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## In God We Trust: Salaries and Income of American Orthodox Rabbis, 1881-1924<sup>1</sup>

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In a letter dated July 16, 1920, to M. B. Friedman, one of the leaders of Cleveland's Jewish community, Cyrus Adler wrote:

The scarcity of rabbis is part of the general scarcity of teachers and professors. Men have drifted away from these professions because they feared they would not have the chance to live in them. The tenure of the rabbi is also very uncertain. Of course, you in Cleveland have large congregations who pay good salaries . . . but when it comes to the smaller towns where men are offered \$1800 or \$2000 a year, are asked to preach in English and Yiddish, to superintend and teach a school and in some cases to even act as hazzan, you can readily see that the men get discouraged.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Some data in this article are drawn from my "Is This Not an Upside Down World?: The Lives, Sermons, and Continuity and Change in the Sermons of American Orthodox Rabbis Who Immigrated from Eastern Europe to America During the Mass Immigration Period (1881-1924)" Ph.D. thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1996; however, it includes many additional sources. I wish to thank the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, the Dov Sadan Foundation, the American Jewish Archives, and the Institute for Jewish Studies of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for their generous financial aid which enabled me to pursue this research. A 1996-97 Harry Starr postdoctoral fellowship at the Center for Jewish Studies of Harvard University and a 1997-98 Kreitman postdoctoral fellowship at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev allowed me to continue the research and write this article. Several archives granted me permission to cite from their rich collections, for which I am grateful: the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati (AJA); the American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham (AJHS); the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York (JTS); the National and University Library Archives, Jerusalem; and Yeshiva University Archives, New York (YU). I wish to thank my thesis advisor, Professor Joseph Dan, as well as Professors Benny Kraut, Jonathan D. Sarna and Shaul Stampfer for their challenging comments and criticism on earlier versions of this article. Professors Mark Chaves, E. Brooks Holifield, William R. Hutchison, Alan Mittleman, Nathan Sussman, and Mr. Joshua Levisohn assisted me in my search for scholarly works on this topic in religious history and suggested several important ideas to consider, and Dr. Mordechai Zalkin referred me to several primary sources—to all I am most grateful. Finally, my wife's help and support were critical. Several themes in this essay were presented at the Seminar on Economic History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, April 14, 1996. The comments I received from all the participants in this seminar were invaluable, for which I owe my deepest gratitude.

2. Ira Robinson, ed., *Cyrus Adler: Selected Letters* (New York and Philadelphia, 1985), 2:14.

Adler's letter, written toward the end of the mass immigration era, suggests that low salaries paid to rabbis, especially in smaller towns, drove men away from the profession. Do Adler's figures reflect rabbis' salaries during the mass immigration era, and did they discourage men from pursuing rabbinical careers? What was the social status, role, and function of the American Orthodox rabbinate in its formative period, the decades before and after the turn of the century?

Numerous scholarly works have been written about the history of the rabbinate in general and several others have uncovered important issues specifically relating to the American rabbinate.<sup>3</sup> However, the economic aspects of the rabbinate have not received much attention, aside from occasional notes on rabbis' contracts and salaries.<sup>4</sup> Even though salaries and income are important tools in any effort to analyze the clergy as a profession and its social status, little has been made of this aspect in American religious history in general and American Jewish history in

3. It would be impossible to cite the endless works on the rabbinate. A few notable works include Hillel Goldberg, *Between Berlin and Slobodka: Jewish Transition Figures From Eastern Europe* (Hoboken, 1989); Jacob Katz, *Hakera Shelo Nitahah: Perishat Haortodoksīm Mikelal Hakehillot Behungaryah Ubegermānyah* (Jerusalem, 1995); Jacob R. Marcus and Abraham J. Peck, eds., *The American Rabbinate: A Century of Continuity and Change, 1883-1983* (Hoboken, 1985) (these articles appeared originally in *American Jewish Archives* 35[2] [1983]); Jacob Neusner, *Understanding Rabbinic Judaism, From Talmudic to Modern Times* (New York, 1974); Simon Schwarzfuchs, *Etudes sur l'origine et le développement du rabbinat au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1957); Azriel Shochat, *Mosad "Harabanut Mita'am" Berusyah: Parashah Bema'avak Hatarbut bein Haredim Lebein Maskilim* (Haifa, 1975); Shaul Stampfer, *Hayeshivah Halitait Behithavutah* (Jerusalem, 1995). On the American rabbinate, see for example Louis Bernstein, "The Emergence of the English Speaking Orthodox Rabbinate," Ph.D. thesis, Yeshiva University, 1977; Jerome E. Carlin and S. H. Mendelovitch, "The American Rabbi: A Religious Specialist Responds to the Loss of Authority," Marshall Sklare, ed., *The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group* (Glencoe, IL, 1958), 377-414; Marcus and Peck, *The American Rabbinate*; Jacob Neusner, ed., *The Rabbinate in America: Reshaping an Ancient Calling* (New York, 1993); Murry Pollner, *Rabbi: The American Experience* (New York, 1977). Numerous specific works have been published, some of which are mentioned later.

4. The following works, which discuss rabbis' contracts, salaries, and income in their historical and socio-religious context, contributed to this article in many ways: Mordechai Breuer, *Eda Udeyukanah: Ortodoksiyah Yehudit Baraikh Hagermani 1871-1918* (Jerusalem, 1990), 191-219; Daniel J. Cohen, "Irgunei 'Bnei Hamedinah' Beashkenaz Bameot Ha17 Veha18," Ph.D. thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1967, 227-35; Israel Kloyzner, *Vilnah Yerushalayim Delita: Dorot Abaronim, 1495-1881* (Tel-Aviv, 1988), 88-111; Simon Schwarzfuchs, *A Concise History of the Rabbinate* (Cambridge, MA, 1993), 50-6. Menahem Ben-Sasson, ed., *Dat Vekalkalah: Yahasei Gomlin* (Jerusalem, 1995), includes several articles with only limited and indirect relevance to this discussion.

particular.<sup>5</sup> The few works on this topic reveal much about the different variables which influence rabbis' salaries, such as the size of the congregation, the income level and lifestyle of its members, and its geographic location.<sup>6</sup>

The few scholarly works on the pay of Christian clergy have also contributed to our understanding of this topic. The different nature of the rabbinate in general and the American rabbinate in particular, as well as fundamental differences between the two religions and their clerical roles, limit the application of these works when discussing the rabbinate. Notwithstanding, works on traveling Methodist preachers in nineteenth-century America, clerical wealth in North and South America during this period, and the financing of ordained ministries in contemporary America are very valuable.<sup>7</sup>

Discussions of the rabbinate as a profession and the processes of professionalization within rabbinical circles are absent in historiography with the exception of Ismar Schorsch's work, which focuses primarily on the academization of the nineteenth-century German rabbinate. Schorsch

5. The best account of the development of professions in America is Samuel Haber's *The Quest for Authority and Honor in the American Professions, 1750-1900* (Chicago, 1991). Understandably, the comprehensiveness of this work allows for limited discussion of the religious professions such as on p. 249. I thank Dr. Menahem Blondheim for referring me to this book. It should be noted that the history of the American rabbinate as a profession began decades before its institutional or union-like expressions. See Jonathan D. Sarna, "Introduction," *American Jewish Archives* 35[2] (1983): 91-9; Lance J. Sussman, *Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism* (Detroit, 1995), 160-1. For a detailed account of Gershom M. Seixas' (1746-1816) salary and additional income, see David De Sola Pool, *Portraits Etched in Stone: Early Jewish Settlers 1682-1831* (New York, 1952), 350-7.

6. Alan Kirschenbaum and Arie Melnik, "Determinants of the Salaries of Rabbis," *Contemporary Jewry* 15 (1994): 157-71, esp. 157-9, 167-8.

7. I have been influenced in many ways by the following works: E. Brooks Holifield, "The Penurious Preacher? Nineteenth-Century Clerical Wealth: North and South," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 58[1] (1990): 17-37; Joseph Mitchell, "Traveling Preacher and Settled Farmer," *Methodist History* 5[4] (1967): 3-15; and Claude A. Smith's "Ordained Ministry and its Financing," an unpublished paper on "Clergy Compensation and the Cost of Clergy to Congregations" in seven mainstream American Protestant denominations. I thank Mr. Smith for allowing me to read and cite this thorough and fascinating paper. It seems that scholars of American Jewish religious history do not make any use of the scholarship available in the area of American religious history. For example, David D. Hall's *The Faithful Shepherd: A History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century* (Williamsburg, VA, and Chapel Hill, NC, 1972), and *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (New York, 1989), could undoubtedly enhance exploring new areas of research in American Jewish religious history.

found that a rabbi was expected to have both rabbinic ordination and an academic degree. This process of professionalization helped define the rabbi as preacher, educator, and prayer conductor vis-à-vis other *klei kodesh*, such as preachers. Schorsch points to the academic demands from Protestant clergy during the same period.<sup>8</sup>

### Salaries and Income of East European Mitnagdic Rabbis

East European Ashkenazi Jewry, both *mitnagdic* and *hassidic*, underwent significant changes throughout the nineteenth century, many of which influenced the rabbinate in various ways. Among *mitnagdim*, for example, we find the rising importance of rosh yeshivas and Torah learners while the rabbinate lost a great deal of its prominence.<sup>9</sup> This was in addition to the growing emphasis on preaching<sup>10</sup> and the changing attitudes toward the relationship between the rabbinate, halakhic decisions, learning and preaching. These processes and others influenced the social and religious status of the rabbinate. Different religious trends, as well as the geographic, political and economic developments which took place in various countries in Eastern Europe throughout the nineteenth century, also influenced the socioreligious status of the rabbinate.<sup>11</sup>

There is, for many reasons, a significant difference in the professional status of *hassidic* rebbes and *mitnagdic* rabbis. For example, they have different sources of authority, whether supernatural powers or intellec-

8. Ismar Schorsch, "Emancipation and the Crisis of Religious Authority: The Emergence of the Modern Rabbinate," Werner E. Mosse et. al., eds., *Revolution and Evolution 1848 in German-Jewish History* (Tübingen, 1981), 205-49 (re-published in: Ismar Schorsch, *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* [Hanover, NH, 1994], 9-51).

9. Emmanuel Erkes, "Bein Lamdanut Lerabanut Beyhadut Lita Shel Hameah Ha19," *Zion* 53[4] (1988): 385-403; *Idem*, "The Relationship Between Talmudic Scholarship and the Institution of the Rabbinate in Nineteenth-Century Lithuanian Jewry," Leo Landman, ed., *Scholars and Scholarship in Jewish History* (New York, 1990), 107-33.

10. As far as I know, this topic has not received enough scholarly attention in the field of Orthodox Jewry. Many of its aspects among German Jewry have been covered by Alexander Altmann, "The New Style of Preaching in Nineteenth-Century German Jewry," *Idem*, ed., *Studies in Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History* (Cambridge, MA, 1964), 65-117 (re-published in: Alexander Altmann, *Essays in Jewish Intellectual History* [Hanover, NH, 1981], 190-245).

11. On the economic situation of the Jews in Eastern Europe see for example Salo W. Baron, *The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets* (New York, 1987, Second Ed.), 63-99, 205-25; Louis Greenberg, *The Jews in Russia*, Part 1 (New Haven, 1994; Third Ed.), 160-72; Jewish Colonization Association, *Recueil de Matériaux Sur La Economique des Israelites de Russie* (Paris, 1906-1908); Jacob Leshzinski, *Hayehudim Berusyah Hasovietit Mimahapekhat Oktober Ad Milhemet Haolam Hashbeniyah* (Tel-Aviv, 1943), 13-33.

tual scholarship, and their followers have different expectations from them. Exploring the economic aspects of these different types raises the following questions: Did the rabbis receive contracts and fixed salaries or contributions? What was their income and how much did they earn? What services did they provide?<sup>12</sup> Clearly, there were significant differences between various countries in Eastern Europe.

We must also take into account the difference between crown rabbis (*rabanim mita'am*), appointed by the government, and the spiritual rabbinate, which in many cases was more respected by the laity. This distinction is important because the salaries of these rabbis came, at times, from different sources. Most rabbis' salaries were paid, one way or another, by the members of the Jewish community, frequently from their meat (*korobka*) and candle taxes; however, this changed in different periods.<sup>13</sup> Several crown rabbis were formally paid by the government, whereas the spiritual rabbinate was not. In both cases salaries were usually inadequate, so rabbis needed additional income. Several works on the economic situation of Russian clergy and Enlightened Jews (*maskilim*) allow us to estimate the cost of living and compare the salaries and income of crown rabbis with those of Orthodox clergy in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Russia.<sup>14</sup> In his memoirs published in 1858, which include a fascinating account of "Clergy in Rural Russia," Ioann S. Belliustin discusses Russian rural priests' salaries. After quoting the salaries of various French Catholic clergy, Belliustin focuses on the differences between them and the Russian clergy and the higher expenses of the latter and explains in great detail how the Russian clergy's salaries

12. Kirschenbaum and Melnik, "Determinants of the Salaries of Rabbis," 158-9. Several economic aspects of Hasidism have been thoroughly discussed in Havivah Pedayah, "Lehitpathuto Shel Hadegem Hahevrati-Dati-Kalkali Bahasidut: Hapidyon, Hahavurah Veha-aliyah Laregel," Ben-Sasson, *Dat Vekalkalah*, 311-75.

13. On the candle tax as a source for rabbinic salaries, see for example ChaeRan Freeze, "Making and Unmaking the Jewish Family: Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia, 1850-1914," Ph.D. thesis, Brandeis University, 1996, 463; Gavriel Z. Margolis, *Torat Gavriel*, (Jerusalem, 1922), 97:1; Shochat, *Mosad Harabanut Mita'am*, 26, 47. An interesting description of the salaries and income of various *klei kodesh* in an East European town in the mid 19th century can be found in Faivel H. Vetshtein, *Sefer Halifat Mikhtavim* (Krakau, 1900), 49-50.

14. Gregory Freeze, *The Russian Levites: Parish Clergy in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1977); 107-47; *Idem* (translator), Ioann S. Belliustin, *Description of the Clergy in Rural Russia: The Memoir of a Nineteenth-Century Parish Priest* (Ithaca, 1985); Michael Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia, 1825-1855* (Philadelphia, 1983), 155-83; and Mordechai Zalkin, "Hahaskalah Hayehudit Berusyah—1800-1860: Hebetim Hevrati'im," Ph.D. thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1996, esp. 78-111.

were regulated. This comparison is followed by a series of rhetorical questions regarding the system of calculating priests' salaries and a detailed list of the expenses of an average priest's family, including his wife and three children. According to Belliustin's calculations, a rural priest's family needed 647 rubles and 50 kopecks per month. However, most priests earned less than a third of this sum. Belliustin questions how a priest, with "a salary of 100 or 150 or 200 rubles" covers "all his needs." Finally, he offers his opinion on how to amend the salaries of Russian clergy.<sup>15</sup> By comparison, Rabbi Schwabacher earned 5,000 rubles a year in Odessa in 1860,<sup>16</sup> and the Malbi"m earned 3,000 rubles a year as rabbi in Cherson in the 1860s as well as money for being the rabbi of other communities.<sup>17</sup>

Because the crown rabbis during the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century in Imperial Russia earned low salaries, they needed additional income.<sup>18</sup> This additional income came from supplying certain religious services which determined the status of the individual in the state. For example, it was in the interest of a divorced woman to register the divorce with a crown rabbi so she could apply for a separate passport. The individual's registered personal status had important financial and other implications for him or her and their children. A crown rabbi's salary could be as low as 50 rubles per month, paid from the *korobka* tax, and he often charged between five and 15 rubles to register a divorce and between three and fifteen rubles for a marriage. Clearly a rabbi was interested in registering as many marriages, divorces, *halizot*, births, or deaths as possible in order to supplement his income. Not surprisingly, many cases of bribery have been uncovered.<sup>19</sup> In the United States, however, the situation was quite different. Additional income in America was subject only to an agreement between the two sides due to the separation of religion and state

15. Freeze, Belliustin, 197-204. There are 100 Kopecks in each ruble.

16. Steven J. Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History, 1794-1881* (Stanford, 1985), 168 note no. 48. For teachers salaries in Odessa in the 1830s, see p. 53, 168 note no. 47.

17. Noah H. Rosenblum, *Hamalbi"m: Rabi Meir Leibush Malbi"m* (Jerusalem, 1988), 26, 28, 32, 48-9, 77, 85-6.

18. Freeze, "Making and Unmaking the Jewish Family," 113, 358, 371-2, 373. Jacob Mazeh (1859-1924), *Zikbronot*, Part 2 (Tel-Aviv, 1936), 46-9, Moscow's Crown Rabbi from 1893, relates to the financial aspects of his job as "despicable." See also Shemaryahu Levin, *Galut Umered* (Tel-Aviv, 1927), 229-30.

19. See for example the State Archive of Kiev Oblast, Pond 1, Opis 145, 1-26; *Idem*, Pond 1, Opis 142, 3-146. I thank Dr. ChaeRan Freeze for her permission to cite these sources.

and the free market of religion. This difference is very significant when assessing rabbis' additional income.

It appears that the salaries of Orthodox *mitnagdic* rabbis and preachers were low, like those of the crown rabbis, and so they too needed additional income.<sup>20</sup> For example, in 1884, Rabbi Jacob D. Willowsky (1845-1913), known as the Ridbaz, described the details of his new appointment as a rabbinical judge and official preacher (*moreh zedek* and *maggid meisbarim*) in Vilna. His salary was 20 rubles a week, "aside from additional income." He was expected to preach 12 times a year, but if he were to preach more often his salary would be slightly higher.<sup>21</sup> The salary of Rabbi Jacob Joseph (1840/1-1902), appointed to a similar position in Vilna in 1883, was probably similar, far more than the 30 kopecks a week ("fifteen American cents") he earned when he began as a rabbi in the small city of Vilon, Lithuania, near the Nieman river, in the late 1850s or early 1860s.<sup>22</sup> For comparison, every yeshivah student at Eishishok, Mir, and Volozhin received 30 to 70 kopecks a week.<sup>23</sup>

The Ridbaz's salary, and the cost of living in cities such as Vilna, was probably higher than in the rural areas. The average salary of a Jewish

20. Samuel Hirsandansky, Biographies File, SC-5072, AJA, esp. 28-9, 33, written most probably between 1885 and the early 1890s; Zaken Shebehavurat Harabanim, "Da'at Zaken, Harabanut Bazeman Hazeh," *Kneset Hagedolah*, Part 1 (Warsaw, 1890), 18; Pinehas Hakohen Lintop, "Meaz Yaza Matok," *Haboneh* 1[1] (5664 [1904]: 21; Lital, "Hayehudim Vehayahadut Belita," *Hashiloah* 2[7-12] (Nisan-Elul 5657 [1897]: 183-6; Jacob D. Willowsky, Introduction, *Shu"t Beit Ridbaz* (Jerusalem, 1908). Certain rabbinic positions in Eastern Europe paid low salaries, but the rabbis' wives had a monopoly on selling yeast or other merchandise to local Jews. At times, this was subject to negotiations with the community, as we learn from Stampfer, *Hayeshivah Halitait Behithavutah*, 27. For additional details on the important economic role of women in rabbinic families in Eastern Europe see Emmanuel Etkes, *Lita Biyerushalayim: Hailit Halamdanit Belita Ukehilat Haperushim Biyerushalayim Leor Igrot Uketavim Shel R' Shmuel Mikelm* (Jerusalem, 1991), 61, 68, 74-81, 99, 110.

21. *Moriah* 19[7-9] (223-225) (5654 [1994]): 66. Details on the Ridbaz's additional income in Bobroysk and his appointment in Vilna can be found in Etkes, *Lita Biyerushalayim*, 170-1. For other comments see Yehudah L. Lazarov, *Der Idisher Redner*, Part 2 (New York, 1927), 85-6; Report from Smolensk, *Hamelitz* 26[87] (23 Av, 5646 [1886]): 1169.

22. See David Livni (Weisbord)'s words in his memoirs, *Yerushalayim Delita*, Part 1 (Tel-Aviv, 1930), 107-8. In comparison, the Volozhin yeshiva gave each student in 1885 2-3 rubles a month, whereas one needed 8 rubles to meet the monthly costs of living. See Stampfer, *Hayeshivah Halitait Behithavutah*, 188. For the low salaries of Rabbi Yizhak E. Spektor (1817-1896) and leading rabbinic figures at Volozhin in the mid-19th century see Jacob Halevi Lifshitz, *Toldot Yizhak* (Warsaw, 1897), 6, 7, 10, 62-3.

23. Ephraim Deinard, *Zikbronot Bat Ami*, Part 1 (St. Louis, n.d.), 37, 39. For additional and more accurate details see Stampfer, *Hayeshivah Halitait Behithavutah*, 14, 38-9, 41, 63, 69, 114, 123, 187-8, 234, 265, 267.

elementary school teacher (*melamed*) in the 1890s was 120 rubles a month (the rate of inflation between the 1880s and 1890s in Lithuania did not change the value of the money significantly). Since 80 rubles a month was far from sufficient, it is clear that the Ridbaz needed additional income.<sup>24</sup> However, we must remember that in certain areas in Eastern Europe rabbis' salaries were significantly higher, as we learn from the various offers Rabbi Yehuda L. Zirelson received in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>25</sup>

As we shall see later, the various sources of rabbinic salaries, for example taxes or congregational funds, had direct implications on the level of these salaries. Furthermore, the situation of additional income of fixed sums to be paid for certain clearly defined services, as in the case of crown rabbis, is an important aspect we must remember when examining additional income of the rabbinate in the New World. The problematic economic situation in Eastern Europe, as well as the lack of opportunities for rabbinic mobility and advancement, appear to have influenced rabbis and preachers in their decision to cross the Atlantic during this period.

### Immigrant Income in America

In order to assess the salary and income of an Orthodox rabbi who led a congregation during the mass immigration era we first must determine the average income of a Jewish immigrant.<sup>26</sup> As Hersch Liebman has pointed out, the garment business employed approximately 60 percent of all Jewish industrial workers between 1899 and 1914, or about 40 percent of the immigrant workers' income. Therefore, the garment industry is a good indicator of the average income of Jewish immigrants during this period.<sup>27</sup> In 1881 the majority of garment workers

24. On the economic situation in Vilna, see, for example, Mikron's letter in *Hayom* 2[221] (10 Heshvan, 5648 [1887]): 1, and Israel Kloysner, *Vilna, Yerushalayim Delita* (Tel-Aviv, 1983-1989), Part 2, 519. On salaries and income see Mordechai Zalkin, "Haskalat Vilnah (1835-1860)—Kavim Lidemutah," Master's thesis, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1992, 30-3, 49-51; Shimon Cohen, *Lekorot Hayehudim Beshioli'i* (Kovna, 1938), 23-5. Information about a rabbi's salary in the socio-economic context of a small town can be found in Shelomo Zalzman, *Min Heavar: Zikhronot Verashumot* (Tel-Aviv, 1943), 39.

25. Yehudah L. Zirelson Collection, The National and University Library Archives, Jerusalem, Collection No. V696, Folders 329, 400, 403, 489, 507, 567, 607, 611.

26. For general statistics on income during this period, see U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, 1789-1945* (Washington, D.C., 1949), 66-71.

27. The following paragraphs are based upon Shmuel Etinger (Israel Bartal and Jonathan Frankel, eds.), *Bein Polin Lerusyah* (Jerusalem, 1995), 293-4, 309-10; Lloyd P.

received a weekly salary between five and 20 dollars, or \$240 to \$1,000 per year. These figures seem to be lower than in 1873. During the 1890's the average salary decreased, then stabilized and increased toward the turn of the century. This decline occurred in several states, including New York and Massachusetts. A close look at the salaries at the beginning of the twentieth century indicates that they rose between 17 and 38 percent compared to 1883. In other words, someone who earned between \$700 and \$800 in 1883 received over \$900 in the early 1920s.

It is also important to note gender differences. For example, in 1901 the average annual salary for a male garment worker was \$484.40, whereas that of a female garment worker was \$282.36. In addition, we must remember that for the most part these salaries were higher than those paid to sweatshop workers.

Income differed between cities, as did the cost of living and real estate. Jobs which paid approximately \$12 a week in Chicago, New York, or Philadelphia usually paid \$10 or less in smaller cities.<sup>28</sup> There are many ways to assess the value of a dollar in New York. For example, in the mid-1890s the average rent for a two-room apartment was approximately eight dollars per month, for three rooms \$11, and four rooms \$15. Generally, rents were higher in buildings with fewer floors. We may conclude that a person who lived in New York and earned \$800 a year spent about 10 percent of his income renting a two-room apartment or close to 25 percent on a four room.<sup>29</sup>

We need to be cautious when dealing with averages, for they do not

Gartner, "Nezhin in Philadelphia: The Families and Occupations of an Immigrant Congregation," *Jewish History* 8[1-2] (1994): 229-55; Hersch Liebman, "Hahagirah Hayehudit Learzot Haberit, 1899-1925: Nituah Demografi," Aryeh Goren and Joseph Venkrat, eds., *Hahagirah Hayehudit Hagedolah Vegibushah Shel Yahadut Amerikah* (Jerusalem, 1977), 25-75, esp. 60-1; Judith Greenfeld, "The Role of the Jews in the Development of the Clothing Industry in the United States," *Yivo Annual* 2-3 (1947-48): 180-205; Arcadius Kahan, "Economic Opportunities and some Pilgrim's Progress: Jewish Immigrants from Eastern Europe in the United States, 1890-1914," *Journal of Economic History* 28[1] (1978): 101-17; Jesse E. Pope, *The Clothing Industry in New York* (Columbia, MO, 1905), 79-122, 212-3, 256-9, 288-321; Isaac M. Rubinow, "New York," Charles S. Bernheimer, ed., *The Russian Jew in the United States* (Philadelphia, 1905), 110-19.

28. For data on the cost of living during this period see *Historical Statistics*, 235.

29. "Harris Rubin: Worker on the Land," *American Jewish Archives* 33[1] (1981): 33, states that in 1885 he paid \$18 for a four room apartment in New York, compared with \$8 for an 8 room house with a barn in Princeton, New Jersey. The connections between housing conditions, income, and health have been analyzed by Deborah Dwork, "Health Conditions of Jews on the Lower East Side of New York 1880-1914," *Medical History* 25 (1981): 1-33.

account for the wide range that creates the average. Nevertheless, hard work along with a savings plan allowed many workers to send money to their families in Eastern Europe and pay for their passage to America within a few years of their immigration. The value of American money in Eastern Europe at the time remains unclear, but the economic hardships in the Old World suggest that the power of the dollar was stronger there.

Memoirs of Jewish immigrants from this period echo these findings. Moe Baskino recalls that his father, who immigrated to America in 1895 and after a short period in New York relocated to Cleveland, Ohio, earned six to eight dollars a week as a cigarette packer.<sup>30</sup> An immigrant who came to Boston in 1892 earned seven dollars a week.<sup>31</sup> Harry Sokolik, who immigrated to Philadelphia immediately after the turn of the century, earned only four dollars every two weeks. In 1904 Sokolik earned eight dollars a week as a clerk in a butcher shop, and several months later he relocated to St. Louis, where his income increased to \$10 a week.<sup>32</sup> Finally, Samuel Wechsler, who immigrated to America in 1899, began working at a sweatshop and earned \$1.50 per day (for a 10 hour work day) and another 50 cents after cleaning the floors at the end of the day. In other words, he earned no less than \$10.50 a week. After numerous job changes he earned \$20 a week and a one dollar bonus if he stayed beyond seven in the evening.<sup>33</sup>

These details allow us to calculate the ability of a Jewish immigrant congregation to pay its rabbi. After deducting rent and other expenses from their average income, as well as money that immigrants sent to their families in Eastern Europe, we can determine that overall synagogue dues could not have been very high. Notwithstanding, there were several wealthy Orthodox immigrant congregations, though certainly far less than in the Reform movement.

30. Moe Baskino, *Memoirs*, Small Collections, SC-765, AJA, esp. 6.

31. H. Liss, *Memoirs*, Biographies File, SC-7304, AJA, esp. 27.

32. Harry Sokolik, "The Story of my Life from Lomza to St. Louis," Biographies File, SC-11690, AJA, esp. 18-9.

33. Samuel Wechsler, "My Autobiography (1885-1963)," MS Collection No. 172, AJA, esp. 13-26. In addition see Alexander Harkavi, *Perakim Mehayai* (New York, 1935), 55, 59, who states that he earned between \$2-5.00 a week; Simhah Z. Zalzman, *Benetivot Hayim: Zikhronot, Igrot, Ma'amarim* (Jerusalem, 1970), 4, who earned five dollars a week in a paper factory soon after he arrived in New York. The same Zalzman, *Min Heavar*, 126, states that the average worker earned between \$3-8.00 a week, a sum which one could live on reasonably, in his opinion.

## Reform Rabbis' Income

Rabbi Moshe S. Sivitz of Pittsburgh (1855-1936) noted that "honest [i.e. Orthodox] people respect the Reform rabbis" more than the Orthodox because "these rabbis are bigger . . . their salary is ten thousand dollars a year!"<sup>34</sup> In 1873 Rabbi Isaac M. Wise (1819-1900) of Cincinnati received an invitation from congregation Anshe Chesed of New York. According to an article published in *Hamagid*, Wise was offered the position for life with a salary of \$8,000 per annum plus a pension of fifteen hundred dollars, and a life insurance policy of no less than \$15,000. After a period of negotiations Wise decided to remain in Cincinnati.<sup>35</sup> In 1888 Dr. Gustav Gottheil (1827-1903) signed a five-year contract with congregation Temple Emanu-El of New York. His salary was \$10,000 per year, and his assistant received \$5,000.<sup>36</sup> Rabbi Alexander Kohut (1842-1894) signed a 10-year contract in 1886 with congregation Ahavat Chesed of New York. He received \$6,000 a year and had the option to receive additional income from conducting marriages and other religious ceremonies.<sup>37</sup> In 1899 Rabbi Stephen S. Wise (1874-1949) became the rabbi of Beth Israel in Portland, Oregon.

34. Moshe S. Sivitz, *Peri Yehezkel* (Jerusalem, 1908), note no. 114. On Sivitz see Moshe D. Sherman, *Orthodox Judaism in America: A Biographical Dictionary and Sourcebook* (Westport, 1993), 200-1. Several details in this entry are inaccurate. Compare with Jimmy Caplan's "The Concerns of an Immigrant Rabbi: The Life and Sermons of Rabbi Moshe Shimon Sivitz," *Polin* 11 (1998) [forthcoming]. Bernard L. Levinthal also commented on the gap between the salaries of Orthodox and Reform rabbis. See Shemaryahu Levin, *Mezikhronot Hayai*, Part 4 (Tel-Aviv, 1942), 95-7. For additional comments of Orthodox rabbis, some of which are quite sarcastic, see Gedalyah Silverstone, *Sukat Shalom* (St. Louis, 1934), Part 2, 47; Yehudah L. Lazarov, *Yalkut Yehudah* (New York, 1934), 111-2. This gap was subject to several satiric articles in Jewish newspapers published in America. See for example Ze'ev Vilner, "Hasurah Mehasrah Vehakhei Katanah," *Havri* 2[4] (July 24, 1892): 8, and Ish Yemini, "Olam Hafukh," *Haleumi* 1[14] (March 14, 1889): 2.

35. *Hamagid* 17[42] (October 29, 1873): 382. Harvey A. Richman, "The Image of America in the European Hebrew Periodicals of the Nineteenth Century (Until 1880)," Ph.D. thesis, University of Texas, 1971, 100 and 115 note no. 76 mentions this source, however, erred in its interpretation. For an account of this episode, see Sefton D. Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise: Shaping American Judaism* (New York, 1992), 253-8. For Temkin's description of the salary and benefits offered to Wise see 253-5, and for data on life insurance during this period see U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*, 2 (Washington, D.C., 1975), 1056-61.

36. Abraham J. Karp, "New York Chooses a Chief Rabbi," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 44[3] (1955): 157. On Gottheil see Kerry M. Olitzky et. al., eds., *Reform Judaism in America: A Biographical Dictionary and Sourcebook* (Westport, 1993), 76-8.

37. His contract is located at Alexander Kohut, Small Collections, SC-6398, AJA.

His salary was \$5,000 a year, and he was contracted to act as a rabbi, read the weekly Torah portion, teach in the Sunday School, and perform other religious duties as needed.<sup>38</sup> The salary of the rabbi of Temple Beth Zion in Portland, Maine, was raised to \$5,000 in 1909-10 from \$4,000 during 1902-07. However, unlike Wise, this rabbi was requested to recite prayers in synagogue on Sabbaths and holidays and to preach on those occasions as well as at some funerals. He was not allowed to conduct marriages or preside over divorces unless he received permission from the president of the congregation.<sup>39</sup>

The highest salary offered to a Reform rabbi was apparently that made to Rabbi Dr. Emil G. Hirsch (1851-1923) of Chicago when he was asked to become rabbi of Temple Emanu-El in New York following Gustav Gottheil's retirement. This wealthy Reform congregation offered Hirsch \$14,000 per year while continuing to pay Gottheil \$6,000 a year. However, due to the protest of his congregation in Chicago Hirsch asked to be released from the contract he had signed with Temple Emanu-El, and he remained in Chicago.<sup>40</sup>

As mentioned above, the salary of the rabbi in Portland, Maine, increased over the years. It seems as though this was not the common practice since most rabbis' contracts lasted a short period of time followed by discussions and negotiations regarding their renewal. However, one can find cases in which a rabbi's contract included a gradual raise in his salary. Such was the case of J. Leonard Levy (1865-1917), the rabbi of Pittsburgh's Rodeph Shalom from 1901 to 1917. His salary began at \$1,500 a year and rose to as much as \$8,500 a year.<sup>41</sup>

Not all Reform congregations could afford to pay such high salaries. For example, after heated negotiations with congregation Har Sinai in Baltimore in the mid-1880s, Rabbi David Philipson (1862-1949) finally received \$2,000 a year.<sup>42</sup> In 1896 congregation Bnai Avraham of Portsmouth, Ohio, appointed Rabbi Abraham Schapiro (1866-1931),

38. Julius J. Nodel, *The Ties Between* (Portland, OR, 1959), 83, 89. On Wise see Olitzky et. al., *Reform Judaism in America*, 225-8.

39. See the protocols of this congregation in: Portland, Maine. Microfilm No. 3212, AJA, 2, 24, 42, 64, 82, 141.

40. *Hapigah* 6[18] (February 17, 1899): 7. Interestingly, a notice in *Hamelitz* 35[99] (23 Iyar, 5655 [1895]): 5, states that Hirsch's salary is \$12,000. See also Alan Silverstein, *Alternatives to Assimilation: The Response of Reform Judaism to American Culture 1840-1930* (Hanover, NH, 1994), 141. On Hirsch see Olitzky et. al., *Reform Judaism in America*, 88-90.

41. *The American Hebrew* 70[21] (April 11, 1902): 638.

42. David Philipson, *My Life as an American Jew* (Cincinnati, 1941), 29. On Philipson see Olitzky et. al., *Reform Judaism in America*, 162-4.

who had studied in Breslau and immigrated to America in 1888, as their rabbi for one year (December 1, 1896 to December 1, 1897) and paid him \$600 per annum after considering \$650. In 1898-99 Schapiro's salary remained the same, and toward the end of 1899 he resigned for unknown reasons. The congregation decided to offer him \$700 a year on condition that he close his shop on Saturdays and Jewish holidays. Schapiro accepted this offer and received the same salary in 1901. That year he left the rabbinate and opened a bookshop in Portsmouth. For the next three years the rabbis of this congregation received \$700, but, in the years 1904-6 Rabbi Kuppin's salary was \$900. Finally, in 1909 the congregation decided that the rabbi's salary would not exceed \$1,000.<sup>43</sup>

As we shall see, the salaries of Orthodox rabbis during this period were far lower than those of their Reform colleagues who held positions at congregations of equal stature.<sup>44</sup> However, not many Reform rabbis earned \$10,000 a year, despite Rabbi Sivitz's claim, with the exception of Rabbis Hirsch and Gottheil. Sivitz's figure, \$10,000, which appears in several other sources as well, may have been symbolic.<sup>45</sup> Ephraim Deinard, an Orthodox Jewish writer, newspaper correspondent, and bibliophile known for his colorful personality and sharp tongue, compares the \$10,000 salaries of American Reform rabbis to the 10,000 silver shekels Haman promised to pay King Ahashverosh in return for the Jewish people (Scroll of Esther 3:9, 4:7). The ideological tensions between Orthodox and Reform rabbis during this period may have led Deinard, Sivitz, and others to draw comparisons between Reform rabbis and Haman.<sup>46</sup>

### The Cantorate

Another important group of *klei kodesh* is Orthodox cantors. In this case we find striking figures which teach us a great deal about the financial priorities of Orthodox immigrant synagogues. First we must remember that the cantorate flourished in Orthodox communities

43. Abraham Schapiro, SC-10904, AJA, in the congregation's protocols, 25, 28, 30, 40, 78.

44. According to Silverstein, *Alternatives to Assimilation*, 141, Reform rabbis' salaries at the turn of centuries were significantly higher than those of Protestant ministers and other non-religious professionals.

45. For example, Samuel E. Elkin, *Devar Shmuel* (St. Louis, n.d.), 66; *Hamagid Leyisrael* 4[26] (July 4, 1895): 210-11; *Hamagid* 16[33] (August 21, 1872): 374; and *Hamabit* 1[6] (April 30, 1878): 44. The two latter sources are cited in Richman, "The Image of America in the European Hebrew Periodicals," 114 note no. 72.

46. Ephraim Deinard, *Miflagot Beyisrael* (New York, 1899), 35.

throughout Eastern Europe before the mass immigration period. The development and establishment of the cantorate in nineteenth-century East European Jewish Orthodoxy has yet to be written; however, it appears that they held central positions within Jewish communities, particularly in *mitnagdic* circles. Although not all cantors received high salaries, it seems as though in many *mitnagdic* East European communities they earned more than rabbis.<sup>47</sup> In several communities in Eastern Europe it was not uncommon to quarrel over cantors and in some cases even violent outbursts occurred.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the desire by American Orthodox immigrant congregations (as well as other denominations) to employ good cantors, often described as a craving, should be seen as a continuum rather than an independent immigrant phenomenon. If so, it cannot be explained solely within the American Jewish immigrant context, as several scholars have suggested.<sup>49</sup>

In 1887 a synagogue in Odessa placed a classified advertisement in the newspaper *Hamagid* in search of a cantor after their renowned cantor, Pinehas Minkovsky, had emigrated to America to accept an offer from congregation Kahal Adath Jeshurun in New York. The salary of the chosen cantor would be as high as 3,500 rubles per annum, "aside from other income as customary."<sup>50</sup> Cantors in nineteenth-century Eastern

47. The memoirs of Pinehas Minkovsky, "Misefer Hayai," *Rashumot* 1 (Tel Aviv, 1925): 97-122 (continued in Vol. 2 [Tel-Aviv, 1927]: 125-58; Vol. 4 [Tel-Aviv, 1926]: 123-44; Vol. 5 [Tel-Aviv, 1927]: 145-60; Vol. 6 [Tel-Aviv, 1930]: 71-100), illustrate the centrality and high salaries of the cantorate in nineteenth-century Eastern Europe. See also Abraham Cahan, *The Rise of David Levinsky: A Novel* (New York, 1917), 390-1. \*

48. See for example the report from Slutzk, *Hayom* 1[116] (5 Tamuz, 5646 [1886]): 1, and compare with the report from Lutzk, *Idem* 1[149] (16 Av, 5646 [1886]): 2. See also Shalom I. Zilbershtein, "Amerikah," *Hamagid* 32[28] (July 19, 1888): 221-2. The memoirs of several East European notables further support this point. See for example Jacob Halevi Lifshiz, *Zikbron Ya'akov*, Part 2 (Kovna, 1927), 148-9, and Barukh Halevi Epshtein, *Mekor Barukh* (Vilna, 1924), Part 2 Chapter 12, 524-5.

49. Jeffrey S. Gurock, "The Orthodox Synagogue," Jack L. Wertheimer, ed., *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed* (New York, 1987), 49; Jonathan D. Sarna, *People Walk On Their Heads: Moses Weinberger's Jews and Judaism in New York* (New York, 1982), 12-3; Mark Slobin, *Chosen Voices: The Story of the American Cantorate* (Urbana and Chicago, 1989), 54. For a description of the desire for a good cantor in the Hungarian Orthodox congregation *Obab Zedek* of New York see Bernard Drachman, *The Unfailing Light: Memoirs of an American Rabbi* (New York, 1948), 281-4.

50. "Kol Koreh Meodesah," *Hamagid* (December 29, 1887): 402. For Minkovsky's account of his decision to emigrate, see his "Misefer Hayai," *Rashumot* 6, 99-100. On his high salary and financial bonuses see Jeffrey S. Gurock, "A Stage in the Emergence of the Americanized Synagogue Among East European Jews, 1890-1910," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 9[2] (1990): 14-5; *Idem*, *American Jewish Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective*, 260.

\* and Samuel Rosenblatt, Yossele Rosenblatt:  
The Story of His Life as Told by His Son  
1.. .. 1

Europe did not always do that well. Reuben Goldman, a native of Baltrimantz, Lithuania, recalls that his brother studied to be a cantor, but, after seeing the cantor in Baltrimantz, who was also a ritual slaughterer, begging for money during Hanukkah, he decided to emigrate to America in search of better possibilities. Goldman describes in detail the honors that cantors Rabinowitz and Sirota received in Vilna. Cantors, like rabbis, usually changed jobs whenever they received better offers. For example, Sirota relocated from Vilna to Grodno and later to other communities, for higher wages. Reuben Goldman noted that his brother sang in the choir of an Orthodox congregation at the age of 16 and was paid 12 rubles a month.<sup>51</sup>

It seems as though America was not much different. Rabbi Louis Feinberg notes in the last decade of the nineteenth century that an Orthodox congregation at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Carpenter Street in Philadelphia has an "evil inclination (*yezer hara*) for good cantors."<sup>52</sup> A letter from New York published in a European Jewish newspaper in 1888 says that American Jewish congregants have a special appreciation for good cantors, claiming that "almost all of the most magnificent cantors in Russia found themselves a place in the Jewish communities here and not one of them can complain about his bitter fate."<sup>53</sup> A letter from Detroit, published in an American Hebrew newspaper in 1892, states that the cantorate is more important to local communal leaders than Torah learning. As a result, hundreds of dollars are generously spent on cantors whereas students of the Talmud Torah are hungry.<sup>54</sup>

In his memoirs from the 1890s, Rabbi Louis Feinberg recalls that a cantor in the "small Kalver shul on Worton Street [Philadelphia] was given three hundred dollars" as payment for his services during the High Holidays, or several months of a garment worker's salary at the time. During the years 1888-1905 Cantor Minkovsky's salary at congregation

51. Reuben Goldman, "Memories of my Youth in Blatrimantz Lithuania," Box No. 630, SC-4210, AJA, 3-15.

52. Louis Feinberg, Small Collections, SC-3376, AJA. In addition see *Congregation Shaare Zedek, 1905-1935* (Pittsburgh, 1935), and *Chevrah Poel Zedek Anshe Illia, YU, Box No. 1, Item No. 1.*

53. Jacob Morison, letter from New York, *Hayom* 2[252] (23 Kislev, 5648 [1887]): 3.

54. *Haiuri* (August 14, 1892): 3. Several Orthodox rabbis and preachers during this period bemoan the fact that congregations appointed their cantors on the basis of their voices, without taking into account their level of religiosity. See for example Yehudah L. Lazarov, *Mateh Yehudah* (New York, 1921), 16, 151; *Idem*, *Sefat Yehudah*, Part 1 (New York, 1928), 18, 144; Gedalyah Silverstone, *Shalhevet Esh* (Washington D.C., 1927), 14.

Kahal Adath Jeshurun in New York averaged \$2,500 per year.<sup>55</sup> In 1909 Joseph Rosenblatt was paid \$10,000 by the Hungarian Orthodox congregation Ohab Zedek of New York.<sup>56</sup>

An interesting case, though rare, is that of congregation Beth Hamidrash Hagadol on Washington Street in Pittsburgh. The protocols of this congregation reveal that in 1901 Cantor Grafman signed a three-year contract including a salary of \$800 per year. In April 1904, approximately two years after being appointed rabbi of this congregation, Rabbi Aaron M. Ashinsky (1867-1954) was reelected "with a salary of nine hundred per year." Another notation shortly thereafter in the protocols indicates that the cantor received a raise of \$100, his salary equivalent to the rabbi's. Over several years the rabbi's salary did not change. In 1907 the cantor resigned after his request for another raise was rejected. As a result, in April 1908 the congregation appointed Cantor Wolf on a two-year contract with an option for another year, paying him \$1,000 a year and an additional \$200 for expenses. In 1910 Rabbi Ashinsky requested a raise, but only in 1912 was his salary raised to \$1,200 per year. In 1923-24 Cantor Weinerman earned \$3,000 a year compared to Ashinsky's salary of \$2,708. In 1926-27 Cantor Rothstein was paid no less than \$7,333, whereas Rabbi Kaplan only received \$130.<sup>57</sup> Even though the salaries of rabbis and cantors in this Pittsburgh congregation were similar until the 1920s, this does not seem to represent the norm. From the material explored we may conclude that Orthodox congregations paid cantors significantly higher salaries than to rabbis and preachers.

These examples lead to the conclusion that the Orthodox cantorate

55. Kahal Adath Jeshurun Em Anshe Lubtz, I-10, Box No. 1, 1888-1905, AJHS. Compare these numbers with those quoted by Judah D. Eisenstein, *Ozar Zikhronotai* (New York, 1929), 55, 57-8, 60, 251, and Minkowsky's unclear words in his "Misefer Hayai," *Rashumot* 6, 100. On page 121, Eisenstein mentions Cantor Michaelovsky's salary at "Beth Hamidrash Hagadol," New York. Lazarov, *Matsh Yehudah*, 172, notes that a cantor in New York earns \$1500 a year. Interestingly, two articles which appeared in East European Jewish newspapers state that the cantor's salary at "Beth Hamidrash Hagadol" was ten times higher than that of the rabbi. See Zevi Z. Burstein, "Report from New York," *Hameliz* 27[113] (13 Sivan, 5647 [1887]): 1193-4, and GM"R, "Report from Cincinnati," *Hameliz* 26[81] (16 Av, 5646 [1886]): 1105.

56. Drachman, *The Unfailing Light*, 282, and compare with Rosenblatt, 95, 132.

57. These protocols are located at the Special Collections, Hillman Library, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Microfilm No. 74:12. See especially July 1, 1901, p. 7; April 3, 1904, p. 25; July 30, 1907, p. 62; July 31, 1907, p. 69; April 5, 1908, p. 69; February 6, 1910, p. 96; January 21, 1912, p. 120; January 23, 1916, p. 167. Several sources on this congregation are located at the Beth Hamidrash Hagadol Collection, the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh.

during the mass immigration era was very well paid, in both absolute and relative terms.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, the number of discussions about cantorate related issues exceeds by far that devoted to the rabbinate. This fact also sustains the argument that the cantorate was by far a more central issue than the rabbinate in many Orthodox congregations during the mass immigration era.

### Orthodox Rabbis' Salaries and Income

A full-scale study of the salaries and income of the American Orthodox rabbinate, which is far beyond the scope of this work, should begin in the mid-nineteenth century. Fortunately, we have a wide variety of sources documenting American Orthodox rabbis' salaries during the mass immigration period, such as contracts, letters, minutes of congregations, and references in newspapers. An interesting example is the case of Isaac Leiser (1806-1868). In 1829, "after considerable discussion and parliamentary maneuvering," congregation Mickveh Israel of Philadelphia offered Leiser a two-year contract with an annual salary of \$800. In comparison, in 1831, the Unitarian minister William H. Furness (1802-1896) was offered over \$2,500 from a Boston church.<sup>59</sup> Over the next several years, Leiser's salary and income was subject to ongoing discussions and negotiations.<sup>60</sup>

Hutchins Hapgood claims that Orthodox rabbis at the turn of the century were paid, if at all, a salary of three to four dollars per week, and sometimes they did not receive regular salaries and so provided various religious services in order to earn extra income.<sup>61</sup> An important source of income was the supervision over kosher meat slaughtering. Interestingly, this form of additional income tends to be presented by Orthodox rabbis as an inevitable result of low salaries in order to meet their costs of living.<sup>62</sup> Hapgood argues that these low salaries contrasted with the

58. Slobin, *Chosen Voices*, 52, 56-7, 60, 61-2. The considerable declension in cantors salaries in the 1930s is yet to be explained in depth. See also Cahan, *The Rise of David Levinsky*, 390-1.

59. Sussman, *Isaac Leiser and the Making of American Judaism*, 56-9.

60. *Idem*, 89-92, 116-21, 124-5, 181. For a few details of American rabbis' salaries which were published in East European newspapers prior to the mass immigration era, see Richman, "The Image of America in the European Hebrew Periodicals," 99-100.

61. Hutchins Hapgood, *The Spirit of the Ghetto* (New York, 1902), 60-2.

62. See for example Tobias Geffen's autobiography, *Fuftzig Yar Rabanut: Kapitlakh fun Mayn Leben*, Tobias Geffen, Small Collections, SC-3884, AJA, 7. Compare with Yehudah L. Lazarov, *Der Idisher Redner*, Vol. 1 (New York, 1916), 175-8. We must remember that shortly after the turn of century, the period which he is relating to in this

social and economic status of Orthodox rabbis in Eastern Europe, a conclusion which is doubtful in light of the sources mentioned earlier.

An article published in *Hapigah* in 1892 tells how an American Orthodox rabbi's salary was collected and paid:

The salary of the rabbi in the Russian and Polish congregations is between six and ten shekalim [dollars] per week, and it originates from the "beggary." Every Friday or Sunday two people go about the doorways of all the congregants with their kerchief in hand to beg small coin to small coin.

Even though small coins accumulate, they "do not add up to an account, since in most cases they succeed to beg only half of his salary and at times only a third or a quarter."<sup>63</sup> This description echoes Hapgood's. Several other sources confirm that a rabbi or preacher's salary was collected by congregants begging their neighbors for money, a form of collection that existed in Eastern Europe as well.<sup>64</sup>

All these sources allude to the low salaries of Orthodox rabbis in America, but they also show that many rural congregations made efforts to collect money in order to pay their rabbis at least part of their salaries. Larger urban congregations signed contracts with rabbis that usually specified details of their salaries, obligations, terms, and possible options to earn additional income. However, this method did not always fully insure payment. For example, if a rabbi had a serious disagreement with the leaders of the congregation or its president he risked becoming penniless.<sup>65</sup> The most famous case is that of Rabbi Jacob Joseph, New York's first and last Chief Rabbi of the Orthodox congregations. For unknown reasons Rabbi Joseph was in serious financial debt in Eastern Europe, and he saw a job opportunity in New York as the best way to pay his debts.<sup>66</sup> After insisting and even threatening not to leave Vilna

paragraph, Geffen lived in a small apartment on the third floor in New York's Lower East Side, whereas in Atlanta he lived in a two-story house.

63. "Haroeh Vehazon," *Hapigah* 3[37] (January 15, 1892): 1-2.

64. L.M. Epstein, "The Crawford Street Synagogue," *Tenth Anniversary Souvenir Book of Congregation Beth Hamidrash Hagadol* (Boston, 1924), 10-1; *Hapigah* 6[3] (November 4, 1898): 6; Yehudah L. Lazarov, *Degel Yehudah* (New York, 1914), 53-4. On Eastern Europe, see Deinard, *Zikhronot Bat Ami*, 20; Epshtein, *Mekor Barukh*, Part 3 Chapter 19, 1218; A. Raisen, *Naye Erzehlungen: Di Alte Velt* (Warsaw, 1910), 45-6. Meir Berlin, *Mivolozin Ad Yerushalayim*, Part 1 (Tel-Aviv, 1939), 154, recalls that the Ridbaz adopted this practice in Slutsk.

65. The importance of the rabbi's oratorical skills in this context should be discussed separately. For an acute description of this aspect, see Eugene Kohn, *The Future of American Judaism* (New York, 1934), 182.

66. The sources of these debts is unclear. From Minkovsky's "Misefer Hayai," *Rashumot* 6, 97-8, we learn that a) they resulted from bad business deals and b) that

before his terms were met, Rabbi Joseph received a six-year contract as well as a lump sum to cover his debts.<sup>67</sup>

According to Yehudah Bukhalter, the secretary of Agudat Hakehilot Haortodoksiyot, Agudat Hakehilot (a consortium of several New York Orthodox congregations) agreed to pay Rabbi Joseph \$3,000 per year and the rent of his spacious and furnished apartment at the corner of Jefferson and Henry streets in the Lower East Side, which came to \$1,350 a year.<sup>68</sup> In contrast, in 1887 Rabbis Abraham J. Ash (1813-1887) and Isaac Margolis (1842-1887) received \$400 per year, the former paid by congregation Beth Hamidrash Hagadol in New York and the latter paid by congregation Adath Bnei Israel Kalvaria in New York.<sup>69</sup> Rabbi Israel Kaplan (circa 1848-1917), father of Mordecai Kaplan (1881-1983), earned \$12 a week—\$576 per annum—as a *dayan* in Rabbi Joseph's court.<sup>70</sup>

*Agudat Hakehilot* gradually ceased paying Rabbi Joseph his salary during the early 1890s, and in 1895, the last year of his contract, he was left without any income and suffered from serious financial difficulties during the remaining seven years of his life. As mentioned above, Rabbis Gottheil and Kohut both signed contracts during this period for much higher salaries. Furthermore, Cantor Minkovsky's annual salary at Beth Hamidrash Hagadol during these years was at least \$2,500. However,

Joseph was seeking a rabbinic position with a higher salary in Odessa in order to pay off these debts, prior to accepting the offer from New York. Interestingly, American Orthodox historiography fails to mention the importance of Joseph's financial situation in his decision to accept the offer from New York. See Shmuel Singer, "A Chief Rabbi for New York City," *The Jewish Observer* 10 [1] (1974): 17.

67. Karp's "New York Chooses a Chief Rabbi," 129-99, remains the only and excellent account of Rabbi Joseph's American experience.

68. See Yehudah Buchalter's letter in *Hazefirah* 15[170] (6 Elul, 5648 [1888]): 2. Karp, "New York Chooses a Chief Rabbi," 155-6, brings the details of Joseph's contract, however, for some reason he states that his salary was \$2500. Interestingly, Mordecai Kaplan notes that Joseph's salary was \$4000. See Mordecai M. Kaplan Diaries, 65-1, JTS (October 28, 1914), 111.

69. Judah D. Eisenstein, "The History of the First Russian American-Jewish Congregation," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 9 (1901): 74; Karp, "New York Chooses a Chief Rabbi," 156 note no. 76; Margolis' description of his salary and obligations appear in his letters to his son from 24 Tevet, 5646, and 20 Shevat, 5646 (1886), located at JTS, Collection No. 105/4. Two articles published shortly after Rabbi Ash died state that his salary was no more than \$200-250 per annum. See Burstein, "Report from New York," *Hameliz* 27[113] (13 Sivan, 5647 [1887]): 1193-4, and Gershon Miller, "Report from Cincinnati," *Idem*, issue no. 118 (18 Sivan): 1247.

70. Jeffrey S. Gurock and Jacob J. Schacter, *A Modern Heretic and a Traditional Community: Mordecai M. Kaplan, Orthodoxy, and American Judaism* (New York, 1997), 13.



improved considerably. In 1907 he signed a five-year contract with congregation Ahavath Achim of Atlanta, earning \$1,200 a year. The congregation agreed to operate in accordance with the rabbi's rulings, in "the Orthodox way," and he was obliged to teach and study with the congregants every evening, to preach every Saturday afternoon, Jewish holidays and other special occasions, to answer halakhic questions, and to supervise kashruth. A possible renewal of Levin's contract was to be discussed in 1912.<sup>79</sup> Shortly after his term ended Rabbi Levin relocated to Cincinnati, where he received another position in 1913. Several sources mention that Levin received additional income from overseeing kashruth, serving as an arbitrator, performing divorces, and selling wine for religious purposes during Prohibition.<sup>80</sup> Levin's salary of \$1,200 a month in 1907 was far higher than the \$400 Rabbis Ash and Margolis received in 1887.

Apparently, a rabbi's salary was often privileged information known to very few people.<sup>81</sup> For example, in 1901 the terms of Rabbi Shimon Glazer's contract with a Houston congregation were specified in great detail. His salary, which did not allow additional income from performing marriages and divorces, was in the hundreds of dollars. Unfortunately we do not know the exact amount since this portion of the original document was ripped off.<sup>82</sup>

The completely different relationship between religion and state in America was not accepted by all immigrant Orthodox rabbis, who sometimes sought sources of additional income which were not acceptable. In Cincinnati Rabbi Shimon Y. Finkelstein (1861-1947) was confronted with legal procedures as a result of presiding over a divorce. One American Hebrew newspaper reported that Finkelstein received

eight dollars from a male from Pittsburgh who wished to separate from his wife. However, the couple changed their mind and they lodged a complaint against Finkelstein, which resulted in a court case in which he was found guilty. Another East European Hebrew newspaper reported that the police put Finkelstein in jail for receiving a "divorce tax in America."<sup>83</sup>

American Orthodox rabbis had many sources of additional income which were equal to or significantly higher than their salaries. For example, a rabbi in New York was requested to eulogize someone. When he came to the widow to receive the \$25 he had been promised, the widow refused to pay, claiming that the eulogy had not measured up to her expectations. This case came before a *beth din* in New York, which ruled in favor of the rabbi. This type of income could be significant, because rabbis who gained a reputation as eulogizers were often invited and paid to give *hespedim*.<sup>84</sup>

It seems as though the highest source of additional income a rabbi could receive during this period was from supervising animal slaughter and granting *hekhsberim* to poultry as well as other kosher products. A short notice in a newspaper in 1897 states that a Rabbi Rosenberg was paid by Va'ad Hakashrut no less than "five thousand dollars stamp money (*plombe gelt*)," twice as much as Rabbi Jacob Joseph's salary just a few years earlier.<sup>85</sup> According to another report, an agreement was made between "the chief butchers and the chief rabbis" in New York that the rabbis would be paid \$10,000 a year for their supervision.<sup>86</sup> Selling wine for religious purposes during Prohibition was another source of high income, which partly explains the conflicts surrounding this issue.<sup>87</sup>

Another source of income, though minor, was the sale of printed material. During the mass immigration era numerous Orthodox rabbis and preachers wrote and published hundreds if not thousands of books.

79. The contract can be found in: Atlanta, Georgia. Congregation Ahavath Achim, Small Collections, SC-561, AJA.

80. Joseph M. Levin, Small Collections, SC-6861, AJA. On Levin see *American Jewish Year Book 1903-04* (Philadelphia, 1903), 73-4; Ben-Zion Eisenstadt, *Letoledot Yisrael Beamerikah* (New York, 1917), 33; D. Goldstein, *From Generation to Generation* (Georgia, 1987), 39; Samuel N. Gorlib, *Oholei Shem* (Pinsk, 1912), 293; Joshua Hoffman, "The Sermons of Rabbi Yoseph Meir Levin," Seminar Paper, Yeshiva University (New York, 1988); Joseph M. Levin, *Leket Yosef* (New York, 1906), Introduction. Levin's son, Shmuel, was caught holding wine illegally during the prohibition and was almost arrested. See Jonathan D. Sarna and Nancy H. Klein, *The Jews of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati, 1989), 114.

81. The financial aspects of the rabbinate are being kept confidential at times, most notably among contemporary rabbinical organizations. The reasons for this deserve a study in itself.

82. Located at MSS Collection No. 269, Folder F-K General, AJA.

83. "Eyzehu Hahakham Halomed Mikol Adam," *Haiuri* 3[13] (March 26, 1893): 3; *Hazefirah* 20[77] (4 Iyar, 5653 [1893]): 319; *Idem* 20[86] (15 Iyar, 5653 [1893]): 543.

84. Samuel Buchler, "An Ambiguous Eulogy," *Idem*, "Cohen Comes First" and Other Cases (New York, 1933), 35-40.

85. "Kashrut In Kvort," *Forverts* (November 10, 1897): 1. The best account of this central aspect in American rabbinic life remains Harold P. Gastwirt's *Fraud, Corruption and Holiness: The Controversy Over the Supervision of Jewish Dietary Practice in New York City, 1881-1940* (Port Washington, NY, 1974). For an overview of the economic opportunities in this business, see pp. 27-49.

86. *Hamagid Leyisrael* 4[26] (July 4, 1895): 210-11.

87. Hannah Sprecher, "Let Them Drink and Forget Our Poverty": Orthodox Rabbis React to Prohibition," *American Jewish Archives* 43[2] (1991): 135-81.

Most of these publications were homiletic; however, there were also other genres, such as responsa and exegetical literature. We do not have many details about the publishing costs at that time, certainly regarding printed material in Hebrew, or about the royalties they may have received. Their profits probably were not that large due to a lack of widespread interest in such publications.<sup>88</sup>

Rabbi Gedalyah Silverstone of Washington states in one of his publications that he contemplated raising the price of his 32-page books of sermons from 50 cents to a dollar. He also claims that he has sold hundreds of books at 50 cents, which leads us to conclude that he earned a few hundred dollars from these sales. Elsewhere Silverstone states that he has sold over 4,000 copies of three of his books, but this is probably an exaggeration.<sup>89</sup>

A few rabbis and preachers published their books at their own expense, but most writers financed their publications by collecting donations or using their earnings from the sale of previous publications. A helpful, though problematic, indicator is the number of volumes sold and editions printed. For example, Rabbi Jacob Joseph's *Lebeit Ya'akov* went through four editions and Rabbi Yoseph Z. Koyfman's *Zikhron Yoseph Ze'ev* five. Unfortunately, we do not have any details about the income from the sale of these books.<sup>90</sup>

We must also consider the importance of honors as a form of reward to rabbis, for example, receiving titles such as Chief Rabbi or being appointed to various respected and powerful positions.<sup>91</sup> However, it is difficult to accurately assess the monetary value of such titles. A final factor in the area of rabbinical income is supply and demand. One could argue that low salaries reflect a market which has more supply than demand, but we lack detailed information about unemployed rabbis and vacant rabbinic positions during the mass immigration era.<sup>92</sup>

We may conclude that even though a few Orthodox rabbis during this period earned thousands of dollars a year, the majority did not. The

above figures appear to support Rabbi Geffen's statement concerning the differences in pay between New York and other cities. Hapgood's statement that immigrant Orthodox rabbis earned three to four dollars a week does not seem to reflect the reality at that time. Even though most were paid more, their salaries were significantly lower than those paid to Reform rabbis or to cantors in Orthodox congregations.

### Wandering Preachers

So far we have considered rabbis who held permanent positions in various congregations, not wandering preachers (*magidim nodedim*) or other occasional speakers. This popular phenomenon, which existed in Europe for centuries, has not been researched.<sup>93</sup> In America during the mass immigration era there were numerous wandering preachers who spoke in immigrant congregations for one weekend or several, and then traveled to other cities.<sup>94</sup>

If the salary of a permanent rabbi was not always guaranteed, the situation of a wandering preacher must have been even more unstable. Many times they were paid very little since collections were done usually on Sundays, when there were usually fewer congregants in synagogue than on Saturdays. Sometimes these preachers did not earn a penny because congregants were more reluctant to contribute to a wandering preacher.<sup>95</sup> As reflected in the congregational minutes of Kahal Adath Jeshurun and other synagogues, wandering preachers received small sums of money, usually in the form of donations.

In 1884 Shlomo Ziskind, a *magid*, was paid \$30 a month by Kahal Adath Jeshurun. In 1887 we find that this congregation paid a "salary to the *magid* Levinson" of \$42.50 for 17 weeks, or \$2.50 a week. It is not surprising that the congregation gave Levinson nine dollars as "charity." *Magidim* who preached in this congregation only once received a few

88. Caplan, "Is This Not an Upside Down World," 158-64.

89. Gedalyah Silverstone, *Beit Meir*, Part 2 (Baltimore, 1912), 6; *Idem*, *Matok Midevash*, Part 3 (Washington D.C., 1918), Introduction, 5-7; *Idem*, *Peninim Yekarim*, Part 1 (Washington D.C., 1915), Introduction; *Idem*, Part 2 (Washington D.C., 1916), Introduction.

90. Joseph—Vilna 1888, Vilna 1898, Warsaw 1900, and Vilna 1912; Koyfman—Philadelphia 1906 (two editions), New York 1910, New York 1913, and New York 1921.

91. Samuel C. Heilman, *Synagogue Life: A Study in Social Interaction* (Chicago, 1976 [2nd ed.]), 107.

92. The importance of this information is evident from William W. Faris' *Unemployed Ministers and Vacant Churches* (Carlinville, IL, 1892).

93. A few preliminary studies on this phenomenon include Walter L. Liefeld, "The Wandering Preacher as a Social Figure in the Roman Empire," Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, (1967); and Yesha'ayahu Shahar, *Bikoret Haheurah Vehanhagat Hazibur Besifrut Hamusar Vehaderush Bepolin Bameah Hat 8* (Jerusalem, 1992).

94. Interestingly, Sussman, *Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism*, 61, notes that "the Saturday afternoon *shiur* (scriptural lesson) and the tradition of the *magid* did not transplant themselves to America." If so, we must explore the emergence and shaping of these phenomena in parts of American Jewish life, and the possibility of tracing their roots prior to the mass immigration period.

95. Yehudah L. Lazarov, *Divrei Yehudah* (New York, 1910), 3; Yizhak I. Savitzky, *Ateret Yizhak* (n.p., 1916), 27-8; Meir I. Vigoder, *Ruab Hakhamim* (Jerusalem, 1933), 7-8; Moshe Weinberger, *Hayehudim Vehayahadut Benoyark* (New York, 1887), 29.

dollars, such as "the *magid* of Slobodka," who was paid five dollars, and "the *magid* of Russia," who was given three dollars. This, in comparison to the generous sums which guest cantors received for spending one or a few weekends with the congregation, is quite noteworthy.<sup>96</sup>

The reality in which rabbis were expected to preach at least once a week if not more was probably the cause for tension between employed rabbis and wandering preachers. This should be understood, from the rabbis' point of view, as a struggle for defining the borders of a profession and controlling it, certainly in a country ruled by the separation of religion and state and the freedom of religious practice. This tension, which existed in Eastern Europe during the nineteenth century and earlier, is yet another important aspect in the history of Jewish preaching in the modern era and in America specifically which deserves considerable attention.<sup>97</sup>

Special attention must also be given to Zionist preachers (*matifim leumi'im*). This very popular and widespread subgroup of wandering orators in Eastern Europe and America has received limited attention, most if not all relating to Zvi H. Masliansky (1856-1943). Masliansky began his career in Eastern Europe and fled to England in 1894 following persecution by Russian authorities. Several months later he crossed the Atlantic Ocean and began a successful career in America. Unlike most Zionists who were wandering preachers, Masliansky was both a wandering preacher and a permanent lecturer at the Educational Alliance in New York.<sup>98</sup>

The situation of wandering preachers in Eastern Europe was not much better than in America. Some of the most prominent East European wandering preachers had to secure their income prior to their

96. See Kahal Adath Jeshurun Collection, AJHS, 35, 37, 41, 43, 47, 73, 75, 77, 83, 85. Additional details can be found in Gurock, "A Stage in the Emergence of the Americanized Synagogue," 17-9.

97. Dr. Elchanan Reiner generously shared his knowledge with me on this aspect of Ashkenazi wandering preachers in the early modern era, during a colloquium at the Department of History of Tel-Aviv University, 1991.

98. On Masliansky see Arthur Hertzberg, "Masliansky, Zvi Hirsch." *Dictionary of American Biography*, Supplement 3 (1941-1945), 512-4; Gary P. Zola, "The People's Preacher: A Study of the Life and Writings of Zvi Hirsch Masliansky (1856-1943)," Rabbinic thesis, Hebrew Union College-JIR, Cincinnati, 1982. As far as I know, Zionist preachers who immigrated to America, such as: Yesha'ayah Glazer, Reuven Leibovitch, and Bezalel Zadikov, have not received scholarly attention, as well as those like Hayim Z. Makabi who relocated to Western Europe. For some general notes on this phenomenon see Harry I. Wohlberg, "The Zionist Idea in Homiletic Literature in the Period Preceding the Rise of Political Zionism (1840-1900)," Ph.D. thesis, Yeshiva University, 1962.

speaking engagements, as we learn from Rabbi Gavriel Z. Margolis, who served as a rabbi in Yashinovka in the late 1870s. Margolis was asked to clear certain peoples' doubts as to the sincerity of the *musar* words of the famous Rabbi Israel of Minsk and the *magid* of Kelm, since they seemed to be worried first and foremost about their payment. Margolis admits the behavior of these preachers is strange; however, he pleads with these people to believe him "that when they [the preachers] speak the words which come from their hearts and go to those of their listeners, they do think about the reward they will receive."<sup>99</sup> Interestingly, Isaac Nissenbaum (1868-1942), the famous Zionist preacher, explains the *magid* of Kelm's decision to preach only on weekdays by the fact that only during the week was a collection bowl for the preacher placed at the entrance of the synagogue.<sup>100</sup>

## Conclusions

As we have seen, many American Orthodox rabbis and preachers bemoaned their low salaries and income, often for good reasons. Although they preached to the immigrants not to be blinded by money or to judge people according to their financial situation, they continued to complain about their low salaries and how low salaries indicated low status. It appears that the attempts of a powerless Agudat Hatabanim to professionalize the Orthodox rabbinate met numerous obstacles, leaving them without means to enforce their rules and regulations. Only the second generation of Orthodox rabbis, which emerged during the mass immigration period and matured in the 1920s, succeeded in establishing guidelines for professionalizing the American Orthodox rabbinate.<sup>101</sup>

Several conclusions can be drawn from the evidence presented here:

- 1) In most cases, the salaries of Orthodox rabbis in America during the mass immigration era were higher, both absolutely and relatively, than those in Eastern Europe.
- 2) Their salaries were significantly lower than those paid to Reform rabbis.

99. Gavriel Z. Margolis, *Torat Gavriel*, Devarim (Jerusalem, 1925), 129:1. Compare with Lazarov, *Mateh Yehudah*, 323. Epshtein, *Mekor Barukh*, Part 3 Chapter 19, 613-4, is also well aware of the fact that paying money to the preacher may leave some doubts as to the sincerity of his message.

100. Yizhak Nisenboim, *Alei Heldi* (Warsaw, 1929), 37.

101. Louis Bernstein, "Generational Conflict in American Orthodoxy: The Early Years of the Rabbinical Council of America," *American Jewish History* 69[2] (1979): 226-34.

3) Cantors' salaries in Orthodox synagogues were in most cases much higher than those of rabbis. However, rabbis apparently had more possibilities of earning extra income.

4) Many rabbis did enjoy additional income from various sources, primarily from providing religious services. Frequently this side income was significantly higher than their salaries.

5) Most Orthodox rabbis were not requested to refrain from earning additional income.

If we did not know about the high salaries that cantors received from Orthodox congregations, one would naturally tend to attribute the difference in income between Orthodox and Reform rabbis to the socioeconomic status of these two denominations. Reform, usually associated during this period with German Jews, is perceived as a movement whose members and congregations generally belonged to the middle and higher economic strata, whereas the Orthodox, or East European Jews, were associated with the middle and lower class. This in itself would explain the difference in rabbis' salaries in these two denominations.<sup>102</sup> However, the generous salaries and lump sums paid to cantors leads to the conclusion that the financial situation of many Orthodox congregations was better than we first believed. The question therefore remains, Why would cantors be paid better than rabbis or preachers? All brought the familiar voices of Eastern Europe to American Jewish immigrants, but cantors did not attempt to rebuke congregations whereas rabbis and preachers almost always chastised them.<sup>103</sup> This leaves us yet to explain why congregants would want rabbis or preachers who continuously rebuke them, as was often the case with Orthodox immigrant rabbis in America. Notwithstanding, another aspect should be taken into consideration: the synagogue as an economic unit which seeks to be profitable. As we have seen, many Orthodox immigrants and their congregations had a "craving" for good cantors, and people bought tickets to listen to renowned cantors. In other words, a good cantor draws crowds and consequently increases the congregation's income.\* This justifies paying him a higher salary.

102. This socio-economic difference is an important factor in contemporary rabbis' salaries, as Kirschenbaum and Melnik, "Determinants of the Salaries of Rabbis," have shown.

103. I base this upon a comment made by Rabbi Gedalyah Silverstone in his *Doreshtov* (n.p., 1926), 8.

\* See Rosenblatt, 110-1.

It is important to remember some institutional factors which had direct influence on rabbis' salaries in America. Until recent years, many Reform congregations did not have cantors, leaving more money for rabbis' salaries. And in the case of Reform and Conservatism, the Hebrew Union College and the Jewish Theological Seminary had a significant influence on the rabbinical market. As the main educational institutions of these movements, HUC and JTS trained a certain number of rabbis per year and therefore indirectly affected the supply of rabbis and their salaries. This was clearly not the case in pre-1900 Orthodoxy, and the situation probably did not change until close to the end of the mass immigration era. Agudat Harabanim's attempts to unionize the rabbinate did not succeed, and RIETS's intentions on this matter are yet to be explored.<sup>104</sup> It is reasonable to assume that there were many more candidates for a position in an Orthodox congregation, compared with a Reform or Conservative one. This, due to the fact that many more, relatively, held ordinations from European authorities—a basic requirement for such a position.

It is hard to compare the economic possibilities of congregations in the center and the periphery. For example, the number of Orthodox congregations in New York, the competition between them—most evident in the hiring of renowned cantors—and the cost of living at the turn of the century were far higher than in, say, Pittsburgh. All these and many other related factors have direct implications when trying to assess a rabbi's status according to his salary and additional income. However, it seems as though certain opportunities for rabbis to earn additional income were relatively more profitable in the periphery due to the lack of competition.

As we have seen, the material presented by Emmanuel Etkes and others suggests that rabbis' salaries in *mitnagdic* Eastern Europe were rather low. According to Etkes, this reflects the lower status of rabbis compared with that of rosh yeshivas. One could also argue that the payment of a low salary to an Orthodox rabbi in America is indicative of his low status in the community. Similarly, a high salary, such as that paid to Reform rabbis, would indicate the congregation's high regard for the position.<sup>105</sup> This assumes that there is a direct correlation between salary and status, but that is not always the case. There are countless jobs in society that pay well but are not perceived well, for various reasons.

104. See Marc Lee Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism: The Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist Traditions in Historical Perspective* (San Francisco, 1984), 142-3.

105. Silverstein, *Alternatives to Assimilation*, 141-2.

Furthermore, this correlation does not account for the additional income rabbis earned, certain discounts, additional expense budgets, or benefits such as rent and furniture, as was the case with Rabbi Jacob Joseph.

In other words, should a low salary for a rabbi necessarily be perceived as a way for his congregants to express contempt toward the rabbinate? Or were congregations, well aware of their financial limits, simply rewarding their rabbis by allowing—and even assisting—them to earn additional income? The answer is complex and involves a careful study of many aspects of immigrant life and perceptions. For example, we have some evidence that immigrants related to the power of the dollar in East European terms, believing that they were wealthier than the wealthy men (*gevirim*) of their hometowns in Eastern Europe.<sup>106</sup> Overlooking the sociogeographical context of the local coin could help explain the gap between a rabbi's actual salary and the way it was perceived. It may have been a low salary in comparison to others in America, but the immigrants may have felt that it was a drastic improvement compared to Eastern Europe.

We are left with numerous open-ended questions which deserve much further research. However, it seems clear that in addition to categories such as academization and institutionalization, we must thoroughly explore the various economic aspects of the rabbinate in any attempt to present the history of a religious profession in general and the American rabbinate specifically. In doing so we must remember "that a desire to create, and a need to live, and a yen for money or recognition are not warring but joined elements in human beings."<sup>107</sup>

106. See for example Mordechai Z. Raisin, "Hayehudim Vchayahadut Beamirikah," *Hashiloah* 4[19-24] (Tamuz 5658-Kislev 5659 [1898]): 175-6.

107. D. Grimsted, "Books and Culture: Canned, Canonized, and Neglected," David D. Hall and John B. Hench, eds., *Needs and Opportunities in the History of the Book: America, 1639-1876* (Worcester 1987), 191.

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