

Building the Temple of *Judische Wissenschaft* in the United States¹

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¹ The title for this paper draws upon Schechter's concept of "the Temple of Truth and real Wissenschaft" in his inaugural address at JTS. See Herman Dicker, *of Learning and Libraries*, pp. 10-11, especially note 10. For the full address, see *Seminary Addresses*, "the Charter of the Seminary", pp.17-18

In 1886, a new rabbinical seminary, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS) was founded in New York in response to the Reform Movement's radical break with Jewish law and practice, with the mission of training rabbis who observe Jewish law as traditionally understood, are familiar with the historical-critical study of Jewish texts and history and are equipped to minister to the needs of the ever-growing American Jewish community. While JTS initially faced numerous financial difficulties almost resulting in bankruptcy, its reorganization by wealthy and well-connected supporters, such as Judge Mayer Sulzberger and Jacob Schiff, placed it on solid footing by the time Solomon Schechter had achieved scholarly renown for his publication of manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah and arrived in 1903 from England to head the institution.² By 1913, JTS was home to an unparalleled faculty in academic Jewish studies, especially in the field of rabbinic text, and housed the largest Judaica collection in the United States, under the expert curatorial hand of librarian Alexander Marx.³ Among the faculty were scholars such as Louis Ginzberg and later, Saul Lieberman, who had studied rabbinic texts as students at elite eastern European yeshivot before pursuing the academic study of Jewish history at European universities.⁴ By 1940, the JTS Talmud faculty towered over that of every university in the world, and its library had surpassed that of even the Bodleian and British Museum, the two greatest Judaica collections in Europe.

² Regarding the early history of JTS, see Robert E. Fierstien's monograph: *A Different Spirit: the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1886-1902*. See also section one of *Tradition Renewed*—"overview; changing administrations, changing missions." Pp.1-238.

³ In 1903, the Seminary library consisted of 5,000 books and 3 manuscripts. By 1913, the library had grown to 43,000 volumes and 1,700 manuscripts. By 1915, JTS could count Louis Ginzberg, Alexander Marx, Israel Davidson, Israel Friedlander, and others among its faculty.

⁴ For example, Louis Ginzberg studied at Telz and Slabodka and then earned his doctorate at the University of Heidelberg. Israel Davidson studied at Slabodka and Volozhin and earned his doctorate at Columbia University. Of the faculty appointed later before the Second World War, Saul Lieberman studied at Slabodka before receiving his university training in Israel, coming to JTS in 1940 from the Harry Fishel Institute in Israel.

In one well-known telling, with the coming of Solomon Schechter, Louis Ginzberg and Alexander Marx to the United States, the torch of *Wissenschaft Des Judentums*, the critical, academic study of Jewish history and texts, had been passed from the old world, specifically Germany and England, to America. But as with founding myths generally, the widely accepted narrative of the origins of JTS and the migration of the center of Jewish scholarship is overly simplistic and ignores the complex convergence of economic, professional and religious factors which drove the movement of both scholars of academic Jewish studies and Judaica collections from Europe to the United States. The impact on Judaic studies and Judaic libraries of historical factors such as Anti-Semitism, Jewish immigration to the US and the rise of Hitler is beyond the scope of this essay

In this paper, I will use JTS as a case study to provide a conceptual, source-based framework for understanding the arrival of *Judische Wissenschaft* in the United States during the first four decades of the twentieth century. More specifically, I will focus on the roles of Solomon Schechter, Alexander Marx and Mayer Sulzberger in recruiting faculty and setting a vision for JTS, creating the Judaica collection for which JTS became known, and providing monetary support as well as recruiting additional donors. I will also discuss the primary, archival materials related to Solomon Schechter, Alexander Marx and Mayer Sulzberger with an eye toward constructing the outline of a documentary-based history of JTS during the period 1903-1940, with a focus on understanding the many factors which shaped JTS in its early years and influenced its current form.

The State of Current Scholarship

While there is no shortage of scholarly treatments of the history of JTS, much of the present scholarship concentrates on understanding its early history (1886-1900) within the context of American Judaism and as a response to the rise of the American Reform movement. This focus does not account for the influence on the early Seminary of modern rabbinical seminaries in Germany and Schechter's conception of *Judische Wissenschaft* as both a religious and scholarly endeavor.⁵ Furthermore, present scholarship fails to sufficiently account for the sweeping changes in faculty, institutional mission and lay leadership which occurred between 1900-1903, following the death of Sabato Morais and other early leaders of JTS, and paved the way for Solomon Schechter's arrival from England to head the reorganized Seminary and implement his vision for an American center of *Judische Wissenschaft*.⁶

While many prior studies focus on the founding of JTS as a response to Reform Judaism, singling out the "Treyfa banquet" and 1885 publication of the Pittsburg Platform as the key catalysts for the founding of the Seminary, I believe that this narrative overlooks a number of important factors. First, historians are to this day divided as to whether the non-kosher food at the HUC ordination banquet in July 1883 was intentional or a slip up by the caterer.⁷ Additionally, traditionalists had been calling for the establishment of a traditional rabbinical school for more than a decade, and the Treyfa banquet and subsequent break from traditional practice and belief manifest in the Pittsburg Platform merely accelerated and intensified these efforts. Finally, the focus on the founding of JTS as a traditionalist response to the Reform movement overlooks the demographic factors which were necessary for JTS to come into being.

⁵ See Schechter's *Seminary Addresses*, 17-19.

⁶ See Robert E. Fierstein, *A Different Spirit: the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1886-1902*. See also Hasia Diner's essay in *Tradition Renewed*, volume one "Like the Antelope and the Badger: The Founding and Early Years of JTS, 1886-1902."

⁷ Diner "Like the Antelope and the Badger: The Founding and Early Years of JTS, 1886-1902." *Tradition Renewed* volume 1, p.11

In brief, minimally two factors were necessary for JTS to be successful; German-Jewish emigration to the US in the first half of the 19th century and the massive influx of eastern European Jews in the 1880s. The presence of an established, wealthy German-Jewish community, including both moderate reformers and the traditional Orthodox, was crucial to the founding of JTS. Members of this community such as Sulzberger, Schiff and others became key funders of the Seminary. The presence of large numbers of eastern European Jews, a significant number of whom were Orthodox/traditional in practice, was also necessary since their children would become the nucleus for the early classes at the seminary.

Perhaps the most glaring omission in present scholarship is the neglect of the economic and professional factors which motivated European scholars such as Schechter, Louis Ginzberg, Alexander Marx and Saul Lieberman to emigrate to the United States and assume well-paying faculty positions at JTS. It must be noted that the status of Jews in the German professoriate in the late 19th-early 20th century was fluid. While some Jews such as Herman Cohen were able to become full professors, this was not universally the case. Furthermore, unlike both Germany and England where academics were paid modest salaries, JTS under Schechter was backed by wealthy donors and could aggressively recruit faculty by offering highly competitive salaries and relatively easy teaching schedules which allowed scholars to concentrate on their scholarship. Furthermore, in view of Schechter's insistence that faculty be fully conversant with both traditional Jewish texts and academic scholarship, understanding the religious character and perception of JTS from 1900-1940 is crucial to explaining why Orthodox/traditional scholars were comfortable accepting positions at an institution which today is indelibly associated with Conservative Judaism. These points, while evident in a careful reading of the primary, archival sources concerning JTS during the period 1900-1940 are mostly overlooked in current

scholarship. In this paper, I will examine these factors using sources such as Schechter's published addresses, correspondence between Judge Mayer Sulzberger and Schechter, correspondence between Sulzberger and Marx, as well as current secondary scholarship on the history of JTS and American Judaism from 1900-1940.⁸

TOWARDS A NEW APPROACH TO THE EARLY HISTORY OF JTS

Why Schechter Comes to JTS

Scholars were drawn to JTS by the convergence of a combination of economic, professional and religious factors in Germany and the United States which collectively served to make a faculty position in the United States far more attractive than one in Germany or in Schechter's case, England. In contrast to Cambridge and institutions in Germany, the Seminary offered its faculty highly competitive salaries which were far higher than what they received in Europe as well as teaching schedules which left ample time for research. By way of example, Schechter's starting salary in 1903 was \$5,000 a year with annual increases. In comparison, the second highest paid faculty member was Alexander Marx, at \$3,000 a year, while Israel Davidson, professor of medieval Jewish literature was paid a starting salary of \$1,000 per year.⁹ Additionally, due to its New York location, JTS was near a large and growing Jewish community with multiple synagogues and several religious schools. The letters between Judge Mayer Sulzberger and Solomon Schechter in the period leading up to Schechter's assumption of the

⁸ The Sulzberger-Schechter letters published in three articles in *Jewish Social Studies* by Meir Ben Horin. These letters provide extensive detail on the negotiations regarding the terms of Schechter assuming the presidency of JTS and Schechter's financial considerations. The Sulzberger-Marx correspondence, published by Herman Dicker provides an intimate perspective on the development of the JTS library and the financial and practical (logistical, administrative and bibliographic) challenges which Marx faced in creating the JTS library's special collections. Herman Dicker's history of the JTS Library, *Of Learning and Libraries* is the most current history of the JTS library and includes extensive references to primary sources.

⁹ see *Of Learning and Libraries* 9-10, 22. See also Mel Scult, "Schechter's Seminary" in *Tradition Renewed volume 1*. See especially, pages 48-50.

Seminary presidency in 1902 illustrate Schechter's concerns about his situation at Cambridge and interest in the JTS presidency.¹⁰

Already in 1897, we find Schechter consulting Sulzberger regarding assuming the chancellorship of the Seminary, and more importantly for the present study, Schechter explicitly mentioning the economic, professional and religious factors which make this role attractive to him. In Schechter's letter of May 9, 1897, he writes:

*"I hardly need tell you that America has certain attractions for me. But I am of course anxious to be there quite independent (parnasah b'kavod) as well as sure of doing there some good by founding there a school on a scientific basis."*¹¹

Schechter's addition of the Hebrew phrase *Parnasah b'kavod*, literally "income with honor," is particularly telling in view of his desire to be in a more Jewish environment on the one hand and uncertainty about the situation in America, a recurring theme in many of the letters. For example, Schechter's letter of April 16, 1897:

*"You see I become mystical; a feeling which always overcomes me on the eve of our Festivals which I must spend here among goyim, without synagogue and without Jewish friends. And what shall become of my children in this wilderness?"*¹²

Most telling is Schechter's June 26, 1898 letter where these feelings are given their sharpest formulation, "*Life among goyim means spiritual death to me whilst I have not even the satisfaction to have real parnasah here.*"¹³ Schechter's focus on the economic difficulty of his

¹⁰ The earliest set of Schechter-Sulzberger letters covers the period 1895-1901.

¹¹ Meir Ben Horin, Solomon Schechter to Judge Mayer Sulzberger: Part I. Letters from the Pre-Seminary Period. P.262, letter #13.

¹² Meir Ben Horin, Solomon Schechter to Judge Mayer Sulzberger: Part I. Letters from the Pre-Seminary Period. P.261, letter #13.

¹³ Meir Ben Horin, Solomon Schechter to Judge Mayer Sulzberger: Part I. Letters from the Pre-Seminary Period. P. 268, letter #21.

position at Cambridge is most starkly evidenced by his “*apologizing for neglecting to mail a letter to America to save postage, ‘which becomes sometimes, a heavy tax on me.’*”¹⁴ Schechter’s intense preoccupation with his precarious economic situation is even more apparent in later letters where his lack of academic recognition, insufficient salary and inability to educate his children in England are mentioned repeatedly to the point that he apologizes for their mention: *I have very little hope from anywhere. But if I tell you that after years of killing work I have not the least hope that they will increase my salary with six- pence, whilst on the other hand education is very expensive here so that I have not the means to bring up my children in the way they ought to be brought up-you will perhaps see my reasons for not being quite content. However, I do not want to trouble you any further with my cares and bakashot.*¹⁵

For Schechter, a position at the Seminary offered the economic security, professional recognition, autonomy and observant Jewish community he lacked in Cambridge.

The JTS library: A Critical Element of Achieving Schechter and Sulzberger’s Vision

JTS was well positioned to accomplish Schechter’s dream of “building a temple of Truth and *Judische Wissenschaft*” in America due to the support of committed board members and supporters who were highly wealthy, cared about Jewish scholarship, and in the case of Sulzberger, valued and collected rare Judaica. Central to accomplishing Schechter’s vision for JTS was the creation of a major Judaica collection which would include rare books and manuscripts to support advanced scholarship as well as all volumes necessary for rabbinical students. In view of these factors, Sulzberger’s stated goal of making the Seminary library “the most perfect collection of Hebraica and Judaica in this country” (and his sizable donation to

¹⁴ *of Learning and Libraries* 10, n. 23 citing Ben Horin 261.

¹⁵ Meir Ben Horin, Solomon Schechter to Judge Mayer Sulzberger: Part I. Letters from the Pre-Seminary Period. P.266-267, letter #19

make this a reality) must be understood as integral to accomplishing Schechter's conception of *Judische Wissenschaft* and its key elements.¹⁶

Schechter's vision for the Seminary consisted of two central and interrelated elements. First, Schechter saw the Seminary as a center for scholarship, specifically in the model of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, the critical (academic) study of Judaism and its key texts with an emphasis on the study of manuscripts and creation of critical editions of rabbinic texts. Schechter's dual vision for the Seminary dictated that the library be both an outstanding general collection of Jewish text and other subjects relevant to rabbinical students and a specialized collection of early printings, rare books and manuscripts to be made available to scholars.¹⁷

JTS' extraordinary Judaica collection resulted from the singular talent of Alexander Marx, who began his fifty-year tenure as chief librarian in 1903, and the financial support of Sulzberger.¹⁸ Marx, a student of two of the fathers of Hebrew Bibliography, Moritz Steinschneider and Abraham Berliner, was both immensely knowledgeable in all matters relating to Hebrew books and manuscripts and passionate about every document which could shed light on Jews, Judaism and Jewish history. More than any other individual besides Schechter and later, the great Talmudist, Saul Lieberman, Alexander Marx transformed the Seminary from an upstart institution of little significance beyond the US to a key player in the world of Judaic studies by making its library a mecca for scholar across all fields of Jewish studies:

¹⁶ See Schechter's November 20, 1902 inaugural address. *Seminary Addresses* 17.

¹⁷ See Sulzberger's address "The Library" in the Jewish Theological Seminary Biannual Report 1902-1904, p.116-119.

¹⁸ Regarding Marx's role in shaping the Seminary Library, see Schmelzer, "Building a great Judaica library-at what price?" 683-697 in *Tradition Renewed* volume 1. See also *of Learning and libraries*, 13-63. For a synthetic treatment of Marx's role as librarian, see David Wachtel talk on Alexander Marx delivered at the 39th annual AJL convention. Accessible at:

<http://databases.jewishlibraries.org/sites/default/files/proceedings/proceedings2004/wachtel.pdf>

“Under his leadership the Library outgrew its cramped quarters several times and its holdings swelled from a meager three manuscripts to over 8,000 and from 5,000 printed works to over 165,000 books. It went from having only two fifteenth-century volumes to becoming the largest single collection of Hebrew incunabula in the world.”¹⁹

While Schechter had initially expressed concerns about the availability of books and manuscripts to support his research, thanks to Marx’s tireless work, JTS faculty had access to a collection which was equal to if not superior to the major European Judaica collections. The quality and comprehensive nature of the JTS library’s collection already in its early years, served to attract scholars to America, specifically JTS to avail themselves of its treasures. To cite one example, a major reason for Saul Lieberman coming to JTS was its unparalleled collection of thousands of Hebrew manuscripts to which Lieberman was given preferential access.²⁰ Thus, the JTS library must be understood as both a cornerstone of the Seminary and Schechter’s vision for *Wissenschaft Des Judentums* and a powerful tool for recruiting faculty.

A major, though seldom discussed source of hesitation for scholars considering positions at JTS was the lack of established scholarly infrastructure, including major Judaica collections with extensive collections of Hebrew manuscripts, early printings and rare books. In Germany and England, many university and public libraries, such as those in Berlin, Frankfurt and Leipzig as well as Oxford, Cambridge and the British Museum held major, comprehensive Judaica collections in academic Jewish studies, especially Jewish history, Rabbinic literature and Bible as well as Hebrew bibliography. While some scholars in Europe amassed private Judaica collections tailored to their scholarly interests, these supplemented the many rich collections

¹⁹ Quoted from David Wachtel “Alexander Marx” p.4. Talk at the 39th annual AJL convention

²⁰ David Golinkin “Was Professor Saul Lieberman “Orthodox” or “Conservative”?” notes 40-41. See also *Saul Lieberman; the Man and His Work*, 16.

already available to European scholars. While Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati and Columbia University held Judaica collections of a respectable size by 1900, both were far smaller and more limited in scope than what Sulzberger and Schechter envisioned, and which Marx later achieved.²¹

In his library dedication address, Sulzberger frames his vision for the Seminary Library as the “creation of a museum of the Hebrew book” which is explicitly modeled on the Bodleian and British Library with the intent of creating the most comprehensive collection possible.²² As Menahem Schemlzer astutely notes in referencing the Bodleian and British Library, Sulzberger was framing the seminary library as a national library of record for the Jewish people.²³ Beyond his financial support, Sulzberger served as chairman of the library committee for more than 25 years, coordinating all practical matters of library operations, especially fundraising.

Schechter arrived in the US having been elected president of the faculty on April 17, 1902 and was inaugurated as president on November 20, 1902. Shortly after his 1903 address at the dedication of the JTS library, Sulzberger told Schechter of his intent to donate 2,400 Hebrew books, including 45 incunabula (book printed between 1450 and 1500) and 500 manuscripts to the library, at a time when the library entire holdings amounted to five thousand volumes and a mere three manuscripts.²⁴ Sulzberger’s gift became the core of the JTS collection and transformed the JTS library from a relatively insignificant collection to one of the most important

²¹ See Robert Singerman “Books weeping for someone to visit and admire them: Jewish library culture in the United States 1850-1910.” *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore*, Vol. 20 (1998), pp. 99-144.

²² See Sulzberger’s address “The Library” in the Jewish Theological Seminary Biannual Report 1902-1904, p.117-118. It must be noted that the current surveys of Hebrew incunabula place the first printed volume at 1469 with a total of about 140 extant editions although the original number of editions was likely higher.

²³ “Building a great Judaica library-at what cost?” *Tradition Renewed* volume 1, pp.680-681.

²⁴ See David G. Dalin “Patron Par Excellence; Mayer Sulzberger and the Early Seminary” in *Tradition Renewed*, v.1 p.670. Dalin notes that in 1903, these 45 incunabula represented half of all known editions of Hebrew incunabula.

in the world, judging by the number of manuscripts and Hebrew incunabula.²⁵ By 1907, a mere 4 years after its founding, the Seminary Library held the 3rd largest collection of Hebrew incunabula and was well on its way of achieving what Sulzberger had thought impossible, surpassing the great collections of Europe, especially England.

The official letter from Sulzberger announcing the donation paints the library as a central element in accomplishing the vision Sulzberger and Schechter shared for the library:

*“My hope is that the Seminary may become the center for original work in the Science of Judaism, to which end the acquisition of a great library is indispensable. We and our successors must labor many years to build up such a library, but I believe that a good foundation for it has now been laid.”*²⁶

The Religious Orientation of the Seminary

In view of Schechter’s dual vision for the Seminary as both a scholarly institution and a rabbinical school, Schechter’s choice of faculty who possessed both classical yeshiva training as well as PhDs from European universities and were traditionally observant in their religious practice was critically important in shaping the religious approach of JTS. It must be noted that the present, clear denominational and ideological divide between Conservative Judaism and Orthodoxy was much less pronounced until the 1940s, if not later.²⁷ Thus, the Seminary’s affiliation with Conservative Judaism did not necessarily represent a barrier to the recruitment of Orthodox faculty members, such as Alexander Marx, Louis Ginzberg and later, Saul Lieberman

²⁵ See David G. Dalin. “Patron par excellence; Mayer Sulzberger and the Early Seminary.” *Tradition Renewed*, v.1 p.670. See especially pp.667-673. It must be noted that at the time, the 45 incunabula Sulzberger donated represented half of all known Hebrew incunabula.

²⁶ Ibid. n.53

²⁷ Regarding the Orthodox perception of the Seminary from its founding until the late 1950’s, see Jeffrey Gurrock’s essay in *Tradition Renewed* volume 1, pages 473-513; “Yeshiva students at the Jewish Theological Seminary”. See also David Golinkin’s “Was Professor Saul Lieberman “Orthodox” or “Conservative”?” Especially the section “The Character of the Jewish Theological Seminary from 1940 and Following” and relevant footnotes.

and, David Weiss Halivni.²⁸ To cite another example, Alexander Marx's father consulted with Schechter about the religiosity and orientation of the Seminary before granting permission for his son to accept the appointment as Librarian and lecturer in Jewish history.²⁹ That Lieberman, a respected figure in the Orthodox rabbinic community, would accept a position at JTS, when the split between Conservatism and Orthodox among rabbinic figures was already pronounced is evidence that JTS was successful well into the 1940's at being sufficient religious to attract traditionalist scholars. Working with the assumption that, at least until 1940, JTS was perceived as "Orthodox" and comparable in Halakhic observance to traditionally oriented, modern rabbinical seminaries in Europe, it is not surprising that staunchly traditional faculty did not find accepting a position at JTS problematic. Furthermore, during the early years of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, the Rabbinical School affiliated with Yeshiva University, a significant number of the incoming Seminary rabbinical students had studied at Yeshiva University's high school (the Talmudical Academy) and many completed their undergraduate educations at Yeshiva college.³⁰ It must be noted, however, that this trend was due to both ideological dissatisfaction with Orthodox rigidity and economic incentives such as free housing and stipends JTS students received.

The Research that Lies Ahead; an Overview of Relevant JTS Archival Material

²⁸ Regarding Saul Lieberman's decision to accept a faculty position at JTS in 1940, see Marc Shapiro's monograph; *Saul Lieberman and the Orthodox*. See also Rabbi David Golinkin's response and critique of Shapiro's monograph at: <http://seforim.blogspot.com/search/label/David%20Golinkin>. Regarding Halivni, see his autobiography, *The Book and the Sword*. See also Yair Sheleg's profile of Halivni "A Living encyclopedia". <https://www.haaretz.com/a-living-talmud-encyclopedia-1.239425>. See also Elijah J. Schochet and Solomon Spiro, *Saul Lieberman: The Man and His Work*.

²⁹ See *Of Learning and Libraries* 13, n.36.

³⁰ See Gurrock's essay "Yeshiva Students at JTS" in *Tradition Renewed* v.1, pp. 473-494 for a discussion of the period 1896-1940.

Up to now, I have discussed the individual factors which made a faculty position at JTS attractive to European scholars, provided a broad overview of the religious nature of the seminary and examined the key players and process of creating the Seminary library's world-class collection. I will now turn to a selection of the relevant archival materials concerning Schechter, Marx and Sulzberger with a focus on outlining a direction for future research. Finally, I will pull together the disparate elements I have discussed to summarize the contours of a new history of JTS during its most foundational period.

In selecting materials concerning Alexander Marx, I have focused on his JTS library activities. While Marx taught Jewish history at JTS and published many significant scholarly studies, these are not relevant for my purposes. The most significant source of material on Marx are his papers at the JTS archives, specifically, Series I, which covers his correspondence from 1890-1953 and Series IV, which includes professional materials relating to acquisitions and Marx's multifaceted role as director of the JTS library.³¹ Of these materials, Marx's correspondence of principal interest is with donors and Judaica collectors such as Hyman G. Enelow, Harry G. Friedman and Ephraim Deinard, whose collections were either donated or sold to JTS. Ephraim Deinard was a traveling rare book dealer and figures prominently in the correspondence between Sulzberger and Marx concerning JTS library acquisitions. Herman Dicker's volume *The Mayer Sulzberger- Alexander Marx Correspondence; 1904-1923* is of great interest for the detailed perspective it provides on the development of the JTS library and the details of specific acquisitions. It provides important insights into Sulzberger's role in financing library acquisitions and his firsthand knowledge of rare Hebrew books and

³¹ The Marx papers are ARC. 80 and a detailed finding guide is available online: <http://garfield.jtsa.edu:8881/R/2UBHRB5MKXHG38GGDVA7YD9KTUQQSFQ1R2UJVB7H2ILBDP9YFI-01540?func=results-full>

manuscripts. Many of the letters concerning potential acquisitions include the cost for which a given item or collection was being offered to the Seminary, which provides an important source of information about the economic considerations which affected the development of the Seminary library.

The significance of Marx's correspondence lies in its use in creating a detailed timeline of major acquisitions for the Seminary Library and tensions between the library as a resource for students and creating a world class rare Judaica collection. Specifically, Marx's correspondence makes clear that his focus was on expanding the collection through the acquisition of rare books and manuscripts and their study. What becomes apparent is that Marx devoted minimal time and attention to the detailed work which would make the Seminary library accessible; he was more interested in studying rare books and manuscripts than creating bibliographic aids and catalogs of the collection when they did not directly assist him in the acquisition of rare materials. While Marx has received much attention among scholars of Judaica libraries, many of these scholars have focused on the individual volumes and collections he acquired while losing sight of the broader importance of these acquisitions. The volumes and collections Marx acquired for JTS represent the physical transfer of the potential for manuscript, literary and historical scholarship from Europe to the US. Marx's stroke of genius which can only be truly appreciated in the aftermath of the holocaust, lay in creating a collection which fairly represented all aspects of Jewish life at a time when Hebrew books and manuscripts were relatively cheap.

Future research on Marx's role as JTS librarian during the library's most formative period will need to focus on broader trends among American educational institutions both Jewish secular, and public of Library building. At the same time as JTS was building its collection, Hebrew Union College was also creating a Judaica collection as were Universities such as Harvard, Yale,

Columbia and intuitions such as the New York Public Library and Library of Congress. While much has been written about the role of Alexander Marx in shaping the JTS Library, far more work remains, especially in constructing a year by year picture of JTS acquisitions, major areas of collection and the collection development policies which guided Marx and his successors. Finally, very little of Marx's correspondence has been published, the publication of all correspondence by and about Marx with relevant cross references is a scholarly desideratum and will shed yet more light on the formative period of JTS and Judaic studies in the US.

Archival Sources on Schechter and Sulzberger

Having discussed archival sources related to Alexander Marx, I will now turn to highlighting additional sources which shed light on Schechter and Sulzberger's activities. It must be noted that archival materials related to Sulzberger are scattered across multiple collections at JTS with a portion of his papers held by the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at University of Pennsylvania.

The Sulzberger- Schechter correspondence, published by Meir Ben Horin in three parts in *Jewish Social Studies* is critical for understanding Schechter's considerations regarding assuming the JTS chancellorship and for the details of the related negotiations as well as for the information it provides on their relationship from 1900 to 1915. Additionally, the letters reveal a wealth of information regarding American Jewry and Schechter's Genizah research. As I mentioned earlier, Sulzberger donated his Judaica collection to the Seminary library at various points, beginning in 1903 and throughout his life, with the remainder of his collection being donated to various institutions, including JTS. Deinard's catalog of Sulzberger's books and Manuscripts, *Or Me'ir*, is significant as it is a comprehensive catalog of Sulzberger's collection

as it stood in 1896, most of which were donated to the Seminary in 1903.³² A study of Sulzberger's collection over the course of his lifetime based on Deinard's catalog and records of his donations to JTS as well as a comparison to the collections of other Jewish bibliophiles is highly desirable. It is a tragic irony that one of the most important early supporters of the Seminary has been largely ignored by scholars. Sulzberger, along with Schechter and others was instrumental in laying the groundwork for Jewish scholarship both popular and academic in the United States. It is my hope to shed further light on his contributions to Judaic scholarship in America in future essays.

Besides the Sulzberger-Schechter correspondence, Schechter's Seminary addresses provide the clearest presentation of his vision for JTS and a Judaism founded upon an academic approach to Jewish texts. Of interest are his addresses concerning *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and the mission of the Seminary: "The Emancipation of Jewish science," "The Charter of the Seminary" and "The Beginnings of Jewish Wissenschaft." While Schechter's letters have been published by Meir Ben Horin, they have been underutilized in studies of JTS from 1900-1915. Surprisingly, Schechter has been the subject of only one scholarly monograph and his impact on laying the ground work for the spread of academic Jewish studies in America has been almost completely ignored.³³ Schechter's vision for JTS and American Judaism and the extent to which it was realized in his lifetime if ever has received very little attention. Such a study drawing on his programmatic writings and addresses as well as correspondence is highly desirable.

³² Or Me'ir: kolel reshimat sifre Yiśra'el, kitve yad ve-nidpasim, ha-nimtsa'im be-vet otsar sefarim ha-gadol shel Me'ir Zultsberger. he'arot, ma'amarim ve-shirim me-et Efrayim Denard. 1896, reprinted in 1973. Also of relevance is JTS MS 10852, Accession list of Hebrew manuscripts donated to JTS Library by Mayer Sulzberger. Sulzberger's papers can be found in the Alexander Marx Archive, box 45/9-15, and in the Henry Pereira Mendes Papers (ARC 82), box 2. A portion of Sulzberger's papers is in the Collection of the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at University of Pennsylvania, ARC MS25 - Mayer Sulzberger Collection.

³³ *The Birth of Conservative Judaism: Solomon Schechter's Disciples and the Creation of an American Religious Movement*. Michael R. Cohen.

The story That Emerges; a Tentative Overview of a New Approach to the History of JTS

In one telling with which I began my essay, JTS is founded as the traditionalist response to the radical break with Jewish law and customs represented by the *Treyfa Banquet* and 1885 publication of the Pittsburg platform which declared as non-binding and non-obligatory many core tenants of Jewish belief. Despite initial difficulties, JTS is reorganized, Solomon Schechter is recruited from Cambridge as president and a first-rate faculty are quickly assembled.

Alexander Marx, is tapped as Librarian and immediately sets to work building what will become an impressive Judaica collection. by all accounts, Schechter, Sulzberger and Marx are successful and eventually the tide of Reform is stemmed, with JTS training rabbis and scholars who will reshape American Judaism.

However, as I have sought to show, this narrative which is frequently presented by JTS and the Conservative Movement obscures the many factors which converged to allow for the reorganization of JTS and its transformation from one of many upstart Jewish educational institutions to the driving force behind *Wissenschaft Des Judentums* and later, Academic Jewish studies in the US. While the role of a core group of committed visionaries such as Sulzberger, Schechter and Marx cannot be overlooked or downplayed, economic, demographic, historical and political factors and trends taking place far beyond America needed to converge for JTS to successfully be founded.

Much of the student body during the early years of JTS were immigrants or the children of immigrants from eastern Europe, especially Russia who had immigrated to America following pogroms in Russia in 1880-1883. These immigrants often had advanced yeshiva education but lacked a basic secular education and almost none had university educations. To transform them into the type of rabbis Schechter envisioned required a major monetary investment to provide

free housing, food and remedial classes to allow them to take courses at local colleges, often paid for by JTS donors. This funding came from German Jews and Sefardic Jews who had immigrated to the US in the first half of the 19th century and were members of the Jewish elite when JTS was founded. without the convergence of massive Eastern European immigration and an established Jewish community willing to fund a rabbinical school which was both modernized in outlook and traditional in practice, JTS would not have succeeded regardless of radical departures from tradition by Reformers.

Returning to Schechter, while his interest in a position at JTS partly stemmed from a desire to advance the cause of traditional Judaism and his conception of Wissenschaft Des Judentums, the professional and economic security offered by the Seminary was a major factor which is often overlooked and understated.

As for the Seminary library, Alexander Marx was uniquely qualified to build a great Judaica collection owing to his vast bibliographic knowledge and burning passion for all documents which could shed light on the Jewish past. furthermore, In Sulzberger, Marx found a fellow bibliophile and perhaps more importantly, a committed lay leader who could galvanize others to raise the vast sums of money necessary to fund some of Marx's most important acquisitions such as the Elchanan Nathan Adler collection of books, manuscripts and Cairo Genizah fragments. turning to the question of timing, the Seminary was fortunate that the bulk of its collection was acquired before the Holocaust consumed the great centers of Jewish learning in continental Europe. Finally, the average cost of a volume acquired by Marx was \$32-\$50. Today, many of the volumes acquired by Marx would easily cost between \$25,000 to multiple hundred thousand if not multiple million dollars.³⁴

³⁴ Wachtel, "Alexander Marx", p.1. A glance at the results of recent Sotheby's Judaica sales will reveal that creating a great Judaica collection today would require untold millions of dollars in view of the price of rare Hebrew books

This paper has endeavored to deconstruct the factors which were essential to the creation of JTS with a special focus on Schechter's economic considerations, Schechter and Sulzberger's Vision for The Seminary and the necessity of creating a world class Judaica library. By all accounts, Schechter succeeded in his vision of a Judaism which embraced and valued Wissenschaft while infusing that study with religious meaning. For Schechter, the study of rare books and manuscripts served not only as a means of correcting textual errors, but also, "if undertaken in the right spirit – that is for the Honor of God... (as) an act of resurrection in miniature".³⁵ Schechter's *Judische Wissenschaft* had a distinctly religious element as made clear in his inaugural address, in which, drawing upon rabbinic language, he articulated a religious obligation to make "some essential contribution to the erection of the Temple of Truth and real *Wissenschaft*".³⁶

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and manuscripts. Wachtel gives an estimated value of the Seminary collection at over \$50,000,000 although a far higher figure would not be unreasonable.

³⁵ *Seminary Addresses*, 17. "The Charter of the Seminary", inaugural address, November 20, 1902.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 18.

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