful at the lack of recognition despite his persistence "in maintaining his concept of Judaism in a time and place which [had] contributed to being a persona non grata not only to several of his congregants, but to most of the congregations in the State, most of the Christian power structure as well; who persisted in keeping his congregation in the Union, [and who kept] B'nai B'rith lodges from flight from the national

*Rabbi Perry Nussbaum surveys the damage to
the secretary's office after the bombing of Beth Israel,
Jackson, Mississippi, September 18, 1967.
Nussbaum's home was bombed two months later.
(Courtesy, the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the
American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.)*

body. . . ."³⁷ Only in 1973, after nineteen years at Temple Beth Israel, did an embittered Nussbaum leave Jackson.

By contrast, André Ungar, David Ben-Ami, and Charles Mantinband benefited from a variety of factors that provided a degree of latitude in their relationships with their congregations that differentiated their situations from that of Nussbaum. Yet the frontier pulpits that they served also contrasted with those of rabbis like Julian Feibelman in New Orleans and Jacob Rothschild in Atlanta. Feibelman and Rothschild benefited from the advantages of their locations: relatively temperate political environments, with relatively large Jewish populations, and opportunities for forming coalitions with like-minded liberals. These advantages were unavailable to frontier rabbis. Charles Mantinband's position was bolstered, among other factors, by his celebrity, itself a by-product of his activism, as well as by his relative financial security. Transient rabbis, new to the South and South Africa, felt free of the responsibilities that narrowed the options available to their anchored colleagues. Exemplars of the former, André Ungar and David Ben-Ami were in some ways freedom rabbis, midway between frontier rabbis and the Jewish freedom riders who flocked to the South in the 1960s. They intentionally chose pulpits on the frontline, seeking to apply the lessons of the prophetic tradition to the civil rights scene while simultaneously fulfilling personal ambition. Mantinband, Nussbaum, and others in the South were driven by similar motivations, but disagreed with the newcomers over the appropriate forms that activism should take.

The frontier experience also shaped preferred methods of activism. Whereas Mantinband and Nussbaum, like many other southern liberals, trusted mediation over marching, Ungar joined Rabbinical Assembly delegations to protest in Birmingham in 1963 and Hattiesburg in 1964. The roots of Ungar's activism can be traced to his time in South Africa.

André Ungar in South Africa

Born in Hungary but trained in London, André Ungar took up the pulpit of Temple Israel in Port Elizabeth in January 1955 at the age of twenty-five. The newly established Reform

congregation, one of only four in southern Africa, had a membership of over three hundred.³⁸ The Jewish community, comprised of storekeepers, businessmen, and professionals, was solidly middle class. Most of Port Elizabeth's one thousand Jewish families were nominally Orthodox, observant of tradition but acculturated. As elsewhere in South Africa, the Progressive movement was a newcomer, regarded with suspicion by the dominant Orthodox leadership.

Ungar arrived at a key moment in South African history. The National Party (NP), first elected in 1948 and thereafter in every election until 1994, was consolidating its hold on South African politics. The government was gradually introducing new racial policies, supplementing the preexisting, largely unlegislated social, economic, and cultural segregation with expansive and rigid race laws. Legislation central to the apartheid system was first applied and enforced during the early 1950s. In 1956 the sleepy coastal city of Port Elizabeth was introducing the measures stipulated by the Group Areas Act, entailing a transfer of non-white residents out of areas allocated to whites. Apartheid issues had little immediate and practical impact on South African Jews in the 1950s, entailing minimal inconvenience to a group that was regarded as white.

Yet the Jewish community had a diffident relationship with the government. Many were troubled by memories of the 1930s and early 1940s when Afrikaner nationalist politicians used antisemitic rhetoric freely. The NP had introduced the "Jewish Question" into political debate in the 1930s, railing against the undesirability of Jewish immigration and negative Jewish influence on South African society. Antisemitism was seized upon by a ragtag assortment of fascistic Afrikaner organizations, many of which were allied or associated with the NP. Although by the late 1940s NP leader Daniel Malan had dissociated the NP from antisemitism, promising white solidarity, the rapprochement between the ruling party and the South African Jewish community was slow and unsteady. Fears persisted throughout the 1950s, particularly as the NP itself seemed divided over the correct course to pursue in its relationship with the Jewish community.

While Malan spoke in conciliatory terms, he was surrounded by a coterie of senior leaders who had openly expressed Nazi sympathies a decade before. These leaders occasionally lapsed into old antisemitic habits, reawakening dormant insecurities. Membership of the Transvaal branch of the NP remained closed to Jews until 1952.³⁹ The South African Jewish Board of Deputies, the community's official representative body, was equally uncertain of the NP's long-term intentions.⁴⁰ This produced an acute sensitivity to public perceptions of the community. That the NP periodically scolded South African Jewry for its apparent overrepresentation in opposition ranks, particularly in the trade union movement, the Communist Party, and in opposition benches in parliament did nothing to ease these concerns. The Board of Deputies frowned on actions that confirmed these negative perceptions, preferring to encourage conciliation with the government. This was buttressed by a policy of strict political neutrality.⁴¹

Members of the broader Jewish community certainly shared the board's lingering sense of unease, disapproving of actions that could potentially antagonize the government. However, it would be a mistake to suggest that insecurity and caution concealed a widely-shared preference for racial equality. In their voting patterns and political associations, most Jews mirrored the behavior of their white, middle-class, English-speaking peers.⁴² While mainstream Jewish political opinion ranged across a spectrum from conservative support of the status quo to liberal humanitarianism, this majority found the idea of surrendering the privileges of race in pursuit of a more equitable society to be distinctly unappealing, never mind unthinkable. The highly visible Jewish minority that supported this departure had a fraught relationship with the community, poisoned as much by political polarity as by a mutually-shared disdain. The disproportionate part played by this radical clique in the ranks of the Communist Party, trade union movement, and African National Congress was the cause of much dismay and embarrassment.⁴³

At the opposite end of the political spectrum, the doctrinaire approach of the NP won little enthusiastic support. An obscure

minority was persistent and consistently unsuccessful in its attempts to persuade other Jews to join the NP. Most Jews were attracted neither by the NP's fixation on the color question, nor by its appeal to the interests of working-class Afrikaans voters. Sizeable Jewish support for the NP only emerged in the 1970s in response to changes in the party, the waning of memories of its erstwhile antisemitism (although the party won most of its support from older Jewish voters), a shift in the political landscape, and South Africa's burgeoning relationship with Israel.⁴⁴ Thus in the 1950s, the overwhelming majority of Jews supported the centrist United Party, their traditional party of preference. Although the race policies of the United Party were less rigid and exacting than those of the governing NP, it supported continued racial segregation and was pushed rightwards by the latter's extremism. The inclusive catch-all nature of the party meant that its Jewish supporters held a broad spectrum of views ranging from liberal to conservative on race matters. While a small parliamentary alternative advocated the removal of the system of racial privileges, only a minority of the white electorate, Jews included, gave it support.⁴⁵

André Ungar, who was sympathetic to the position of this liberal minority, came to Temple Israel committed to making social justice the focus of his ministry. For someone brought up in a Modern Orthodox household and exposed at close quarters to virulent racism, the Progressive movement offered a socially relevant alternative to traditional Judaism. Ungar combined his doctoral studies in modern philosophy in London with rabbinical training, first at the Orthodox Jew's College and later under Leo Baeck and Harold Reinhart. Baeck, a symbol of loyalty to his calling and spiritual resistance to oppression, was a distinguished role model for an activist rabbi. Baeck's brand of Progressive Judaism sought to harmonize social engagement with Jewish teachings, looking to the prophets and early rabbinical reformers as appropriate sources for inspiration. As with David Ben-Ami a decade later, Progressive Judaism's social agenda resonated with Ungar's personal encounter with antisemitism. Ungar, who escaped the Holocaust by living on false papers in Budapest, was

*Temple Israel, Port Elizabeth, South Africa.
(By permission of the Rochlin Archives,
South African Jewish Board of Deputies.)*

“haunted” by his wartime experience.⁴⁶ Progressive Judaism incorporated the lessons of the Holocaust into the framework of prophetic Judaism. The Holocaust had altered thinking about the role of bystanders. For Ungar, and other progressive rabbis trained in the prophetic tradition after the war, to be a passive spectator to injustice was equivalent to acquiescence in evil. In his eyes, the rabbi’s responsibilities extended beyond his congregation to the pursuit of justice for all.

Newly ordained and in search of a position, Ungar was offered the pulpit of Temple Israel. Although not a prestigious post, it was well remunerated and a first step on the rabbinical ladder. The job was probably earmarked for Ungar by Baeck,

president of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. Ungar served as liaison officer of the youth section of the organization's governing body. The posting in Port Elizabeth was in line with the WUPJ's goals of spreading Progressive Judaism abroad since South Africa was seen as a receptive new frontier for expansion.⁴⁷ Moreover, for Ungar, South Africa presented the challenge and opportunity of practical fulfillment of the ideals of prophetic Judaism. Despite the misgivings of his family, by then living in Israel, and the apprehensions of his wife, Ungar accepted the job fully aware of, and perhaps relishing, the "dangers" of such a pulpit.⁴⁸

Ungar revealed these inspirations and intentions at his induction. Moses Cyrus Weiler, the chief minister of the Progressive movement in South Africa, probably sensing the spirit of the new arrival, warned Ungar of the necessity of restraint in dealing with sensitive political issues. Sol Marcus, the president of the temple, concurred and stressed the "importance of caution and experience for newcomers in finding their place in a new country." Ungar's reply, that his "ultimate loyalty is to no one else than God and Israel as an organic whole. . . . The Rabbi is indeed the Rabbi of one particular congregation, but above all he is a Rabbi of the Jewish people," should have forewarned his congregation of the strength of his convictions, the independence of his thinking, and his resistance to advice and criticism. Above all, André Ungar regarded it as his "task to bring to the [congregation's] notice in no uncertain terms the concrete implications of our ethical heritage for here and now."⁴⁹

The rabbi's early attempts to discuss the race issue in private were warily rebuffed: "*That . . . is a lifetime's study. You must be born there to understand it. Foreigners can know nothing about it. Besides, it is an unsavory topic, a communist thing to worry about [italics in original].*"⁵⁰ Making little headway in personal discussions, Ungar decided to bring his views before his congregation in a sermon titled "Apartheid Three Thousand Years Ago" that he delivered on Passover eve, 1955. Ungar's pointed comparison of the treatment of Jews in biblical Egypt with contemporary attitudes towards blacks aroused "pained consternation" from his

congregants, who pleaded that he in the future “preach us *religion*, not politics [italics in original].”⁵¹

Initially forgiving of what they regarded as an isolated political sermon, the temple board and membership were dismayed by his return to the race issue in a sermon preached a few weeks later. Responding to an article in a local newspaper detailing the denial of a passport for a black student to study in America, Ungar ridiculed the government from his pulpit as “arrogantly puffed up little men [who acted] in heartless stupidity,” perpetrating “a greater tragedy than the biblical episode of Moses being denied entry into the Promised Land.” Ungar concluded his sermon by provocatively offering prayers on behalf of his congregation “for all who suffer in their innocence.”⁵² Many temple members were furious. Some were outraged at the presumptuousness of a newcomer’s meddling in a local political issue, while others were upset by the implied criticism of Ungar’s message and his disregard for their warnings, and most were disturbed by his reckless fixation on an unpopular racial theme. This widely felt consternation was exacerbated by the publicity that the sermon generated in the local and national press, raising the fear that its sentiments would be understood to be representative of member, and wider community, opinion. Particularly worrisome was the attention that the Afrikaans press gave to the story.⁵³

Rabbi Ungar became an “acute source of embarrassment” to the Jewish community, which was discussed in agitated correspondence between concerned regional representatives and the national head office of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.⁵⁴ Statements of this kind were anathema at a time when the board sought stability in its relationship with the ruling party. The government would be unlikely to differentiate between the views of a rabbi and those of the broader community, potentially confirming its association of Jews with the liberal parliamentary and radical extra-parliamentary opposition. Ungar claimed to speak in the name of Jewish tradition and urged the Jewish community to take a collective stand against apartheid. Hostile statements from a rabbi, seen as a community leader, risked undermining various countervailing efforts to portray South African Jews as loyal white

citizens. The South African Union of Progressive Judaism was also concerned by the incident. J. Heilbron, the president of the union, thought it necessary to issue a stern warning:

I do deplore the words you are reported to have used to describe the members of our Government, men with outstanding careers behind them, and men who have been appointed to act as this country's leaders and spokesmen.

You must realize, Dr. Ungar, that all men do not think alike, and by making use of such unfortunate expressions in your Sermon, you are doing no good to anybody or to anything, least of all to the cause which you obviously have so much to heart. . .you are new to our country, cannot possibly in the short time you have been here fully understand all the political problems with which we have to deal in South Africa. I would beg of you, therefore, to avoid making political speeches that can do infinite harm not only to yourself as a spiritual leader, but also to the general Jewish community. . . .

Very friendly relations indeed exist between the South African Government and the Jewish Community in this country. We want to keep it that way for as long as possible. Whilst you are fully entitled to disagree with Government policy, there can be no excuse for personal abuse.⁵⁵

For Heilbron and the Board of Deputies, the demands of the prophetic past were no match for the demands of the pragmatic present. The priorities of the Jewish community, rooted in concerns about safety, acceptance in white society, and the preservation of what was regarded by some as a tenuous status quo, conflicted with the convictions of an outsider rabbi. Ungar was seemingly insensitive to these local priorities; later, in a similar vein, he called for all Jews to leave South Africa, or, failing that, to support black opposition to the government in the expectation of an eventual dividend. Although the controversy gradually abated and tempers cooled, the rabbi and his congregation thereafter coexisted in an uneasy truce.⁵⁶

Instead of serving to subdue the rabbi, the congregation's shrill complaints and demands backfired, spurring an increasingly

headstrong Ungar to extend and deepen his involvement in local racial matters. Ungar's commitment to social justice assumed a public form. He was elected to the regional executive committee of the South African Institute for Race Relations, an outspoken liberal organization probably regarded as politically radical by some in his congregation. Ungar also became involved in fighting the local implementation of the Group Areas Act by joining the interracial Group Areas Action Committee. His public statements in this latter role brought further press attention and controversy. Speaking at a public meeting in November 1956, Ungar compared his own experience of Nazi ghettoization in Hungary to the relocation of communities from their homes into segregated suburbs. Openly chastising the local Jewish community for its passivity, Ungar warned that Jews were shortsighted and foolish if they ignored the NP's core "basic identity of both anti-Jewish and anti-black racialism." Ungar next condemned the Group Areas Act as a "despicable evil," admonishing his audience, and all South African Jews, that "Hitler was not defeated [as] his spirit was marching triumphantly" across South Africa.⁵⁷

Statements of this kind reinforced the board's view that the rabbi was reckless and irresponsible, drawing attention to the Jewish community at a time when it was better for it to be inconspicuous. Ungar was seen to be playing a dangerous game, tempting fate by riling politicians averse to reminders of their shady past connections. Yet beyond reprimands, cautions, and pleas, the community was almost powerless to rein in their rabbi. Ungar was unmoved by the appeals of his critics. The imagined concerns of an "accepted, respected and pigmentocratically privileged" community paled next to the reality of daily black suffering.⁵⁸ To be swayed by the pressure for silence would be the equivalent of complicity. The prophetic tradition demanded that he stand up for an unpopular but just cause. It also provided a salve for the stinging rebukes and encouragement to remain steadfast when facing an obdurate congregation. For were not the biblical prophets, wrote Ungar in the *Temple Israel Bulletin*, because of

the partisan, and apparently revolutionary nature of their teachings, the focal points of heated controversy, more often than not, exposed to extreme unpopularity. . . . They had something definite to say, and they said it even though some people raised their eyebrows in shocked horror at their outspokenness. . . . So much for any outward resemblance there may be between the zealous prophets of old and some of the fearlessly enthusiastic champions of Progressive Judaism in the contemporary world.⁵⁹

The temple board exerted little leverage over their rabbi. Its weakness was probably compounded by the inexperience of its members. Ungar was the congregation's first rabbi; the temple had been founded only in 1951. The board members were faced with an unprecedented situation made more difficult by the ineffectiveness of the standard constraints on a frontier rabbi's behavior. Long service could create a web of understanding and dependency between a rabbi and his congregation. Over time a rabbi was likely to win the respect of his congregation and even of the broader community. Time together was also likely to heighten the rabbi's sense of responsibility to his congregation, creating an awareness and sensitivity to local concerns and priorities. Conversely, the congregation was likely to be more tolerant of the idiosyncrasies of an established rabbi. Unlike such ministers in frontier pulpits, Ungar's brief tenure ensured that these links of mutual dependency were frail. It also meant that the usual considerations of job and pension security played a lesser role in his thinking, particularly because he was employed on a short-term contract. Moreover, unlike most other rabbis on the frontier, Ungar's qualifications, coupled with his youth, ensured a high degree of mobility. Even firing the rabbi was problematic, risking embarrassment and stigma, potentially making recruitment of future rabbis difficult. Barring dismissal before the natural conclusion of Ungar's contract, the congregation was left with few ways to control his behavior.

Ungar's increasing involvement in opposition to apartheid coincided with and contributed to a deteriorating relationship with his congregation. Although the rabbi toned down the political content of his sermons, he began needling his congregants

with pointed political commentary in the *Temple Israel Bulletin*.⁶⁰ Sometimes his approach was blunt. For example, he lashed out at Port Elizabeth Jewry's "bundu backwoodsmanship of intolerance and prejudice."⁶¹ Temple Israel members began to believe that Ungar was neglecting his pastoral duties by devoting more time to his social justice interests than to his rabbinical responsibilities. A member of Temple Israel recalled that Ungar was "more in the [black] townships surrounding Port Elizabeth, than at shul. When you needed him—he wasn't there."⁶² His self-described "hot-headed" temperament and provocative personality may have also estranged the rabbi from his congregation.⁶³ Congregants were easily upset by the criticism of outsiders, particularly one as young as Ungar, and intolerant of those they regarded as self-righteous meddlers in South Africa's problems. While the majority of his community were willing to forgive what Ungar later termed his "pulpit naughtiness," most were likely to have privately disapproved of his breaching of racial taboos. According to his own account, temple members found his interracial friendships, invitations to black friends to drop in at his home, and his visits to the black townships unacceptable.⁶⁴ That these friends included political activists such as Dennis Brutus and Govan Mbeki, both later imprisoned on Robben Island, only made matters worse. In response, the community stepped up pressure on their rabbi through a "barrage of telephone calls, personal visits, emergency meetings" and "threats, reproofs, [and] anonymous letters."⁶⁵ Ungar, impervious to his congregation's demands, realized that he and they had reached a stalemate, and probably sensed the approaching end to his tenure. Perhaps he also was taunting congregants with his provocative and public interracial contacts.

The combination of an outspoken stance on racial matters and private friendships across the race line produced an open confrontation with the temple sisterhood committee. Ungar was censured by the committee, which disapprovingly noted with "grave concern" that the rabbi had vacationed with two black companions, and sought assurances that "such a thing would not reoccur."⁶⁶ The congregation was "on the whole upset, afraid, at

*Letter from J. Heilbron to Rabbi Ungar August 12, 1955.).
(By permission of the Rochlin Archives,
South African Jewish Board of Deputies.)*

times outraged, generally icily unsympathetic" towards their own spiritual leader.⁶⁷

In October 1956, barely a year and a half after assuming his first rabbinical position, André Ungar informed his temple board of his acceptance of an offer for the more modestly-paying position of rabbi at the Settlement Synagogue in London's East End. Ungar opted to leave, although he agreed to delay his departure until January 1957 so that Temple Israel could find a replacement, because he was "beginning to feel that we had reached an impasse," recognizing that with "all the amiability in the world, Congregation and Rabbi cannot remain wed unless there is a basic acceptance of common principles." At Temple Israel "that substantial agreement which is the foundation of serving a congregation was lacking."⁶⁸ Although his combustible interactions with the temple board and strained relationship with his congregation largely dictated his decision, other factors were likely involved as well. There were few prospects for a Reform rabbi in South Africa, a relative backwater of the Progressive movement. Port Elizabeth was a small and unsophisticated city with an "arid cultural scene," an uninspiring first posting for a highly-educated and cosmopolitan minister.⁶⁹ Ungar had a restless personality and moved from his next two pulpits in quick succession.

Although his congregation may have been pleased to see him depart, the government, probably unaware of his announced resignation, was even more determined that he leave South Africa. In December 1956, a month before his scheduled departure and days after arrests nationwide of 156 anti-apartheid activists who were charged with treason, the government revoked Ungar's temporary residence permit.⁷⁰ The national press trumpeted him as "virtually deported."⁷¹ While Ungar regarded this unexpected order as a "compliment" to his "modest efforts," becoming the first rabbi to be "expelled" from South Africa, his congregation and the Board of Deputies saw things differently. Ungar's earlier resignation proved to be a relief for his congregation, absolving them of their obligation to defend their rabbi. Most were not "unpleased when he had to leave."⁷²

The pattern of the reactions from Port Elizabeth Jewry to Ungar's departure presaged the nature of later South African Jewish responses to apartheid. The national Jewish press dealt with the Ungar affair in what was to become characteristic of its later coverage of Jewish dissidence in racial matters, opting for either circumspection or avoidance. The *South African Jewish Chronicle* shunned the controversy entirely, limiting its comments to a cryptic editorial about the "Dilemma of the Jewish Rabbi." The editorial avoided naming Ungar, vaguely proclaiming that rabbis must "preserve the relevance of Judaism," but steer clear of "identifying the lay community with every rabbinical assessment."⁷³ The *South African Jewish Times* defended Ungar's right to freedom of the pulpit, although it castigated him for the "little discretion in the way he used it" and his "intemperate statements."⁷⁴ The Board of Deputies' response was derived from its policy of assuming neutrality in political matters it regarded as not directly affecting the Jewish community. Ungar, the board argued, "went on to the political platform and must therefore bear the consequences as an individual."⁷⁵ He had spoken "entirely as an individual—neither for his congregation nor for South African Jewry as a whole." Jews, the board proclaimed repeatedly, held a spectrum of political opinions, "in common with other sections of the South African people."⁷⁶ Not content with this declaration of dissociation, one member of the Board of Deputies later made his case against Ungar in *Jewish Affairs*, the organization's official publication:

... it is [not] true that Judaism imposes upon its adherents opposition to Apartheid as such. Judaism enjoins consideration and justice for all people, assistance to the sick, the poor and the underprivileged, facilities for all people to live their lives in peace. This writer, at least, fails to see any reason why these desiderata cannot be achieved within the framework of the social separation that has been traditional in South Africa since even before the Union [of South Africa] began.⁷⁷

The article suggests the range of acceptable attitudes on racial matters within mainstream Jewish opinion, a spectrum that stretched from liberal humanitarianism exemplified by Helen Suzman in parliament to endorsement of the racial status quo. It

can also be interpreted as an attempt to limit the potential political consequences of Ungar's call for a collective Jewish stand against apartheid. Its timing is significant in that it was published during the treason trial at which Jewish radicals were disproportionately represented among the white defendants.⁷⁸ While the Board of Deputies and Jewish press studiously avoided making this connection known, all but avoiding a major national event, criticism of Ungar's lesser antics offered the means to obliquely disassociate the community from actions hostile to the government that might also enflame passions against the Jewish minority.

Ungar himself interpreted the termination of his residence permit as an act intended to intimidate the South African Jewish establishment and thus to bully the insecure community into "if not active conformity, then at least into a fearsome silence."⁷⁹ Ungar, returning to and expanding on this fear-centered explanation for Jewish behavior in his later writing, employed themes and tropes instantly recognizable to anyone familiar with historical writing about southern Jewry and segregation. South African Jews were "frustrated, terrified and unhappy," a suspect minority caught in the middle of an enveloping struggle between blacks and whites.⁸⁰ In its current state, the Jewish community concealed its "fearfully hushed up nightmare" of potential antisemitism and racial exclusion, hiding a "nervous apprehension" that was revealed only in a "tone of nervousness."⁸¹ Jews were "uncomfortably near the [racial] fence to feel really secure."⁸²

While the racial divide was currently positioned so as to accommodate Jews as whites, it could easily be moved, ejecting Jews from their privileged perch. Ungar was suggesting that Jews would never gain full acceptance as whites in a society structured by race: their racial in-betweenness would only be eliminated in the egalitarian society promised by the opponents of apartheid. Jews, Ungar warned, were already victims of social antisemitism and coerced conformity.⁸³ Echoing the calls of Jewish defense agencies active in the South, Ungar cautioned that passivity and acquiescence would win only a temporary respite: "How long before the intrinsic disruptiveness of racialism begins to weed out the less desirable from within the light-skinned fold?" His

admonition that the Jews would be “most vulnerable” when white supremacists “follow out the essential logic of their position,” replicated countless warnings made to southern Jews by Anti-Defamation League and American Jewish Committee officials.⁸⁴ Ungar and the defense agencies were articulating what John Higham has termed the theory of the unitary character of prejudice. This paradigm, dominant in the 1950s and 1960s, was rooted in a psychological explanation for racism. According to this theory, racists, no matter their preferred target, shared a “generic need to hate.” By implication, bigots would shift their negative attentions to new groups once a particular hatred was sated or a target disappeared.

Yet, unlike commentators on southern Jewry, Ungar was ultimately unsympathetic and accusing. Whereas observers from the defense organizations and historians such as Clive Webb, Leonard Dinnerstein, and Mark Bauman have pointed to the “innate sympathy” of southern Jews to the civil rights struggle, Ungar’s judgment about the political and racial sympathies of the South African Jewish community was damning. For all their fears and vulnerabilities, South African Jews were “wholly and beyond redemption part of White South Africa, sharing its privileges, interests and prejudices.”⁸⁵

Not all Jews in Port Elizabeth agreed with Ungar’s claim that the government was attempting to intimidate the community. Many were pleased to see Ungar depart. The latter prompted an outpouring of bitterness and barely concealed gloating in the press. While the vitriol vented in the pages of the local newspapers may not have been representative of Port Elizabeth Jewry, the sheer volume of correspondence hostile to Ungar suggests that he had won few supporters in the wider community. Although letters defending Ungar did appear in the press, much of this support came from non-Jews.⁸⁶ The *Jewish Review*, the otherwise politically unengaged official monthly of Port Elizabeth’s Orthodox Jewish majority, was scathing in its criticism of Ungar:

The entire Jewish community resents Dr Ungar’s act of making a publicity stunt out of it, encouraging the press to make a whole ‘Tzimes’ about it. A rabbi serving a community usually

consisting of members holding different points of view, should concentrate on the job to which he is appointed or which he is called upon to do rather than indulge in political controversy of any kind. Was there for him not enough work to do, within the framework of his congregation to prevent him wasting time on arguments with the government? Are there not more competent people in our community older and more experienced than Dr Ungar to instruct the community in matters of 'Universal Justice'? Was it for Dr Ungar, a recent arrival in this country, who has never had a chance of studying thoroughly and properly the complex racial problems in South Africa, and their implications, to take this task on himself? It is from this point of view that we venture to say, that Dr Ungar's departure from our country will be received by some of us with a sigh of relief.⁸⁷

Another Port Elizabeth Jew wrote to a local newspaper to record his

indignation at the abuse of the freedom of the press by the non-desirable visitor to South Africa, Rabbi Ungar. If he is planning to get cheap publicity and pave the way for his future career in one of the London suburban congregations, let him not drag into this controversy the whole Jewish community. Let him also not run away from South Africa with the idea that he is Emile Zola or a Rev. Mr. Scott, because he lacks the responsibility and dignity of a responsible leader of a community. The friendly and good-neighborly relations between the South African Jew and his non-Jewish fellow citizens will not be affected by Rabbi Ungar's, or any other foreigner's radical and subversive ideas. We are citizens of this country and we owe our allegiance to the Government and people of this country. As Jewish members of this community we demand from our leaders, those who are graced or disgraced, the sense of dignity and responsibility which befits a Rabbi. On the occasion of Rabbi Ungar's departure, the Jewish community of Port Elizabeth should pronounce the traditional Hebrew blessing of "Baruch Sheptorau", i.e. "Thank God we are getting rid of this Rabbi."⁸⁸

Ungar was lambasted as self-seeking and publicity hungry, a young upstart and "foreign busybody" with a "Messiah complex."⁸⁹ The criticisms directed at Ungar mirrored similar condemnation of "outside agitators" who became involved with the civil rights struggle in the South. Northern rabbis

who came south in the 1960s were berated in nearly identical terms.⁹⁰

As André Ungar departed Port Elizabeth in January 1957, sent off to the strains of *Aveinu Shalom Aleichem* sung at the airport by students of the Temple Hebrew School (which suggests that politics rather than his personality was primary in alienating him from his congregation), few would have predicted that he would play a coincidental but crucial role in a parallel drama, encountering and affecting the experience of a rabbi in a similar position at Temple B'nai Israel in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Ungar's experience in South Africa had affected his weltanschauung and priorities. Social justice, already important to the rabbi, had become a central concern.

After a brief stint in unsatisfactory positions in London and Toronto, he was appointed associate rabbi to Dr. Joachim Prinz at Temple B'nai Abraham in Newark.⁹¹ From there he took the pulpit of Temple Emanuel in Westwood, New Jersey, a position he still holds. Ungar continued to mull over his South African experiences, writing and lecturing extensively about South Africa.⁹² Having cut his civil rights teeth in South Africa, Ungar transferred his concern about social justice to his new environment. Gradually, interest and involvement in the southern civil rights struggle complemented his continued opposition to apartheid.⁹³

The Micah of Mississippi

While Ungar was battling his congregation in South Africa, Rabbi Charles Mantinband was fighting a similar (and similarly unsuccessful) lonely war of attrition in Hattiesburg.⁹⁴ Although Hattiesburg was perhaps "less rigid in the resistance" to integration than other towns in the state of comparable size, Mississippi was hostile to dissenting views on the racial status quo, and values of the town's citizens were moderate only in relation to those of the state's citizens as a whole. Nevertheless, the gentile townspeople may have been more tolerant toward Charles Mantinband than were his own congregants. Mantinband, having taken up the pulpit of Temple B'nai Israel in 1951, explained this tolerance as a consequence of his established position and familiarity in

Rabbi Charles Mantinband
(Courtesy, the Jacob Rader Marcus Center,
American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.)

the small town by the time the focus of the civil rights struggle shifted to Mississippi in the early 1960s. Locals did not see him as an outside agitator, but perhaps instead as a misguided liberal race mixer, albeit he was their misguided liberal:

. . . when you live in a town long enough, you get to know everybody, and you're given the opportunity to befriend everybody. And, if after ten years or more you have gotten this fellow a job, and this fellow you visited when he was in the hospital, and this person you were able to get a scholarship for his

child, and this person you did a favor—you served on a committee with him . . . they'll say, "Well now, this fellow is out of step, and he's ahead of his times and he's crazy — we don't like what he says — but don't touch him, he's my friend, and I like him!" Whatever the case may be, I stayed a long time.⁹⁵

Mantinband ministered to Hattiesburg's fifty Jewish families, 180 people in a population of thirty-five thousand.⁹⁶ A native southerner, Mantinband came to Hattiesburg towards the end of his rabbinical career, already having served communities elsewhere in the South. His personal charm, geniality, and familiarity with the region would serve as a crucial buffer when his civil rights activism awakened insecurities and raised tempers.⁹⁷ He was held in affectionate regard, an honored and respected figure in Hattiesburg, who was active in the broader community.⁹⁸ This esteem was magnified by the southern regard for clergymen. However, Mantinband's outspoken opposition to segregation generated mixed responses from his congregants. Some resented his sermons supporting racial change, a small, like-minded minority was encouraged by his willingness to deal with a taboo subject, but the majority "brooded in silent unease or in friendly-sinister warnings to 'take it easy.'"⁹⁹

Although most would have tolerated some "pulpit naughtiness," many were upset when Mantinband took to activism beyond the pulpit. This resentment and unease boiled over when Mantinband's activities were publicized in the local press. One such incident in 1956, his public denunciation of Mississippi's staunchly segregationist senior senator James Eastland, that the *Hattiesburg American* headlined as "Local Rabbi Says Race Relations Stink," produced outraged responses from his congregation. At an emergency meeting, the rabbi promised to avoid future publicity.¹⁰⁰ Responding to calls for his resignation, Mantinband's allies within the temple chose not to defend his racial stance, but instead pointed to his virtues as a man and the difficulties that would be created by his dismissal.¹⁰¹ Mantinband's transgression of local racial mores, as with Ungar, was another cause of friction. Members of the temple objected to Mantinband's interracial friendships, made all the more unacceptable by the visits of

African Americans to his home opposite Temple B'nai Israel. That his friends included Clyde Kennard, Vernon Dahmer, and Medgar Evers, all prominent civil rights activists in Mississippi, made these visits even more unpalatable. Citing a state law that threatened to remove tax-exempt status from facilities that were used on non-segregated bases, a delegation urged the rabbi to stop these visits. An indignant Mantinband refused, retorting that the house may be temple property, but it was also his "home."¹⁰²

Although massive resistance measures adopted by the Mississippi legislature suppressed the already limited support for dissent and reduced the scope of opposition activism, Mantinband remained committed to the civil rights cause, his involvement eliciting disapproving responses from some members of his community. The concerted challenge to the stasis in race relations in Mississippi in the early 1960s, including freedom rides and Freedom Summer projects organized by civil rights organizations hoping to undermine segregation in the most racially recalcitrant state, injected new fire into Mantinband's relationship with his congregation. Tensions between rabbi and congregation escalated alongside the level of activism in Mississippi. Although the rabbi's political position, made more so by his forthrightness and prominence, was unpopular, Mantinband was still admired and valued by his congregation. A series of incidents, climaxing in 1962, persuaded Mantinband to leave Hattiesburg. In May 1962 the rabbi was again reprimanded by his congregation at an emergency meeting after he was publicly linked with the Mississippi State Council, an inter-religious body that advanced acceptance of desegregation. The responses at a congregational meeting illustrate the range of concerns within the Jewish community. The temple's president objected to the identification of the congregation with a liberal cause, expressing a widely shared fear of antisemitic reprisals.¹⁰³ These fears were particularly acute at a time when freedom riders, among them a disproportionate number of northern Jews, poured south. The arrival of freedom riders galvanized radical segregationists and prompted a surge in distribution of segregationist literature, some laced with antisemitism.¹⁰⁴ Another congregant complained that the rabbi's civil rights stance created

divisions within the congregation, an untenable situation in a small and vulnerable community. A final complainant articulated what other members were likely to have felt, but were reluctant to express in public, also suggesting the incompatibility of Mantinband's liberal attitudes with those of some of his congregants: "Why must the rabbi mix with the niggers? Let us sell to them and keep them in their place."¹⁰⁵

Mantinband refused to compromise or back down, agreeing only to avoid publicity "for the time being" and to steer clear of biracial meetings.¹⁰⁶ The congregation was unsatisfied by this promise, having heard similar reassurances in the past. Gathering again later, the temple board agreed to additional steps to restrain their rabbi. Mantinband was stung by the acrimony expressed at these meetings with his congregation and unhappy with the strictures imposed on his activism. Further news was disheartening. The small Jewish community of Brookhaven cancelled Mantinband's weekly visits. Word trickled back to him that a congregational delegation had met with the president of the local college, a friend and ally in local civil rights matters, urging him to rein in his friend.¹⁰⁷ The cancellation of a public lecture at a black college in compliance with his congregation's demands solicited a disappointed rebuke from the college president: "It is indeed a sad day to know that the Children of the Seed of Abraham, themselves persecuted down the ages, have yielded to the persecution of their black brothers."¹⁰⁸

These actions suggest both the congregation's desperation and its weakness. While Charles Mantinband displayed some of the characteristics of the frontier rabbi's condition, particularly his long service to a single community, a number of factors served to reduce his dependence on Temple B'nai Israel. In many ways Mantinband was atypical of the frontier rabbi. While his political views engendered hostility in Hattiesburg, Mantinband's charm, celebrity, and success guaranteed him prospects elsewhere, reducing the importance of job security.¹⁰⁹ The dismissal of a rabbi during the civil rights era produced embarrassing press attention and potentially hindered the recruitment of a replacement. Mantinband's prominence all but ruled out this option. This unusually

high level of job security was augmented by the timing of his service in Hattiesburg. Mantinband held the pulpit of Temple B'nai Israel towards the end of his career and beyond into retirement age. This reduced his financial vulnerability by ensuring him access to a pension. Maury Gurwitch, a member of the temple board, recalled that Mantinband "was old and set in his ways and money meant little to him so you could not pressure, sway or change him."¹¹⁰ These critical, liberating factors reduced the temple board's leverage over their rabbi, simultaneously serving as facilitating factors that produced confidence and scope for activism and outspokenness.

Yet, although the board's direct leverage was limited, Mantinband was attuned to local concerns. His long residence in Hattiesburg produced sensitivity to the community and a stake in the maintenance of a positive relationship with his congregation. The deterioration in this relationship was, therefore, particularly troubling. In an intimate congregation, those who were upset were often friends and long-term acquaintances. Mantinband, unlike Ungar, was therefore more responsive to their pleas, and they were tied together through bonds of obligation.

At this point Mantinband reached a state of impasse with his congregation similar to that which had persuaded Ungar to leave Port Elizabeth. While he was still highly regarded within the congregation, the rabbi was frustrated by the restrictions placed on him, unhappy in representing a reluctant congregation, unwilling to curtail his civil rights efforts, and certain to have known that renewed activism in the heated climate would bring about an acrimonious departure. Mantinband was caught in a dilemma; a return to smooth relations with his congregation dictated a reduction of his controversial public activities, but withdrawal from the fight for civil rights would compromise his principles.¹¹¹ Ill feeling continued to fester throughout 1962, probably exacerbated by Mantinband's contact with freedom riders and the tension generated by challenges to Mississippi's racial caste system.

In March 1963 Temple B'nai Israel's problem with its rabbi ceased when Mantinband resigned and left Hattiesburg. Mantinband's decision to leave, clearly the product of much soul

*Rabbi Charles Mantinband, after a Confirmation
service at Temple B'nai Israel, Hattiesburg.
(The Papers of Rabbi Charles Mantinband, McCain Library
and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi
Hattiesburg, Mississippi.)*

searching, was motivated by a combination of factors. The departure was made possible by the attractive offer of the pulpit of a new congregation in Longview, Texas. Mantinband explained that he “moved because of special circumstances of a personal nature: [in Longview] we were near our grandchildren and we were near our family . . . there was a brand new congregation that challenged me.”¹¹² Mantinband was attracted by the “less turbulent pastures” of Texas that offered an escape from the “day to day tensions” he and his wife had experienced for years.¹¹³ By his own admission, Hattiesburg had become “increasingly difficult to work in” and likely to become more difficult as Mississippi became the focal point of the civil rights struggle.¹¹⁴ However, Mantinband may have simultaneously been pushed out of Temple B’nai Israel. Colleague and civil rights ally Nussbaum wrote of Mantinband’s “removal.”¹¹⁵ Leo Bergman, rabbi of Touro Synagogue in New Orleans, maintained that Mantinband’s claim that he left for family reasons was a “polite pretense,” and argued that he “was leaving by a mutual gentleman’s agreement between Congregation and Rabbi.”¹¹⁶ Rabbi Allan Schwartzman of Greenville, a close friend, thought that Mantinband was “ridden out on a rail.”¹¹⁷

Charles Mantinband was given a warm send off by the non-Jewish community including a public farewell banquet. Few of Hattiesburg’s Jews attended; apparently it had been “difficult to interest the Jewish group” in the occasion.¹¹⁸ The membership of Temple B’nai Israel was ambivalent about the loss of their rabbi. While the temple board attempted to persuade Mantinband to stay, the congregation had cause to feel relief at the rabbi’s planned departure.¹¹⁹ A final demonstration of the burden of having an outspoken and prominent rabbi had come in the frank and revealing extracts from Mantinband’s personal journal printed in *American Judaism*. This critical and intimate portrait of his congregation, detailing its obstructionism and exposing its prejudices, suggests why some within a congregation sensitive to its image and wary of conspicuousness would have been comforted by

the prospect of a more reticent replacement rabbi.¹²⁰ This was not to be.

Ben-Ami's Background

Less than two years after Mantinband's departure, his replacement, Rabbi David Z. Ben-Ami, left Temple B'nai Israel in much the same circumstances as André Ungar had exited Temple Israel in Port Elizabeth.¹²¹ During his brief tenure in Hattiesburg, Ben-Ami's path crossed with his historical *doppelganger*; Ungar playing an incidental role in the first act of Ben-Ami's personal drama.

Temple B'nai Israel began looking for a rabbi after Mantinband traveled to Longview and soon settled on David Ben-Ami. It is uncertain as to who referred or nominated Ben-Ami as a candidate (indeed he seems to have been the only candidate), although he did enjoy the enthusiastic backing of temple president Alvin Sackler.¹²² Sackler nonetheless later turned on his charge, becoming the major proponent of the speedy termination of the rabbi's services. Ben-Ami was not a member of the CCAR and therefore not recommended by the organization's placement commission. The temple board may have been attracted by Ben-Ami's background, promising a low-key alternative to his high profile predecessor.

Ben-Ami, born in Germany in 1924, was on the surface an unusual candidate for a southern pulpit. He had trained in social work at New York University and practiced as a social worker in New York, a career that the temple board believed to be far removed from political activism.¹²³ He received his rabbinical training in the late 1950s from the Academy for Higher Jewish Learning, a small, newly-established independent seminary.¹²⁴ His motives for this mid-career turn to the pulpit are unclear, as are the reasons for his choice of Hattiesburg. Temple B'nai Israel paid a modest salary, a sum smaller than that which elicited complaints from Perry Nussbaum.¹²⁵ Ben-Ami later claimed that he was driven by prophetic motives, intentionally opting to serve on the "frontlines" of the civil rights struggle.¹²⁶ However, he came to Hattiesburg with his wife and three young children,

not a propitious platform for activism in Mississippi's turbulent political climate. He was surely also aware of Charles Mantinband's experience at Temple B'nai Israel, certainly a discouragement to all but the most foolhardy of activists. He may have been seeking celebrity if his later activities in the town are indicative. Alternatively, his motives may have been more practical. His wife used his brief tenure to complete a master's degree in education at the local campus of the University of Southern Mississippi, undertaken with an eye to future employment as a teacher in New York.¹²⁷ Ben-Ami wanted to join the CCAR. Without membership his prospects for employment and advancement were limited. Not having trained at one of the "recognized theological schools" that would have gained him automatic membership in the CCAR, he was required to serve a five-year probationary period at UAHC-affiliated congregations in order to qualify.¹²⁸ Four years in the rabbinical backwaters of Irondequoit and Brewster in New York left only one year in Hattiesburg to fulfill this requirement, thereafter leaving him "free to return to 'civilization.'" He looked forward to finally finding a "suitable (decent) position."¹²⁹

Ben-Ami's background placed him between Mantinband and Ungar on the frontier spectrum. Whereas Ungar's mobility allowed him to place the demands of the prophets before the responsibilities of the pulpit, Ben-Ami exhibited both the weaknesses of a frontier rabbi and the strengths of an outsider. While he did not share Mantinband's deeply-felt sense of responsibility towards his congregation, he was constrained by a set of factors typical of the frontier condition. For example, his wife's studies tied him to Hattiesburg and established local links and pressure for the maintenance of a relatively stable relationship with his congregation. While his age and family responsibilities may have been counterbalanced by the possibility of a return to his secular profession, he had few alternative prospects within the rabbinate. Lacking membership in the CCAR, he was excluded from the support and protection offered by organizational ties. His mobility as a rabbi was further reduced by the coincidence of his tenure with a period of crisis in the Reform rabbinate. The rapid growth

*Temple B'nai Israel, Hattiesburg, Mississippi.
(Papers of Rabbi David Z. Ben-Ami, McCain Library
and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi.)*

of the Reform movement in the 1950s had slowed by the mid-1960s, producing an oversupply of rabbis. The already small pool of attractive pulpits shrunk, leaving few desirable options for rabbis who were not served by the CCAR Placement Commission. Another consequence was a change in power relationships within congregations as their boards and the laity became more assertive and made inroads into the rabbi's sphere.¹³⁰ Moreover, unlike Port Elizabeth's Temple Israel, Hattiesburg's congregation was experienced in dealing with a difficult rabbi. Crucially, Ben-Ami seems to have regarded his move to Hattiesburg as temporary. He never formed the lasting attachments that restrained many frontier rabbis. However, Ben-Ami was more pliable than Ungar and Mantinband. He ultimately reduced his involvement in public civil rights activities in response to congregational pressure.

Ungar and Other Outsiders

David Ben-Ami's problems began within months of his arrival when Hattiesburg became a center of the Freedom Summer project in Mississippi.¹³¹ Freedom Summer began in Hattiesburg on January 21, 1964, with a demonstration outside the Forrest County Courthouse organized to coincide with the South's inaugural Freedom Day. Two hundred of Hattiesburg's African American residents, joined by fifty pastors from the National Council of Churches, stood in the rain all day outside the courthouse waiting to register as voters.¹³² Among the poster-toting protestors was André Ungar, who participated in the first week of protests together with a small delegation from the Rabbinical Assembly.¹³³ The day's demonstration was uneventful, the first of a series of protests that continued through spring.¹³⁴ The protests and the presence of the northern rabbis had an unsettling effect on the Hattiesburg Jewish community, which disapproved of their "marching around for the news cameras."¹³⁵ The rabbis were a noticeable presence among the mainly black protestors; "white men with beards and black suits," they were "obviously Jewish."¹³⁶ To add to the community's worries, the courthouse was in the heart of Hattiesburg's business district, and the demonstrations disrupted commerce including at Jewish-owned businesses.

The Jewish community's disquiet was intensified when Ungar and fellow rabbi Jerome Lipnick announced that they planned to attend the Friday night service at Temple B'nai Israel.¹³⁷ The rabbis were forewarned that the service could be cancelled if they chose to come.¹³⁸ This threat was not carried out; instead many members of the congregation seem to have demonstrated their displeasure by not attending.¹³⁹ Reluctantly invited into the temple, Ungar, Lipnick, and several Protestant ministers who accompanied them joined a turnout of fifteen members for the service. Much to the rabbis' disappointment, Ben-Ami did not deliver a sermon, relinquishing, what to their minds was a perfect opportunity to apply the lessons of the weekly Torah portion to the events in Hattiesburg. Appropriately the Torah portion described the exodus from Egypt, material that Ungar himself had used to much effect and disaffection in his first controversial

sermon in Port Elizabeth nearly a decade before.¹⁴⁰ The rabbis' presence and the start of the Freedom Summer project in Hattiesburg set in motion a train of events marked by escalating tensions between the rabbi and his congregation that led to the unseating of David Ben-Ami within a year.

Ungar was familiar with the cold welcome of his southern co-religionists. In May 1963, he and eighteen other Conservative rabbis left the annual Rabbinical Assembly convention in the Catskills to travel to Birmingham in a show of solidarity with the civil rights protests in the city.¹⁴¹ The expedition had been spontaneously suggested as a means to demonstrate commitment to social justice, an issue that took on immediate relevance when the daily newspapers showed scenes of police brutality in Birmingham.¹⁴² While Ungar relished the short visit, rhapsodizing that the delegation had come within "hissing distance of the grand sweep of history itself, of the immortal battle between good and evil", Birmingham's Jewish community was much less enthusiastic.¹⁴³ Indignant at the rabbis' failure to warn them of their plans and concerned that the delegation's presence could spark equally spontaneous reprisals, the local Jewish leadership tried to persuade the delegation to leave immediately. Failing that, they sought reassurances that the rabbis would consult with the community before taking any action.¹⁴⁴ Ungar, unsympathetic to and suspicious of the community's timidity, scornfully dismissed their fears in much the same way that he spurned the pleadings of Port Elizabeth's Jews:

Our coming had already caused much harm; let us not bring it to the boil by being seen in the streets as demonstrators. We were solemnly warned about the peril to our own lives. The number of dynamite sticks recently found under the Temple was solemnly adduced. How the forthcoming convention of the States' Rights Party and the as yet quiescent Klanners wreak vengeance for our misdeeds on the heads of the local Jewish population was starkly portrayed. Also, we were assured of the liberal sentiments and the behind-the-scenes commitment of Birmingham Jewry, as well as their efforts on behalf of civil rights. Hints were flashed our way about the public recognition that Robert Kennedy might flash our way if only we withdrew

now and forever. . . . The Birmingham Jew was squarely on the side of reaction.¹⁴⁵

Although the trip coincided with a lull in the protests as city officials negotiated with the protesters, the delegation was denounced by Birmingham's Jewish leaders as "irresponsible," "intoxicated," "ill-timed and ill-conceived."¹⁴⁶ After discussing the visit with Rabbi Milton Grafman of Temple Emanu-El in Birmingham, Charles Mantinband apparently agreed with this assessment, adding a final reproachful "ill-advised" to the alliterative list of epithets.¹⁴⁷ Despite the frosty reception from Birmingham Jewry, Ungar and his colleagues were inspired by their perceived success and excited that a mere "handful of individuals may indeed leave their worthy mark." "Who," Ungar concluded, "is more called upon than Jews, God's chosen, and among them rabbis, the chosen people's chosen ones, to fulfill that holy task?"¹⁴⁸ This sense of obligation and excitement motivated Ungar's return south a few months later, this time to Hattiesburg.

The ill feeling that Ungar encountered in Birmingham and Hattiesburg reflected a resentment of outside intervention in what was perceived by many southerners as a problem that was theirs alone to solve. This reaction was part of a broad response manifested in a widely shared suspicion of "outside agitators" and "Yankee foreigners."¹⁴⁹ Everyone, from extremists blaming "communist Jews" for secretly pulling the strings of the hated NAACP, to moderate, educated southerners, criticized northern interference.¹⁵⁰ David Danzig, the American Jewish Committee's program director, encountered this feeling among Jewish leaders in the region when he received the unspoken admonition that "if Northern Jews 'would go away and leave us alone' – keep hands off the desegregation situation – everything would be alright."¹⁵¹ Mantinband similarly advised his northern colleagues that "we who live in the South know how to proceed."¹⁵² This resentment was a rare area of commonality between the minority of rabbis who openly supported integration and the minority of vocal Jewish segregationists. Progressive rabbis could agree with the sentiment expressed in the pamphlet *A Jewish View on Segregation*, written by a Mississippi Jew (avowedly a

“Jewish Southerner”, “not a Southern Jew”) and published by the Mississippi Citizens’ Council:

Is it too much to ask that they leave us to the solution of our own problems? Any jackass can be a Monday morning quarterback, an armchair general. Any idiot can successfully rear the other fellow’s children or make a go of his marriage or solve his financial difficulties. But it is the smart man who knows that each person has not only the right but the obligation to settle his own problems to the best of his ability.¹⁵³

Even outspoken supporters of civil rights were annoyed by the criticisms and moral demands made by their northern counterparts.¹⁵⁴ The pronouncements of northerners often ignored the need for practicality and slow, steady progress.¹⁵⁵ Mantinband “didn’t have too much respect for the North or their attitudes towards the Negro,” urging “them not to feel superior” and pointing out that “it is easy to be liberal one thousand miles away from the scene of the battle.”¹⁵⁶ Echoing Mantinband’s words, Rabbi William Silverman of Nashville cautioned, “It is little help to beat one’s breast in New York and preach at us in Boston.”¹⁵⁷

This resentment extended to the perceived insensitivity of northern Jewish organizations to their southern constituency, often compounding the problems of already embattled rabbis. For example, the UAHC’s invitation to Martin Luther King, Jr., to address its biennial banquet in Chicago in 1963 was criticized by seven Mississippi rabbis, Ben-Ami included, as a “completely unnecessary provocation,” that generated unwanted publicity and visibility for southern Jews.¹⁵⁸ Rabbi Moses Landau reported that Jews in the Deep South were “full of sound and fury” about the selection of banquet speaker: “Boards meet and pass resolutions. . . . Even the moderates join in. . . . People speak of secession from the UAHC. . . . It is 1860 here again.”¹⁵⁹ Nussbaum thought that the invitation indicated that the UAHC “has no regard for the security of the Jewish communities” in Mississippi. Moreover, it undermined his own efforts as “a one man vocal defender of the Union,” as well as the work of other “Rabbis of congregations fighting the battle for our national bodies day by day, and year

by year." Nussbaum ominously warned that most Mississippi Jews had been "restrained until now from aggressive displays toward the Union," suggestively highlighting his congregation's "steady history of financial support."¹⁶⁰ With the Social Justice Commission of the UAHC "on the march", seemingly placing political motives before their concerns of their southern colleagues, Nussbaum found himself "committed to a position wholly unrealistic and untenable – a brinkmanship unworthy of a Jewish doctrine of responsibility toward Jews also!"¹⁶¹

Many southern rabbis also resented the brief visits of northern rabbis who came south to join protests. Northern rabbis gained praise in their own region for these actions, but were often regarded as interfering meddlers in the South. The visitors were not tied down by local responsibilities and were unaffected by the factors that constrained frontier rabbis. The security of fleeting prophetic tourism, the remoteness of congregational obligations, and the perceived Manichean moral nature of the South's problems freed the rabbis to say and do what many would not in the North. Rabbi Arnold Turetsky of the Jacksonville (FL) Jewish Center complained that the visits of crusading rabbis were counterproductive, creating "a great deal of resistance and resentment even among those [in the Jewish community] who consider themselves moderates."¹⁶² Turetsky regarded the rabbis' visits as impolite, questioning "the propriety and the courtesy of someone coming down to my community" and deprecating "hit-and-run, sporadic, staccato" morality.¹⁶³ Mantinband complained that he had "long become accustomed to visits by investigators from the North who, after a few days, become experts upon conditions in Dixie. I should not presume to venture any opinion about the sorry situation in New York City."¹⁶⁴ Nussbaum dismissed such rabbis as "carpetbaggers."¹⁶⁵ The actions of northern rabbis in the South were often embarrassing for both the southern rabbi and his community and potentially disrupted relations with the non-Jewish community and sometimes undermined low-key desegregation initiatives. Unrestrained by local responsibilities and often not in contact with their southern counterparts, the

temporary visitors often left their colleagues with bruised egos and angry congregations.¹⁶⁶ Some southern rabbis, Nussbaum included, suggested restrictions on these unsolicited visits by northern colleagues.¹⁶⁷ Anshe Chesed Congregation in Vicksburg, Mississippi, formally requested from the CCAR that “no rabbi should come to Vicksburg.”¹⁶⁸

Resentment at outside interference became particularly pronounced during the freedom rides and the Freedom Summer projects, soured with additional indignation at the perceived hypocrisy of northern Jewish activists who failed to protest inequalities closer to home.¹⁶⁹ The Jewish northerners who made up a sizeable proportion of the white freedom riders often met with private hostility from their southern co-religionists. Mantinband regarded the freedom rides as “grandstand stunts for publicity.” He bitterly complained that the “greatest experts on Mississippi are persons who have never been there or those demonstrators who are there for 48 hours and get arrested and their names in the papers.”¹⁷⁰ Jacob Rothschild similarly argued that the Freedom Riders, unlike participants in the sit-ins, were “often . . . outsiders who have come in without consulting people really involved in the situation.”¹⁷¹ Mantinband preferred a strategy that avoided confrontation, fearing that civil rights protests, particularly by outsiders, would trigger a segregationist backlash, radicalizing and polarizing the political climate, and undermining the slow and steady efforts of moderates. He had “never seen active demonstrations where a messier condition wasn’t left after the demonstrators go. I deplore such actions because it may do as much bad as good.”¹⁷² Rothschild thought that “direct non-violent action often creates violence” speculating that “perhaps some of the Riders may have hoped for violence.”¹⁷³ Negotiation was more productive than “self-defeating,” badly-timed protests.¹⁷⁴ Mass protest made for inflexibility, obviating the possibility of compromise: “one [side] becomes more extreme, forcing the other to do likewise.”¹⁷⁵ The Atlanta rabbi argued that persuasion was preferable to coercion. Solutions should be sought by bringing local moderates together, not imposed by outsiders: “whites [began] to understand and to be willing to speak, to know who the other

people were and, therefore, able to do something in the community." To his mind "there is a value . . . in working with the so-called power structure because it can change and do something."¹⁷⁶

The Freedom Summer projects signaled a change in strategy by bringing the civil rights struggle into the Deep South and challenging segregationists on their home turf. They also challenged the approach of many southern liberals, civil rights rabbis included. The new focus on confrontational tactics, press attention, and national pressure conflicted with the compromise and gradualist approach preferred by many southern liberals. The familiar modus operandi, drawing on a network of contacts and sympathizers, and necessitating a familiarity with the local political scene, was being replaced by mass action. Already distrustful of forced change and sharing misgivings about outside interference, many southern liberals were resistant to the new tactics that diminished their importance, leaving them on the sidelines as spectators to the change and rendering their long established role as interracial intermediaries largely redundant. That those involved in civil rights protests, most of whom were outsiders and scornful of the southerners' liberal credentials, were suspicious of their commitment and motives only made matters worse. The unease of southern liberals, the civil rights rabbis among them, was magnified many times over in the broader white community.

Battling Ben-Ami

While David Ben-Ami was unfortunate in that his tenure coincided with a period of volatility in Hattiesburg, his own actions in the spring and summer of 1964 did much to anger the membership of Temple B'nai Israel. Many of his congregants thought Ben-Ami far too friendly towards the northern activists and clergymen involved in the Freedom Summer project. According to one of the ministers who participated in the protests, Rabbi Ben-Ami "was the only local citizen in Hattiesburg to show any amount of friendliness" to the delegation of northern clergymen. He invited them to his house and talked with them at the courthouse.¹⁷⁷ While the congregation would have disapproved of visits by the

clergymen to the rabbi's home because of their sensitivity about associating the temple with the protestors, they must have been enraged when Ben-Ami housed rabbis participating in the registration project.¹⁷⁸ The rabbi also visited the nine clergymen arrested during the second week of the protests. Informed of his visit by the sheriff, the temple board read Ben-Ami the "riot act . . . Thou shalt not visit agitators — clerical or otherwise — who have come to disturb the equanimity of our community."¹⁷⁹ Alvin Sackler, Temple B'nai Israel's president, complained that despite meeting with Ben-Ami, "we did not make a dent on the Rabbi as to his dealing with Presbyterian ministers in regards to integration." While they could not persuade the rabbi to cease his contacts with the ministers, Ben-Ami was sympathetic to their warnings about the potential consequences for Jewish businessmen if Jews were seen to be involved in the protests.¹⁸⁰ However, the rabbi did not heed this demand. Instead he befriended Robert Beech, a northern clergyman representing the Delta Ministry of the National Council of Churches in Hattiesburg.¹⁸¹ Ben-Ami also raised funds for the Committee of Concern to rebuild black churches destroyed by white supremacists, a project actively promoted by Perry Nussbaum.¹⁸²

The relationship between Ben-Ami and his congregation rapidly disintegrated after the first public protests in January 1964. Members of the Jewish community pressured Ben-Ami to cease his association with the civil rights activists by writing letters and telephoning the rabbi to express their displeasure.¹⁸³ His initial failure to comply brought a harsher response. Sackler threatened to resign from the congregation if the rabbi was not fired: "he had lost confidence in Rabbi Ben-Ami. Cannot do anything with the Rabbi."¹⁸⁴ Other members of the congregation displayed their discontent in a blunter fashion by boycotting services and withdrawing financial support.¹⁸⁵ These events eventually persuaded Ben-Ami to reduce his controversial public presence. Unlike Ungar, Ben-Ami buckled under congregational pressure. Sufficiently dependent on his position to back away from continued activism, he chose job security over prophetic self-sacrifice.

Frowning on their rabbi's activities and probably dreading a replay of their experience with Mantinband, the congregation was provided with no respite as Hattiesburg became the largest Freedom Summer site in Mississippi. Alongside the voter registration drive, in July 1964 the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) opened freedom schools in Hattiesburg and adjoining Palmer's Crossing.¹⁸⁶ Many of the northern college students recruited to teach at the freedom schools were Jewish.¹⁸⁷ Hattiesburg's Jews were already sensitive to their image in the white community, fearful of stirring antisemitism, and critical of the civil rights struggle.¹⁸⁸ The presence of Jewish activists magnified the local Jews' preexisting hostility to the Freedom Summer project. In some of their eyes it looked too much like a "Jewish protest."¹⁸⁹ Their opposition could not have been helped by the content of some of the lessons taught at the freedom schools. Doug Baer, who had just returned from a year of study in Israel, made the similarities between the Jewish historical experience of persecution and the black struggle in America the theme of his classes, pointing to Israel's mettle as a model for the civil rights movement.¹⁹⁰ As if to prove their fears well founded, Rabbi Arthur Lelyveld, a highly visible and prominent volunteer who served the Fairmont Temple in Cleveland (OH), and a small interracial group of co-workers were assaulted in broad daylight while walking. Although the Jewish community was unsympathetic to Lelyveld, the attack unsettled Hattiesburg's Jews.¹⁹¹ It was an unpleasant reminder of the threat implicit in the antisemitic literature that had been distributed along with segregationist material in Hattiesburg during the summer.¹⁹²

Many considered Ben-Ami a less likable figure than his predecessor. His relationship with his congregation was marred as much by "personality factors" as by an incompatibility of convictions and priorities.¹⁹³ His colleagues in the Mississippi Reform rabbinate thought that he was not a competent congregational rabbi because he lacked "the qualities that would have kept him in his congregation, civil rights issue or not."¹⁹⁴ While Temple B'nai Israel may have been willing to hire anybody "who professed to be a rabbi," the community suspected that Ben-Ami fell

short of even this low bar.¹⁹⁵ One congregant recalled that his “ability and education as a rabbi (if he was one) was obviously minimal.”¹⁹⁶ He failed to perform his rabbinical duties, perhaps distracted by his part-time teaching at the University of Southern Mississippi. Sackler composed a lengthy list of “grievances against [the] Rabbi”: services did not start on time, he was under-prepared, did not teach at the Sunday School, “talks bad about the congregation out of town,” “disregards wishes of board of directors,” and failed to “set [an] example for [the] community in personal life.”¹⁹⁷ Shortcomings that might have otherwise been overlooked were fodder for a fault-finding board. Ben-Ami also seems to have lacked Mantinband’s finesse and charm, virtues that were essential in soothing and placating a raging congregation. Like Ungar, he appears to have been quick to disapprove of his congregation’s timidity. Suggesting poor judgment, he most likely distributed reprints of a sermon by a rabbi jailed at Albany, Georgia, to some members of congregation:

Let those who embrace a faith without a passion for justice at its core, without a willingness to act — sacrifice, if need be without ‘Love thy neighbor as thyself,’ and all that implies of human responsibility — let them do what they will, but let them not call that faith by the name of Judaism. For their temples are only comfortable shams, their God is opportunism, and in the place of the Torah they might well build their idols to success, conformity, respectability and ambition — for truly this is already the religion of their heart.¹⁹⁸

Ben-Ami was unhappy in Hattiesburg, and he expressed his disappointment about the congregation and community to Nussbaum shortly after his arrival.¹⁹⁹ However, he received little sympathy from his rabbinical counterpart in Jackson. Nussbaum chided Ben-Ami that he “must have been fully aware of what developed in this congregation and in the city towards the end of Mantinband’s ministry” before he accepted the Hattiesburg pulpit. Nussbaum refused to believe that the congregation had “turned against” Ben-Ami over his civil rights activities, as their “attitudes and concerns were already fixed by the time he arrived.”²⁰⁰ Ben-Ami complained that he was isolated in the small

town, receiving no support from national Jewish bodies beyond "pious statements."²⁰¹ The tense local scene troubled the rabbi: "I had to tremble when I walked in the street or when someone knocked at my door. It reminded me of Germany where I was born."²⁰²

The rabbi's despondency was rooted in frustration and disappointment. He began looking for alternative postings barely months after taking up his position in Hattiesburg, probably realizing that his already stormy tenure was likely to be short-lived.²⁰³ "Decent" pulpits were still out of his grasp. Not yet a member of the CCAR, he was offered positions in Bluefield, West Virginia, and Muskegon, Michigan.²⁰⁴ After years of sacrifice in the expectation of eventual reward, all he could look forward to were further frontier pulpits.

In October 1964, the temple's trustees unanimously agreed to terminate the rabbi's three-year contract, giving Ben-Ami the "prerogative of leaving at anytime."²⁰⁵ He was offered the inducement of three months salary if he opted to depart early.²⁰⁶ Ben-Ami reached a mutual agreement with the temple board that he would leave the following February, amicably and quietly satisfying both parties.²⁰⁷

This was not to be. He left Temple B'nai Israel in the blaze of publicity that the congregation had long sought to avoid. The controversy and resulting press attention arose out of the "Christmas in Mississippi" project, a scheme hatched by black entertainers Dick Gregory and Sammy Davis, Jr., to provide twenty thousand turkeys to the poor of Mississippi for Christmas. The Salvation Army was enlisted to distribute the turkeys, but many of its local officers refused to participate.²⁰⁸ It was left to volunteers to fulfill this function. When David Ben-Ami's name was included in a list published in the *New Orleans States-Item* of those distributing turkeys in Hattiesburg, alongside the names of the controversial Reverend Robert Beech and a black Baptist minister, members of the Jewish community were enraged. The temple held an emergency meeting the next day.²⁰⁹ The publicity was considered to be a final provocation and even Ben-Ami admitted that the "notoriety . . . added fuel to the fire." Rumors swirled that segregationists

were planning a retaliatory boycott of Jewish owned stores.²¹⁰ To further worsen matters, the timing of this final act created the impression that the incident had precipitated Ben-Ami's departure. The national Jewish press trumpeted Ben-Ami's "ousting" as a scandal, claiming that the rabbi had "lost his position with the congregation because of his advocacy of civil rights."²¹¹ Temple B'nai Israel was swamped by angry letters from across the country decrying its betrayal of Jewish values.

Relations between the rabbi and his congregation reached a nadir. Some of the congregants were so distrustful and upset that Ben-Ami "had to have the Salvation Army's National Commander . . . in New York wire the board to assure them that I was not a subversive character."²¹² The incident also soured the rabbi's relationship with his Mississippi colleagues. Nussbaum, who had shortly before reminded Hattiesburg's rabbi that "the rabbis and congregations in Mississippi would still have a lot of problems once he was gone," an implicit warning against provocative actions as his departure grew near, resented the complications created by the controversy.²¹³ Ben-Ami could not resist making a final splash. Like Ungar, who made his last public speech fiercely condemning the Group Areas after having announced his resignation to his congregation, David Ben-Ami had used this opening to take a controversial public position. To Nussbaum's mind, he had acted in a manner unrestrained by congregational responsibilities and due regard for the interests of his fellow Jews in Mississippi.

Ben-Ami's departure in February 1965 was not regretted by his congregation. Exhausted and distressed by their experience with two troublesome rabbis, Temple B'nai Israel elected not to seek a replacement. Congregants would conduct their own services in the future. The congregation did not want to "get 'stuck' again after our disappointment with Ben-Ami."²¹⁴ Before leaving Hattiesburg, Ben-Ami took a last swipe at his congregation, at the same time justifying his own actions: "The Jews' position as Jews is morally untenable, but the rabbi in the South cannot always act in the rabbinic tradition. Either we had to do what was right, or we compromised with evil."²¹⁵

The tone and sentiments expressed could easily have been André Ungar's.

Micah, Mantinband, Amos, and Ben-Ami

These sentiments reflect a trend within progressive Judaism in the 1950s and 1960s. In America, the UAHC under Maurice Eisendrath pushed the rapidly expanding Reform movement towards greater engagement with social justice issues, providing institutional backing for civil rights activities by rabbis and congregations.²¹⁶ Ben-Ami credited Eisendrath's "call to action" as an inspiration for his own activism.²¹⁷ André Ungar drew similar inspiration from Leo Baeck who urged his students to exemplify the ideals of prophetic Judaism: "the message is not the preaching of a Rabbi, but the man himself. . . . Only if he himself is a message, can he bring a message."²¹⁸ Both Ungar and Ben-Ami were influenced by this renewed effort to synthesize Judaism and human service, a movement that resonated with their own personal encounters with Nazism.²¹⁹ These same forces galvanized the social justice movement within progressive Judaism. The expansion of the Reform and Conservative movements and the accompanying institutional support for the social message of prophetic Judaism provided a platform and a niche for the turbulent priest-prophet. The postwar period offered opportunity and encouragement for idealistic rabbis to exemplify prophetic Judaism, whether by assuming pulpits in Mississippi and South Africa or, more commonly, by participating in the freedom rides and Freedom Summer projects. Ben-Ami, working as a social worker in New York, claimed to have seized the opportunity to live out what he saw as the ethical implications of his religious heritage. He "volunteered to serve on the front lines of the civil rights struggle," wanting to be on the "firing line instead of dealing only with dialog on racial strife."²²⁰ Ungar "felt keenly the duty to articulate the traditional Jewish laws on social justice," arriving in South Africa with "leaping hopes and blazing ideals," driven by a vision of a "community thriving in its fulfillment of prophetic Judaism."²²¹

Both rabbis derived inspiration from the prophetic model, understanding social justice to be central to Jewish values and to

be intimately bound up with Jewish identity.²²² Ben-Ami presented his activities in the South as that of “a ‘witness’ laboring in the prophetic tradition, and therefore not able to assume a ‘hands-off’ and neutral position in the struggle for civil rights.”²²³ Ungar, who saw himself as the heir to rabbinical reformers and prophets, articulated this commitment to “living Judaism” in a *cri de coeur* in the *Temple Israel Bulletin*. As “Justice is the highway to piety,” the rabbi’s responsibilities extend to

Human Dignity, the equality of all peoples and races, the oneness of mankind and the worth of all its members. Prophetic courage was—and is—needed to assert them amidst circumstances which let the negation of these values pass as permissible and even respectable. . . . The pulpits and written pronouncements of progressive Jewish congregations always represent focal points of the struggle for human rights, social equity, universal moral standards.

While Ungar and Ben-Ami defined Judaism in prophetic terms, entailing inescapable universal responsibilities, their congregations preferred their religion to be a socially acceptable counterpart to that of their conservative, church-going neighbors. The temple stood at the center of an orbit of religious, social, education, fundraising, and sisterhood activities, but was resistant to the pull of controversial social justice activities. The perception of vulnerability, coupled with disinterest and disinclination, persuaded South African and southern Jews to steer clear of political involvement. Ungar scorned the “hollow automatism of lip and limb movement” of a Judaism that placed appearance before substance, warning that without commitment to prophetic ideals South African Jewish “spiritual coherence will be reduced to the level of a common liking for gefilte fish.”²²⁴ Instead, it was necessary to “infuse meaning into outward observance; and spread Jewish relevance from its arbitrary ritual confinement to all levels of life.”²²⁵ Ben-Ami shared this concern, counseling that a morally unengaged Judaism was unsatisfactory.²²⁶

This clash of perceptions extended to the appropriate role of the rabbi. Above all, Temple B’nai Israel in Hattiesburg wanted its rabbi to be presentable, as much an ambassador to the gentiles as

a representative of God's preferably undemanding message.²²⁷ Although Charles Mantinband fulfilled this role, participating in an assortment of civic organizations, he was headstrong and resistant to pressure from his congregation. Ungar, and to a lesser extent Ben-Ami, were no more malleable or willing to "consecrate the status quo."²²⁸ In their eyes the rabbi's paramount obligation to fulfillment of prophetic teachings beyond his community dwarfed his congregational duties.

The divergence between the needs of congregation and rabbi points to the widening gulf between progressive Judaism, pushed by the social justice orientation into activism, and South African and southern Jewry, pulled by the countervailing tug of conservative conformity. Ben-Ami and Ungar's brief tenures also suggest the dynamics of the frontier power relationships. Both were isolated, André Ungar on a double frontier. If Port Elizabeth was an outlying settlement of Jewry in South Africa, Temple Israel was a beleaguered outpost of Reform Judaism in its midst. Although Port Elizabeth had a large Jewish community, the tensions between Reform and Orthodoxy ensured that the lone Progressive rabbi was unable to draw on the support of his Orthodox colleagues.²²⁹ Nor did he have the support of the fledgling Progressive movement, which was hostile to his political stance. David Ben-Ami could not rely on the support of the CCAR, one potential ally, because he was not a member. Elements in the rabbis' backgrounds made their positions even more precarious and problematic. Their outsider status, by virtue of their foreign origins, simultaneously sensitized them to injustice and created barriers between them and their congregations. It also activated the endemic suspicion of outsiders, impeded their acceptance into the community, and reduced their commitment and sense of attachment to their congregations. Although their temple boards attempted to dominate them, their relative youth, qualifications, and brief tenures provided the option of mobility that many of their counterparts lacked. Nonetheless, the sway that the congregation held over these two unusual rabbis is demonstrated by the liberating effect that the lifting of congregational responsibilities had on them. Ungar and Ben-Ami became vocal

and troublesome for their congregations after they agreed to depart.

The place that the two rabbis currently occupy in southern and South African Jewish consciousness also hints at the fickle nature of memory. Although David Ben-Ami's name still elicits disapproving murmurs from Hattiesburg's older Jewish residents, recently André Ungar has been retrospectively embraced by the South African Jewish community as a Jewish "struggle hero."²³⁰ Although a suspicious South African Jewish Board of Deputies continued to follow Ungar's actions and writings until the late 1980s, in post-apartheid South Africa, a "struggle" rabbi is now an asset and no longer an embarrassment.²³¹

NOTES

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¹ Although a relatively unexplored area, the benchmark of comparative studies of race relations in South Africa and the South are John Cell's, *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy: the Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South*, (New York, 1982) and George Fredrickson's, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History* (New York, 1981).

² The southern Jewish population was approximately 200,000 in the 1950s, comprising less than 0.5 percent of the total population of the region. The South African Jewish community numbered 118,200 at its peak in 1970, making up 3.2 percent of the white population and 0.1 percent of the total population. See Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism: the South African Experience (1910-1967)*, (Cape Town, 1980), 364; Alfred Hero, *the South-erner and World Affairs* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1965), 474.

³ This area is the focus of the author's ongoing research. For recent scholarship that follows this trend see, for example, Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* (Athens, GA, 2001); Claudia Braude, ed., *Contemporary Jewish Writing in South Africa* (Lincoln, NE, 2001).

⁴ Rabbi André Ungar noted that events at Little Rock in the United States were "picked up and gloated over" by South African Jews who found vicarious reassurance that others shared their racial problem: "You see, we are no worse than Jews elsewhere." Ungar's account of South African Jewish responses to apartheid was printed in *Conservative Judaism* alongside an analysis of the southern Jewish community and segregation by Rabbi William

Malev of Houston, Texas. The two articles formed a joint analysis of the “Jew and the Negro,” *Conservative Judaism*, 13 (1958). See also Adam Mendelsohn, “‘South African Jews Also Face Racial Crisis’: American Jewish Newspapers on Apartheid South Africa during the Civil Rights Era,” *Jewish Affairs* 56 (2001); Charles Mantinband, “The Horns of a Dilemma,” *Central Conference of American Rabbis Annual Convention*, 74 (1964): 249.

⁵ In the South, these new immigrants encountered an older Sephardic community.

⁶ In South Africa, some Jews adapted to the lifestyle of their rural Afrikaans neighbors by becoming commercial farmers and earning the sobriquet “boere Jode” (Boer Jews).

⁷ This rural presence has since all but disappeared.

⁸ The concept of the frontier Jewish experience is raised in Milton Shain and Sander Gilman, eds., *Jewries at the Frontier: Accommodation, Identity, Conflict* (Chicago, 1999).

⁹ Balfour Brickner to Leon Feuer, February 19, 1963, folder 4, box 19, MS 34, Central Conference of American Rabbis Papers (hereafter cited as CCAR), Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio (hereafter cited as AJA).

¹⁰ Rabbi Moses Cyrus Weiler complained of the financial strain of recruiting American trained rabbis: “All of our congregations are over-bonded and find it difficult to meet their budget because, in order to get Rabbis from America—and strictly between ourselves they are little more than mediocre—we have to pay a salary of £2,000. per annum, and even then we find it difficult to get them.” Moses Weiler to Lily Montagu, December 15, 1950, folder 10, box D8, MS 16, World Union of Progressive Judaism Papers (hereafter cited as WUPJ), AJA.

¹¹ See Bertram Jacobs to W. Blumenthal (SA Union for Progressive Judaism), October 21, 1977, folder 13, box D8; Malcolm Stern to Maurice Silverman, September 21, 1976; Malcolm Stern to Victor Brasch, August 24, 1977; Malcolm Stern to Anthony Holz, November 29, 1976, box G1; Report of the Southern African Union for Progressive Judaism (1959?), folder 10, box 8, MS 16, WUPJ.

¹² See Hollace Ava Weiner, *Jewish Stars in Texas* (College Station, TX, 1999), xiv; David Sherman quoted in the transcript of proceedings of the 14th Conference of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, July 7, 1966, folder 5, box C2, MS 16, WUPJ.

¹³ Moses Weiler to Lily Montagu, December 15, 1950, folder 10, box D8, MS 16, WUPJ; see also Jacob Rader Marcus quoted in Weiner, *Jewish Stars in Texas*, xix.

¹⁴ Balfour Brickner to Leon Feuer, February 19, 1963, folder 4, box 19, MS 34, CCAR, AJA.

¹⁵ Moses Landau of Cleveland, Mississippi, explained why he preferred to steer clear of Jewish civil rights activists: “In dealing with such a problem I have to consider these people whose rabbi I am and who will most certainly resign if any action is taken by my side to make them more ‘nervous.’ Then I would have no congregation.” Landau to Nussbaum, January 15, 1965, MS 430, box 2 folder 4, Perry Nussbaum Papers, AJA (hereafter cited as Nussbaum Papers).

¹⁶ See Marc Lee Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism* (San Francisco, 1984), 18.

¹⁷ Dave Fogel wrote to Ben-Ami that “You don’t have the right meal tickets. . . . [T]oday Hillel couldn’t get a job because he doesn’t belong to the union.” Fogel to Ben-Ami, December 23, 1964, David Ben-Ami Papers, (hereafter cited as Ben-Ami Papers) McCain Library and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi (hereafter cited as USM); *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, January 29, 1965.

¹⁸ For example, Rabbi Martin Silverman of Congregation B'nai Israel in Monroe, Louisiana, recognized that confronting his congregation on the race issue risked "all that [he] had built up" over his period of service. Silverman to Leon Feuer, September 10, 1963, folder 3, box 20, MS 34, CCAR.

¹⁹ For Nussbaum see Gary P. Zola, "What Price Amos? Perry Nussbaum's Career in Jackson, Mississippi," in Mark Bauman and Berkley Kalin, eds., *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880s-1990s* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 1997), 230-57.

²⁰ Before Jackson, Nussbaum served communities in Australia, Texas, Colorado, Kansas, Massachusetts, and New York. Perry Nussbaum to Murray Polner, February 27, 1976, folder 15, box 3, MS 88, Murray Polner Papers, AJA (hereafter cited as Polner Papers).

²¹ Nussbaum wrote, "[A]fter I had delivered what I thought was an exceptionally good sermon, the only comment of a visitor was, 'Hasn't he beautiful teeth!' Or when I thought I had been giving my Jackson congregation hell about our lack of support for civil rights, etc. my very dearest friend and family physician, a native of Georgia and until his lamentable death a year ago a very loyal Jew but a vicious racist, would shake my hand, congratulate me and say that I was wonderful—but continue to practice his racialism!" Perry Nussbaum to Murray Polner, folder 14, box 3, MS 88, Polner Papers.

²² Nussbaum reminisced, "I had always considered myself not only a liberal in theology but very much of a liberal in matters of social justice. I had not minced my words in my preaching or in positions that I took up North, but very quickly I could understand that if I were to accomplish my primary purpose, which was to do something about this congregation, that it wouldn't come as easy as in other congregations far removed from the state of Mississippi. There would be realities that would have to be faced." "Transcript of oral history memoir of Rabbi Perry Nussbaum (Recording made at Rabbi Nussbaum's study, Temple Beth Israel, Jackson, MS) Thursday morning, August 5, 1965," folder 16, box 3, MS 88, Polner Papers.

²³ Nussbaum estimated that fewer than five of the city's 150 Jewish families openly sympathized with the civil rights movement. "Third generation Jews are no different from Christians . . . We have our segregationists and integrationists. A closed society is a product of history. Not even the Prophets of Israel assumed history can be reshaped overnight." Nussbaum quoted in Murray Polner, *Rabbi: The American Experience* (New York, 1977), 79-81.

²⁴ Nussbaum surmised, "What our friends in the North do not fully appreciate is the fact that there is no difference between most of the Jews and their Christian neighbors in their attitudes towards the Negro . . . For these Jews desegregation represents not merely a school problem, but also a problem of mixing of races. The Jew, like his Christian neighbor, resents 'Northern' interference. The Southern Jew is a proud and independent man, suh!" Perry Nussbaum, "Pulpit in Mississippi Anyone?" *CCAR Journal*, 14 (June 1956): 3.

²⁵ *Jackson State Times*, October 24, 1958.

²⁶ Nussbaum to Al Vorspan, October 29, 1958, MS 430, box 2 folder 6, Nussbaum Papers; see also temple board minutes, Jackson, Mississippi, Beth Israel Congregation, SC 5585, AJA.

²⁷ Nussbaum wrote to Charles Mantinband that the "personal attack on me was spear-headed by Sidney Rosenbaum of Bbrith [*sic*]- whom I had taken to task last Spring for having a Citizens Council Program; by Chas MCCowan whose son I wouldn't confirm and shopped around in Christian churches last Fall when the Board raised his dues; by one or

two others who have been trying to become ‘machers’ but don’t have the substance to back up their pretension. The rest just went along – most regret their action – and I believe, gam zu, l’tovo, [also, this is for the good] my friends will be on the alert from now on ... I came home from the CCAR considerably depressed about stories disseminated there that an element in your congregation was out to get rid of you. . .” Perry Nussbaum to Charles Mantinband, August 22, 1958, folder 3, box 1, Charles Mantinband Papers, AJA.)

²⁸ Nussbaum to Murray Polner, February 27, 1976, folder 15, box 3, MS 88, Polner Papers.

²⁹ See Perry Nussbaum to the Rabbis of Mississippi, July 28, 1961, MS 430, box 1 folder 7, Nussbaum Papers.

³⁰ Moses Landau to Nussbaum, August 3, 1961, MS 430, folder 7, box 1, Nussbaum Papers.

³¹ Nussbaum provided a list of reasons for his wife’s “disagreeing with my integration activities:

- a. insecurity about my tenure in Jackson
- b. a native of Texas
- c. A Welfare Department worker whose caseload was primarily Black
- d. A sincere conviction that Blacks were not ready for integration
- e. That Christian clergy stayed out in the early years.
- f. By the early 1960’s she mellowed.”

Nussbaum to Polner, February 27, 1976, folder 15, box 3; notes written by Perry Nussbaum, folder 15, box 3; Nussbaum to Polner, November 22, 1976, folder 15, box 3, MS 88, Polner Papers.

³² Nussbaum to Max Nussbaum, October 23, 1968, MS 430, box 1 folder 4, Nussbaum Papers. By “*Baalhabteem*” Nussbaum probably meant “*baalebateem*”, literally, “landlords,” or “property owners.”

³³ Nussbaum to the president of the CCAR, September 19, 1968, MS 430, box 2 folder 6, Nussbaum Papers.

³⁴ Nussbaum to Malcolm Stern, June 5, 1969, MS 430, box 1 folder 4, Nussbaum Papers.

³⁵ See Nussbaum to Leon Cohen, September 2, 1970; Morris Graff to Nussbaum, March 17, 1969; Nussbaum to Graff, February 19, 1969; Nussbaum to Malcolm Stern, May 6, 1968, October 24, 1971, October 20, 1971, May 18, 1972, all MS 430, box 1 folder 4, Nussbaum Papers.

³⁶ Perry Nussbaum to Max Nussbaum, October 23, 1968, MS 430, box 1 folder 4, Nussbaum Papers.

³⁷ Nussbaum recalled later that “For years, there wasn’t a Board of Trustees meeting which didn’t provoke an argument and bad feelings because I would not let them resign from the UAHC.” Polner, *Rabbi*, 87. See also Perry Nussbaum to Stanley Chyet, February 20, 1967; Nussbaum to Charles Mantinband, April 17, 1964, MS 430, box 1 folder 4, Nussbaum Papers.

³⁸ Temple membership comprised 122 men, 118 women, and 75 children. See A. Ungar immigration papers, PIO, vol. 1583, ref. 69693E/1, South African Archives, Cape Town Depot.

³⁹ For the shifts in National Party (NP) policy towards the Jews see Milton Shain, *The Roots of Anti-Semitism in South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1994), 142–153 and Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism*, 96–136.

⁴⁰ The South African Jewish Board of Deputies serves as the community's interlocutor with the government and defends the interests of South African Jewry.

⁴¹ For the relationship of the Board of Deputies with the NP government see Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism*, 206–234.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 301–304.

⁴³ Joshua Lazerson, *Against the Tide: Whites in the Struggle Against Apartheid* (Cape Town, 1994), 90–91; Franklin Hugh Adler, "South African Jews and Apartheid," *Patterns of Prejudice*, 34 (2000): 23–36. For analysis of Jewish participation in radical, left-wing opposition see Mark Israel and Simon Adams, "'That spells trouble': Jews and the Communist Party of South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26 (2000): 145–163; James T Campbell, "Beyond the Pale: Jewish Immigration and the South African Left" and Gideon Shimoni, "Accounting for Jewish Radicals in Apartheid South Africa," both in Milton Shain and Richard Mendelsohn, eds., *Memories, Realities and Dreams: Aspects of the South African Jewish Experience* (Johannesburg, 2002).

⁴⁴ Interpretations of the South similarly emphasize a division between old time Jews and newer arrivals, with the former having a greater tendency to accept and sometimes support segregation. See Henry Lever, "The Jewish Voter in South Africa," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2 (1979): 432–433.

⁴⁵ For the political behavior of South African Jews see Harry Schwarz, "Jewish Modes of Opposition," *Jewish Affairs*, 52 (1997): 27–30; Milton Shain and Sally Frankental, "'Community with a Conscience': Myth or Reality," in G. Abramson, ed., *Modern Jewish Mythologies* (Detroit, 1999), 57–67; Gideon Shimoni, "South African Jews and the Apartheid Crisis," *American Jewish Year Book*, 8 (1988): 3–59.

⁴⁶ Unpublished letter from André Ungar to press (n.d.), box 800, Public Relations files, SAJBD.

⁴⁷ See Michael Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Oxford, 1988), 340–342.

⁴⁸ André Ungar to author, June 6, 2002.

⁴⁹ Ungar defended his engagement with South Africa's racial problems by arguing that he was "not a politician and the policies of anyone are not my business as such. But, on the other hand, I am a minister of religion and it is my duty to take what I consider a moral approach to all actions that concern the life and welfare of my people. It is not that they [the ruling party] are Nationalists that worries me. But in their policies, I consider there have been certain actions the ethical principles of which all religions, not only mine, cannot accept. I consider it the duty of all men of faith, especially ministries of religion, to fight against prejudice, oppression [and] men's inhumanity to man wherever they are. Primarily it is the problems of the society in which he lives that a religious man must grapple, but his moral responsibilities reaches [sic] beyond geographical confines." This last statement would have unwitting relevance to his later civil rights activities in the South. Quoted in *Eastern Province Herald*, December 10, 1956; see also André Ungar, "My Expulsion from South Africa," *The Reconstructionist*, March 18, 1960, 27.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Ungar, "My Expulsion from South Africa," 25.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵² *Eastern Province Herald*, July 30, 1955.

⁵³ See, for example, *Transvaaler*, November 15, 1956.

⁵⁴ Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism*, 279; see also Gus Saron to A. M. Spira, August 1, 1955, box 840, Port Elizabeth Correspondence, South African Jewish Board of Deputies Archive, Johannesburg (hereafter cited as SAJBD).

⁵⁵ J. Heilbron to André Ungar, August 12, 1955, box 800, Public Relations files, SAJBD.

⁵⁶ Ungar, "My Expulsion from South Africa," 28; André Ungar, "Rabbi in Three Worlds," *Present Tense* (July 1975): 15.

⁵⁷ Ungar, "My Expulsion from South Africa," 23; see also Port Elizabeth *Evening Post*, November 7, 1956.

⁵⁸ André Ungar, "The Abdication of a Community," *Africa South*, 3 (October-December 1958): 31.

⁵⁹ *Temple Israel Bulletin*, July 1956.

⁶⁰ See *Temple Israel Bulletin*, May, July, September, and November 1956; Memorandum from the Secretary of the Eastern Province Committee to the National Secretary, ICC 25, September 1, 1955, box 800, Public Relations files, SAJBD.

⁶¹ *Temple Israel Bulletin*, July 1956.

⁶² Roz Hirsch to author, May 9, 2002.

⁶³ André Ungar, "Silent Guests," *American Jewish Archives*, 3 (March 1957), 19.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 28-29.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 22-23.

⁶⁶ One of these companions was Govan Mbeki, father of current South African President Thabo Mbeki.

⁶⁷ Ungar, "The Abdication of a Community," 33.

⁶⁸ Ungar, "My Expulsion from South Africa," 23.

⁶⁹ *Temple Israel Bulletin*, May 1956.

⁷⁰ Ungar was awakened on the morning of the arrests by an anxious congregant who was relieved to discover that the rabbi was not among those arrested. The government later justified its decision to expel Ungar on the grounds that "Rabbi Ungar addressed political meetings denouncing the South African Government's racial policies in intemperate language, he referred to 'the shadow of the Swastika marching across the Free State' . . . he associated with organizations with Leftwing [and 'pinkish'] tendencies, and members of his own flock publicly attacked him in the press as a 'non-desirable visitor to South Africa' and described his utterances as 'irresponsible and undignified.'" Letter from Union of South Africa Department of External Affairs, State Information Office to Fritz Flesch, January 14, 1958, Fritz Flesch Papers, Detroit Public Library.

⁷¹ *Evening Post*, December 10, 1956.

⁷² Hirsch to author.

⁷³ *South African Jewish Chronicle*, December 28, 1956.

⁷⁴ Rabbi Dr Leslie Edgar shared this view of his colleague and former pupil: "Rabbi Andre Ungar is certainly a man of considerable ability. He is keenly concerned with the impact of Judaism on the social problems of our time, especially the racial problem, and expresses his views most forthrightly . . . Personally I think he tends to state his views in rather extreme ways." Edgar to Jacob Marcus, November 13, 1958, folder 13, box 18, MS 34, CCAR; *South African Jewish Times*, December 14, 1956.

⁷⁵ Memorandum from J. M. Rich to National Executive Committee, December 14, 1956, Public Relations files, box 509, SAJBD.

⁷⁶ *Evening Post*, December 14, 1956.

⁷⁷ See Anonymous, "Points of View," *Jewish Affairs*, (January 1959): 21–22.

⁷⁸ The treason trial of the 156 activists, fourteen of whom were Jewish, dragged on until March 1961. All were acquitted, although most were later re-arrested. See David Saks, "The Jewish Accused at the South African Treason Trial," *Jewish Affairs*, Autumn 1997.

⁷⁹ The South African Jewish Board of Deputies disavowed Ungar's claim. See letter by Ungar, *Evening Post*, December 17, 1956; also December 10, 1956, December 14, 1956.

⁸⁰ Ungar, "'As the Children of Ethiopians . . ." (An Essay on Jews and Judaism in South Africa)," *Conservative Judaism*, 13(1958): 1.

⁸¹ Ungar, "Silent Guests," 10.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 14.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Ungar continued, "The mechanics of racial mentality work in such a way as to endanger anyone who does not belong to the innermost core of the herrenvolk. . . it is purely a matter of time before the edge of discrimination is turned against sections which at the moment are tolerated." Ungar, "Silent Guests," 19; Ungar, "The Abdication of a Community," 35. See also John Higham, *Send These to Me: Immigrants in Urban America* (Baltimore, 1984), 154–155; Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice* (New York, 1997); Seth Forman, *Blacks in the Jewish Mind* (New York, 1998).

⁸⁵ Driven by bitter memories of his Port Elizabeth experience, Ungar later wrote that South African Jews were guilty of "deliberately throwing away—the living heart of the essence of Judaism." "In vain would one say that Jewish historical experience and Jewish religious concepts make it impossible for the Jew to subscribe to racial oppression. Some accept it *de facto*, many also *de jure*. The Jew in South Africa is wholly and beyond redemption part of White South Africa, sharing its privileges, interests and prejudices." South African Jews were an example of the moral "abdication of a community," guilty of "full connivance" with the Government and "betrayal" of their "theological and ethical heritage." Ungar, "'As the Children of Ethiopians . . .,'" 16; *idem*, "What's Ahead for the Jews of South Africa?" *American Judaism*, 11 (Winter 1961): 18–19. See also Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, xiv–xvi.

⁸⁶ A Jewish letter writer praised Ungar for being "prepared to castigate his own people, if necessary, to try and awaken them from their long sleep, and stimulate them, not only to read the holy word of God but to apply the principles of the words in their lives." He was "proud" of Ungar's "great spiritual work for the freedom of mankind." Non-Jews weighed in, denouncing the community's silence. One acknowledged that the Jewish community was "more vulnerable" than other whites, but maintained that "of all people [they] have good historical reason to know how little is to be gained from bowing down in the house of Rimmon. With the exception of Rabbi Ungar, however, the Jewish churches . . . have been conspicuously silent. . . . Morally speaking this is inexcusable." *Evening Post*, December 21, 1956, December 24, 1956; *Eastern Province Herald*, December 19, 1956; see also *Eastern Province Herald*, December 22, 1956.

⁸⁷ In September 1956 the *Jewish Review* noted with "great satisfaction" the "attitude of the South African government to our Jewish community," praising the Government for showing "great understanding of Jewish problems" and "deserving our gratitude." *Jewish Review*, December 1956.

⁸⁸ Reverend Michael Scott was a leading proponent of the use of passive resistance in opposition to apartheid. *Evening Post*, December 18, 1956.

⁸⁹ Ungar, "My Expulsion from South Africa," 27.

⁹⁰ Another letter writer rebuked Ungar for his presumption in moralizing on South Africa's problems: "A two-year's residence barely suffices to get more than an elementary knowledge of the vast problems confronting South Africa, and basically the gentleman's criticism was not leveled against this government only, but against at least 75 percent of South Africa's population, including his own congregation. Whether we call it Apartheid or segregation, the vast majority of Europeans feel the same. So why oppose Group Areas, which is the only logical consequence of this attitude." *Evening Post*, December 11, 1956.

⁹¹ Prinz was president of the American Jewish Congress.

⁹² While the tone of Ungar's writing about his South African experience in the years immediately following his departure suggested a residual bitterness and anger at South African Jewry, a recent conversation suggests a mellowing of his attitudes. Author's conversation with Ungar, March 4, 2001.

⁹³ Ungar maintained his interest in and commitment to South Africa after his departure. See for example *London Jewish Chronicle*, November 29, 1957; *Jewish Currents*, 20 (April 1966); *Johannesburg Star*, November 4, 1968.

⁹⁴ For Mantinband see Clive Webb, "Big Struggle in a Small Town: Charles Mantinband in Hattiesburg, Mississippi" in Bauman and Kalin, eds., *Quiet Voices*, 213-229.

⁹⁵ Matinband quoted in Allen Krause, "The Southern Rabbi and Civil Rights," (Rabbinical thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1967), 161.

⁹⁶ See *American Jewish Year Book* (New York, 1957), 78.

⁹⁷ A friend enumerated his virtues: "Friendly, courteous, public spirited, his is the common touch. He is never too busy to hear the woes and share the burden of the man in the street." Notes on "Most Unforgettable Character," (n.d.), box 2, Mantinband Papers, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans (hereafter cited as Mantinband Papers, Amistad). See also Anna Mantinband, "Time for Remembering," unpublished memoir, 57-62, AJA.

⁹⁸ The temple president felt "able to laugh off the Rabbi's well known pro-integration opinions in conversation with Gentile friends by saying: 'a man like that is entitled to be a little crazy.'" Rosenthal, "Mezuzahs and Magnolias," 11.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 12.

¹⁰⁰ Mantinband, "Time for Remembering," 62; see also *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, June 22, 1962.

¹⁰¹ They argued that firing Mantinband would produce more adverse publicity, potentially persuading the CCAR to obstruct attempts to hire a replacement rabbi. Mantinband himself thought that the national publicity that the spat generated had cowed the congregation. Rosenthal, "Mezuzahs and Magnolias," 14-15; Mantinband, "Rabbi in the Deep South," *ADL Bulletin* (May 1962): 4.

¹⁰² See Charles Mantinband, "The Board Prefers the Rabbi Remain Silent," *CCAR Journal*, 14 (June 1956): 3-5; Polner, *Rabbi*, 89. For segregationist legislative measures adopted by Mississippi and efforts to coerce conformity see Numan Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1997), 66-67, 211.

¹⁰³ Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 199.

¹⁰⁴ Much of the antisemitic literature was imported from the North. Few southern groups had the resources to produce and print it, opting instead to draw on the materials of professional hate groups. These northern and California-based professionals

tailored their literature for the southern market, hoping to win converts in the South and to opportunistically introduce an antisemitic component into the segregationist platform. See Arnold Forster, "The South: New Field for an Old Game," *ADL Bulletin*, 15 (1958).

¹⁰⁵ Charles Mantinband, "From the Diary of a Mississippi Rabbi," *American Judaism* (Winter 1962-1963): 8.

¹⁰⁶ *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, March 1, 1963.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*; see also Mantinband to Bruce Aultman, May 9, 1962, box 2, Mantinband Papers, Amistad.

¹⁰⁸ Rosenthal, "Mezuzahs and Magnolias," 15.

¹⁰⁹ "To many throughout the country, Rabbi Mantinband has become something of a legend or symbol. He is much in demand as a speaker and consultant, in all parts of the country. For every invitation he accepts, he declines many." Among others, Mantinband was awarded the first George Brussel Memorial Award by the Stephen S. Wise Synagogue (New York) and the honorary degree of doctor of humane letters from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania.

¹¹⁰ Maury Gurwitch, former president and trustee of Temple B'nai Israel, to author, May 24, 2002.

¹¹¹ *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, March 1, 1963; Rosenthal, "Mezuzahs and Magnolias," 14-15.

¹¹² Quoted in Krause, "Southern Rabbi and Civil Rights," 162.

¹¹³ The Mantinband Megillah, 1964, M 327, folder 6, box 2, Mantinband Papers, USM.

¹¹⁴ Mantinband quoted in Krause, "Southern Rabbi and Civil Rights," 163; The Mantinband Megillah, December 1962, M 327, folder 6, box 2, Mantinband Papers, USM.

¹¹⁵ Nussbaum to Mantinband, April 17, 1964, MS 430, folder 6, box 2, Nussbaum Papers.

¹¹⁶ Sermon by Rabbi Leo Bergman, Touro Synagogue, New Orleans, January 15, 1965, David Ben-Ami Correspondence file, AJA (hereafter cited as Ben-Ami Correspondence, AJA).

¹¹⁷ Embattled Ole Miss historian James Silver wrote, "It seems to me that it is possible that you have been 'driven' from Mississippi whether or not you will say it that way. In this 'closed society' we do *drive* people out even though sometimes done gently. Or is it gently? I say these things in the realization and I might say expectation of being driven out myself within the next year." Silver to Mantinband, March 4, 1963, writings folder, box 2, Mantinband Papers, Amistad. See also interview notes, folder 12, box 3, MS 88, Polner Papers.

¹¹⁸ Bergman sermon, Ben-Ami Correspondence, AJA.

¹¹⁹ Board of Trustees minutes, December 3, 1962, Temple B'nai Israel Records, AM 98-59, USM, (hereafter cited as B'nai Israel Records, USM).

¹²⁰ Mantinband realized that his community was acutely sensitive, warning Paul Kresh, the editor of *American Judaism*, "that this [article] is something all my members are bound to read. On the whole, they have been patient and cooperative." Mantinband to Kresh, October 26, 1962, Writings folder, box 2, Mantinband Papers, Amistad; *idem*, "From the Diary of a Mississippi Rabbi," 48-51; see also *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, March 1, 1963.

¹²¹ David Ben-Ami's experiences in Hattiesburg are discussed in Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 172, 199-202.

¹²² Board of Trustees minutes, March 22, 1963, Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Congregation B'nai Israel, March 25, 1963; Board of Trustees minutes, July 8, 1963, all B'nai Israel Records, USM

¹²³ Harry Alpert to Ben-Ami, December 24, 1964, Ben-Ami Papers, USM.

¹²⁴ The Academy for Higher Jewish learning was established in 1956 to provide an alternative to the major seminaries that followed movement-based and denomination specific approaches to religious practice. The seminary primarily attracted students, like Ben-Ami, who came to the rabbinate as a second career.

¹²⁵ Board of Trustees minutes, April 12, 1963, B'nai Israel Records, USM; Perry Nussbaum to Malcolm Stern, October 24, 1971, MS 430, folder 4, box 1, Nussbaum Papers.

¹²⁶ *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, January 29, 1965.

¹²⁷ See Pearl Crystal to David and Evelyn Ben-Ami, December 19, 1964, Ben-Ami Papers, USM.

¹²⁸ The "CCAR does not recognize the smicha of individual rabbis because the CCAR constitution requires that a candidate for admission be ordained by a recognized theological school." The requirements for admission to the CCAR were "A Bachelor of Arts degree; a knowledge of Bible, Rabbinics, Jewish religious thought, Jewish history, Jewish literature, Jewish education, and homiletics; a degree from a recognized Hebrew rabbinic authority or from a recognized yeshiva; the candidate must have served a minimum period of five years in a Reform congregation; the candidate must be recommended by members of the CCAR who know him well; the candidate must be personally interviewed by all members of the Admissions Committee." Jacob Marcus to Charles Shoulson, January 29, 1961, folder 18, box 18; Marcus to Louis Schechter, May 16, 1960, folder 14, box 18, MS 34, CCAR.

¹²⁹ Ben-Ami to Phillip Bernstein, March 3, 1964, SC 836, AJA.

¹³⁰ See Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 369–370.

¹³¹ Ben-Ami began his service in Hattiesburg in August 1963.

¹³² The National Council of Churches was involved in the training of many of those involved in the Freedom Summer project.

¹³³ Friends wrote to Mantinband, "We are finally getting our share of excitement— for ten days or so we have had pickets walking around the courthouse— with twice as many helmeted police or deputies walking around them. Two rabbis were here with all the ministers—but they left before arrests started— thank goodness! The Jewish community is in a state and it is very hard on Rabbi Ben-Ami." Charles Mantinband was eager for details of the goings on in Hattiesburg: "Who were the visiting rabbis (in the march)? Did they have any contact with Hattiesburg Jewry? Why did they go home so quickly? What is the status now? Suppose you cut out some photographs and news items from your local press, and without comment if you prefer, send them to me." May and Jimmy to Charles Mantinband, February 4, 1964; Mantinband to May and Jimmy, February 6, 1964; Mantinband to Judea Miller, April 6, 1964, Writings folder, box 2, Mantinband Papers, Amistad.

¹³⁴ See Fred Powledge, *Free At Last? The Civil Rights Movement and the People Who made It* (New York, 1992), 471–473; for the account of another rabbi involved in the Hattiesburg protests see A. James Rudin, "Harvest of Hate," enclosure with letter to the CCAR, February 2, 1967, Correspondence File on Social Justice Activities of Various Rabbis 1965–1967, AJA.

¹³⁵ Marvin Reuben quoted in Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 82.

¹³⁶ Gurwitch to author, May 24, 2002.

¹³⁷ Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 199–200.

¹³⁸ Perhaps unwilling to join the service at Temple B'nai Israel or expecting to be made to feel unwelcome, a group of Jewish participants in the Freedom Summer project later arranged their own service in a church. See Paul, "From Hattiesburg, Mississippi," 35.

¹³⁹ Maury Gurwitsch recalled that "We tried to let these rabbis know that they were hurting their fellow Jews, were not welcome, and requested they leave our city." Gurwitsch to author, May 24, 2002.

¹⁴⁰ Rabbi Jerome Lipnick, "From Where I Stand," (n.d.), Ben-Ami Correspondence, AJA.

¹⁴¹ Rabbis from the Rabbinical Assembly also joined protests in St. Petersburg in 1964, and Selma in 1965. See Charles Silberman, "A Jewish View on the Racial Crisis," *Conservative Judaism*, 19 (Summer 1965): 6–7.

¹⁴² See Ungar, "To Birmingham, and Back," *Conservative Judaism*, 18 (1963): 1–2. See also Jonathan Bass, *Blessed Are the Peacemakers: Martin Luther King, Jr., Eight White Religious Leaders, and the "Letter from Birmingham Jail"* (Baton Rouge, LA, 2002); Terry Barr, "Rabbi Grafman and Birmingham's Civil Rights Era" in Bauman and Kalin, eds., *Quiet Voices*, 168–189.

¹⁴³ For accounts by other rabbis in the delegation, see Arie Becker, SC 2852, and Jacob Bloom, SC 2853, AJA.

¹⁴⁴ One of the participants recalled, "The objective of the leadership was to dissuade us from any public action, or failing that, to secure our agreement to consult with them before taking action which might endanger them. . . . Having come, we ought to return as fast as possible." The Jewish Community Council also persuaded the local newspapers not to give coverage to the rabbis' visit. In a letter to the National Community Relations Advisory Council (NCRAC), Harold Katz, the head of the Birmingham Jewish Community Council, wrote that it "was the opinion of the Council that serious anti-Semitism would result from a community conclusion that Jews are leading the local integration fight and the publicity about the Rabbis' pilgrimage might have had serious consequences." While the fear was genuine, NCRAC is unlikely to have been sympathetic to any other explanation for the Council's actions. See R. Rubenstein, "The Rabbis visit Birmingham," *Reconstructionist*, May 31, 1963: 7; Ungar, "To Birmingham, and Back," 3–4; Harold Katz, Memorandum on Racial Problems Affecting the Birmingham Jewish Community to National Community Relations Advisory Council, July 3, 1963, Mark Elovitz Research Material on Birmingham Jewish History, file 781.5.7.2.18, Birmingham Public Library, Alabama.

¹⁴⁵ Ungar, "To Birmingham, and Back," 10–11.

¹⁴⁶ Indicative of the contrary perspectives of northern Jews, Murray Friedman, a representative of the ADL in the South, described the delegation as "Nineteen Messiahs." Friedman, *What Went Wrong? The Creation and Collapse of the Black-Jewish Alliance* (New York, 1995); see also Rubenstein, "The Rabbis Visit Birmingham," 6; Ungar, "To Birmingham, and Back," 10–11; Harold Katz, Memorandum on Racial Problems Affecting the Birmingham Jewish Community.

¹⁴⁷ Mantinband to Nussbaum, June 2, 1963, folder 3, box 1, MS 563, AJA.

¹⁴⁸ Ungar, "To Birmingham, and Back," 17.

¹⁴⁹ See, for example, J. Gumbiner, "A Rabbi takes his Stand in Dixie," *Reconstructionist*, January 12, 1962: 11.

¹⁵⁰ David Chappell argues that this generalized segregationist focus on and blame of “outside agitators,” rooted in a failure to appreciate southern black pressure for desegregation, was central to the success of the civil rights movement. Chappell, “The Divided Mind of Southern Segregationists,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 82 (1998), 50.

¹⁵¹ Address by David Danzig at AJC Southwest Regional Congress, Houston, Texas, March 22, 1959, Southern States file, Blaustein Library, American Jewish Committee, New York; see also Alfred Hero, *The Southerner and World Affairs*, 479–480; Cheryl Greenberg, “The Southern Jewish Community and the Struggle for Civil Rights” in James V. Franklin, ed., *African Americans and Jews in the Twentieth Century: Studies in Convergence and Conflict* (Columbia, MO, 1998), 143–163.

¹⁵² Mantinband also complained that the northern Jewish press “blew things up and complicated things for us.” Quoted in Polner, *Rabbi*, 89.

¹⁵³ Anonymous, *A Jewish View on Desegregation* (Greenville, MS, n.d.), 12; Clive Webb, “Charles Bloch, Jewish White Supremacist,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 83 (1999): 278–279.

¹⁵⁴ Nussbaum complained that “some of us down here have been on the receiving end of some unnecessary condescension from our Northern colleagues—it is not only the headline maker in Dixie who is devoting his energies to making an improvement of this unholy mess.” In responding to an article in *Midstream* chastising southern Jews as “Mississippi Maranos,” Nussbaum moaned that the rabbis’ problem is to “cope with all the experts on Judaism and the Jewish Problem with special reference to Social Justice. Do you understand what went on in this capital of the Deep South, you in the North who from the security of your own *kehillahs* were quick to advise and consent about our leadership? . . . The colleague and the expert, so blandly reassuring in his prophecy as set down in social justice writ, has still to learn some hard facts of life about rabbis and small congregations. Or else hold his tongue in check. . . . Tell me, colleagues, how did Isaac feel when that knife was poised above his head?” Nussbaum, “Pulpit in Mississippi Anyone?” *CCAR Journal*, 14 (June 1956), 3; idem, “And Then There was One—In the Capital City of Mississippi,” *CCAR Journal* (July 1963), 17–19.

¹⁵⁵ David White, publisher of the *Houston Jewish Herald-Voice* and advocate of gradualism, pithily articulated this annoyance: “why hinder us with these outside pronouncements?” Quoted in *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, November 21, 1958.

¹⁵⁶ Quoted in *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, February 14, 1958.

¹⁵⁷ “It is a hard and aching row we hoe and every bit of human understanding, every drop of human kindness is needed in these days.” *Ibid.*, November 23, 1958.

¹⁵⁸ See Nussbaum to Solomon Kaplan, October 28, 1963, folder 6, box 1, Nussbaum Papers.

¹⁵⁹ Moses Landau to Maurice Eisendrath, November 1, 1963, folder 14, box 19, MS 34, CCAR.

¹⁶⁰ Perry Nussbaum to Solomon Kaplan, October 28, 1963, folder 4, box 1, Nussbaum Papers.

¹⁶¹ Some southern Jews opposed the creation of the Commission on Social Justice. See *Ibid.*; Robert Blinder to Leon Feuer, October 23, 1963, folder 4, box 19, CCAR.

¹⁶² “I don’t think that generally the Jewish community has risen in the Negroes’ eyes or command any more respect than it did (before the rabbis came).” “American Rabbis Split on Civil Rights Issue,” *London Jewish Chronicle*, August 28, 1964.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Charles Mantinband, "The Horns of a Dilemma," *Central Conference of American Rabbinical Annual Convention*, 74 (1964), 249.

¹⁶⁵ See Zola, "What Price Amos?" 247-252; folder 7, box 2; Nussbaum to Moses Landau, January 7, 1965, folder 6, box 2, MS 430, Nussbaum Papers.

¹⁶⁶ Rabbi Joseph Friedman complained to Nussbaum, "If it were not so tragic it would be positively funny, when one realizes the extent to which some of our colleagues are going to sacrifice us, not themselves, in the struggle. Like the English fighting to the last Frenchman, so they are quite willing to fight to the last Southern Rabbi." Friedman to Nussbaum, November 8, 1963, box 1, folder 6, Nussbaum Papers.

¹⁶⁷ See Nussbaum to the Steering Committee on Resolutions, CCAR, April 26, 1965; Moses Landau to Nussbaum, August 6, 1964, box 2 folder 6, MS 430, Nussbaum Papers.

¹⁶⁸ Victor Jacobs to Samuel Soskin, July 24, 1964, folder 7, box 21, MS 34, CCAR. See also Greenberg, "Southern Jewish Community," 143-163.

¹⁶⁹ Allen Krause encountered this in some of his interviews. One respondent commented indignantly to Krause's questions, "Why pick on the South? Since when does the South have a monopoly on racism?" Krause, "Southern Rabbi and Civil Rights," 1. See also "Jewish Freedom Fighters and the Role of the Jewish Community: An Evaluation," *Jewish Currents* (July-August 1965), 5, 11-12.

¹⁷⁰ "Rabbi from Mississippi calls freedom rides publicity stunts" (undated newspaper article), scrapbook, Mantinband Papers, AJA.

¹⁷¹ "The first Freedom Ride was a dramatization of the conditions and served its purpose. But to have almost 150 people in jail does not accomplish permanent results." Minutes of Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism, June 1, 1961, folder 19, box 18, MS 34, CCAR.

¹⁷² *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, August 2, 1963.

¹⁷³ Rothschild's position was contentious within the Commission on Social Action itself. See Minutes of Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism, June 1, 1961, folder 19, box 18, MS 34, CCAR.

¹⁷⁴ Mantinband thought that "Non-violent demonstrations in the long run are a contradiction in terms, and serve little purpose except to focus attention on the issue." Mantinband to Francis Harmon, February 24, 1965, Mantinband Papers, Amistad; Mantinband, "Horns of a Dilemma," 245.

¹⁷⁵ Commission on Social Action minutes, November 22-23, 1964, folder 3, box 53, MS 72, AJA.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ See Rabbi Elbert Sapinsley to Rabbi Malcolm Stern, February 3, 1965, Ben-Ami Correspondence, AJA; see also Dave Fogel to Ben-Ami, December 25, 1964 and Anne Badon to Ben-Ami, October 15, 1964, both in Ben-Ami Papers, USM.

¹⁷⁸ See Krause, "The Southern Rabbi and Civil Rights," 307; Sapinsley to Stern, February 3, 1965, Ben-Ami Correspondence, AJA.

¹⁷⁹ Morris Margolies, a Kansas City rabbi who joined Ungar and Lipnick in Hattiesburg, quoted in the *Jewish Monitor*, 16 July 1964, 57.

¹⁸⁰ Board of Trustees minutes (n.d.), B'nai Israel Records, USM.

¹⁸¹ The National Council of Churches provided training to those involved in the Freedom Summer projects. See Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 200; *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, January 1, 1965.

¹⁸² Robert Stone to Ben-Ami, January 5, 1965, Ben-Ami Correspondence, AJA.

¹⁸³ *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, January 1, 1965.

¹⁸⁴ Minutes of a Special Congregational Meeting, April 24, 1964, B'nai Israel Records, USM.

¹⁸⁵ Bergman sermon; Sapinsley to Stern, February 3, 1965, Ben-Ami Correspondence, AJA. See also *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, January 1, 1965.

¹⁸⁶ Although the recruitment and coordination of the Freedom Summer was largely performed by COFO (Council of Federated Organizations), SNCC was given responsibility for Hattiesburg.

¹⁸⁷ As many as two-thirds of the white volunteers for the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer project were Jewish. See Debra L. Schultz, *Going South: Jewish Women in the Civil Rights Movement* (New York, 2001), 18.

¹⁸⁸ Webb, "Big Struggle in a Small Town," 222; *Washington Post*, December 25, 1964.

¹⁸⁹ Gurwitsch quoted in Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 82.

¹⁹⁰ D. Segal, "Jewish Young Folksinger in Mississippi," *Jewish Currents* (March 1965), 10.

¹⁹¹ A delegation of Hattiesburg Jews visited Lelyveld in the hospital and "firmly suggested he leave our city as soon as he was able, and to go handle problems in Chicago [sic] where he lived." Lelyveld reported to Mantinband, "Only one Jew has showed any interest in me . . . I contacted Dr. Reikes but aside from x-raying my skull in the line of duty he was a total loss." Arthur Lelyveld to Mantinband (n.d.), writings folder, box 2, Mantinband Papers, Amistad; Gurwitsch to author, 24 May, 2002; see also Arthur Lelyveld Affidavit to the FBI, SC 6786, AJA. Lelyveld, who passed away in 2003, was national director of B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations (1947-1956) and later presided over the American Jewish Congress (1966) and the Synagogue Council of America (1979). For his activities in Mississippi, the NAACP awarded him its Distinguished Service Award.

¹⁹² See Irene Paul, "From Hattiesburg, Mississippi," *Jewish Currents*, September 1964, 35; "My Grandfather's Ghost in Hattiesburg," *Jewish Currents* (January 1966).

¹⁹³ The UAHC investigated the causes of Ben-Ami's departure. Rabbi Richard Hirsch of the Religious Action Center of the UAHC concluded that, after "We went into great detail and upon a considerable amount of investigation, [we] learned it was not only the . . . issue of principle but there were personality factors which were involved. . . ." Quoted in Krause, "Southern Rabbi and Civil Rights," 307.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ Lou Ginsburg to author, June 5, 2002; Betty Reuben to author, June 6, 2002; Gurwitsch to author, May 24, 2002.

¹⁹⁷ Minutes of trustees meetings, April 24, 1964, October 28, 1964, B'nai Israel Records, USM.

¹⁹⁸ Ben-Ami bought twenty-five copies of the sermon, presumably distributing it to members of his congregation. See "Jewish Freedom Fighters and the Role of the Jewish Community: An Evaluation," *Jewish Currents* (July-August 1965), 18, 22-23.

¹⁹⁹ Nussbaum to Rabbi Randall Falk, January 28, 1965, folder 6, box 1, Nussbaum Papers.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, February 5, 1965.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, January 1, 1965.

²⁰³ Nussbaum to Falk, January 28, 1965, folder 6, box 1, Nussbaum Papers.

²⁰⁴ Stern to Ben-Ami, September 18, 1964, folder 7, box 21, MS 34, CCAR.

²⁰⁵ Minutes of Trustees meeting, October 28, 1964, B'nai Israel Records, USM.

²⁰⁶ Nussbaum to Falk, January 28, 1965, folder 6, box 1, Nussbaum Papers.

²⁰⁷ Minutes of Congregation Meeting, November 2, 1964, B'nai Israel Records, USM; *Southern Israelite*, December 25, 1964.

²⁰⁸ A number of prominent Hattiesburg Jews sat on the local Salvation Army board. See Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 266, n. 93; telegram from Leonard Bowers to Ben-Ami, December 11, 1964; Alfred Osborne to Ben-Ami, December 11, 1964; W. G. Sims to Drew Pearson, December 25, 1964, all in the Ben-Ami Papers, USM.

²⁰⁹ *New Orleans States-Item*, December 26, 1964, December 23, 1964.

²¹⁰ *Southern Israelite*, December 25, 1964.

²¹¹ *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, January 1, 1965; Krause, "Southern Rabbi and Civil Rights," 306.

²¹² *Southern Israelite*, December 25, 1964.

²¹³ Nussbaum had encountered this problem before. In October 1963 he complained to Solomon Kaplan, the director of the southwest region of the UAHC, that the increasingly uncooperative and obstructive Rabbi Allan Schwartzman of Greenville "is leaving Mississippi, and in the leaving doesn't care what he is bequeathing to us." Nussbaum to Kaplan, October 28, 1963, folder 6, box 1, Nussbaum Papers.

²¹⁴ The congregation later struggled to hire another rabbi. According to Nussbaum, Temple B'nai Israel "tried repeatedly for years and offered exorbitant salaries (for Mississippi), but Rabbis were reluctant to sink themselves away in that small town." Nussbaum to Murray Polner, November 20, 1975, folder 15, box 3, MS 88, Polner Papers; Gurwitsch to author, May 24, 2002.

²¹⁵ *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, January 1, 1965.

²¹⁶ Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, 364–366.

²¹⁷ *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, January 29, 1965.

²¹⁸ Mantinband drew similar inspiration from his teacher Stephen S. Wise: "Charles, the best sermon you can preach, can be managed without opening your mouth. It is by the life you lead, the influence you exert, the example you set." Mantinband to Editor, *Jewish Post*, November 13, 1958; Notes on "Most Unforgettable Character," box 2, Mantinband Papers, Amistad.

²¹⁹ To Ungar, South Africa offered obvious and vivid parallels with recent Jewish history: "anti-Semitism and apartheid were palpably kissing cousins as forms of racial hatred." Ungar to author, June 6, 2002.

²²⁰ *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, January 29, 1965; *Chicago Sun-Times*, December 17, 1964

²²¹ Ungar, "Rabbi in Three Worlds," *Present Tense*, July 1975: 15; Ungar, "Apartheid—One Generation Later," *Jewish Spectator* (Winter 1986).

²²² Ungar maintained, "Relevance is the keynote to true Judaism. . . . (It) is the duty of every generation of Jews to come to grips with the most vital problems of their own age and land, applying the eternal principles of Jewish ethics to the concrete situation around them." Transcript of a public meeting on "Progressive Judaism and Problems of Today," 10th International Conference of the World Union of Progressive Judaism, July 8, 1957, folder 14, box c1, MS 16, WUPJ.

²²³ *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, January 29, 1965.

²²⁴ Unpublished letter from Ungar to press (n.d.), box 800, Public Relations files, SAJBD.

²²⁵ *Temple Israel Bulletin*, May 1956.

²²⁶ *National Jewish Post and Opinion*, January 29, 1965.

²²⁷ See Board of Trustees minutes January 15, 1964, B'nai Israel Records, USM; Malcolm Stern, "The Role of the Rabbi in the South" in Nathan Kaganoff and Melvin Urofsky, eds., *Turn to the South: Essays on Southern Jewry* (Charlottesville, VA 1979), 27.

²²⁸ Ungar, "Rabbi in Three Worlds," 15.

²²⁹ See David Sherman, "Reform Judaism in South Africa: Its Origins, Growth and Principles," *Jewish Affairs* (Autumn 1993): 27–31.

²³⁰ See Milton Shain et al, *Looking Back in Anger: Jews in the Struggles for Democracy and Human Rights in South Africa* (Cape Town, 2001), 83, as well as the exhibition of the same name.

²³¹ See, for example *Jewish Affairs*, January 1959; Gus Saron to Paul Kresh, April 3, 1962, Overseas Reactions, box 394; Memorandum from Gus Saron to Executive Council, "Crusader Against South African Jewry," March 6, 1974; Saron to S. Abramowitch, February 7, 1968; also Biography file: 199 Ungar, all SAJBD.