As I heard the story, the young Kiev was one of a number of orphans who came to the attention of Mrs. Wise, who "adopted" them and saw to it that they had, among other things, a proper pair of shoes or clothing for Rosh Hashanah (that is, the beginning of the school-year).

Education

It was through Mrs. Wise that Kiev came to the attention of Rabbi Wise, who was seeking students for his newly created (1922) rabbinical seminary, the Jewish Institute of Religion. I. Edward Kiev entered the J.I.R. in 1923 as part of what was to be the second graduating class, i.e., the class of 1927. While a student, he earned money by working in the library, paging and shelving books. This was his first position on the J.I.R. library staff. Because Kiev did not complete the course of study at J.I.R., which included the writing of a thesis for the Bachelor's degree, he was not formally ordained in 1927. Instead, he was given a hatarat hora'ah, a certificate recognized by the State of New York, which permitted him to function as a rabbi.

Career

Being a somewhat shy and retiring individual, and without a formal degree of higher learning, it was difficult for the young Mr. Kiev to find a pulpit that would pay a satisfactory wage. But he did find a position—one that no one else seemed to want—as chaplain at the Sea-View Hospital, a city-run tuberculosis sanitarium on Staten Island. It is difficult for us to realize today what a frightening disease tuberculosis was at that time. It would be no exaggeration to compare it to AIDS in terms of prejudice and fears, both real and unfounded. How Kiev took to the sanitarium at the outset is not known, but he remained chaplain there for years, long after it was financially necessary. Indeed, he served continually from 1927 until his retirement over four decades later, and then continued to visit voluntarily until his death.

Because this chaplaincy was a week-end position, Kiev continued to work in the library of the Jewish Institute of Religion, serving as Assistant Librarian to both Salo W. Baron, Librarian of the Institute between 1927 and 1930, and Shalom Spiegel, Librarian between 1930 and 1942. The position of Librarian was, at that time, an onerous responsibility thrust upon a junior member of the faculty. While it was the Librarian's job to oversee the running of the library, especially the budget and payment of bills, the Assistant Librarian was responsible for the library's daily operations.

In 1930, Kiev was considered for the position of Librarian, and while members of the administration and faculty felt that he had the knowledge to perform in this capacity in a competent manner, the overriding view was that his lack of a university degree made it impossible for him to function on the same level as Joshua Bloch (New York Public Library), Alexander Marx (Jewish Theological Seminary) and Adolph Oko (Hebrew Union College), who would be his professional peers. In 1942, with Shalom Spiegel's move to the Jewish Theological Seminary, Kiev's abilities were finally recognized, and he was named Librarian of J.I.R., a position he held until his death. It was also at that time that he was formally made a rabbi, for the Institute's catalogue listed him as "rabbi extra ordinem."

Anecdotes

There is one anecdote from this period which especially demonstrates his warm and generous nature. It is a story told to me twice, once by Rabbi Kiev and once by Philipp Feldheim, the publisher and owner of the famous bookstore on East Broadway.

Feldheim had arrived in New York, a refugee from Austria, with little more than the clothes on his back and a suitcase of books. On his first morning in New York, he set out to peddle these books, hoping to establish himself as a mohrer-siforim. He started in mid-town at the New York Public Library, where a clerk prevented him from seeing Dr. Bloch, head of the Jewish Division, by telling him that Dr. Bloch did his purchasing through the library's Acquisitions Office. Needless to say, the large bureaucracy of the Public Library had no time for the hapless refugee.
Feldheim then walked to the West Side, to the Jewish Institute of Religion, where he sought an appointment with the Librarian. Mr. Kiev received Mr. Feldheim, who explained that he was trying to establish himself as a bookseller, and that perhaps he had something in the suitcase that the library could use. Examining the books, Kiev selected a set of Graetz' history in German, which he then took into Dr. Spiegel's office, closing the door behind him. He emerged after several minutes with cash in hand and paid Mr. Feldheim, who then went on his way.

When I first met Mr. Feldheim in 1976, he told me that this was the very first sale he made in America and the beginning of a successful career. Rabbi Kiev himself supplied additional details, perhaps not known to Mr. Feldheim: Dr. Spiegel was not in his office during Mr. Feldheim's visit, as he was teaching. The cash for the set of Graetz came from Rabbi Kiev's own pocket, for he could not bring himself to turn Mr. Feldheim away empty-handed.

**Professional Activities**

After World War II, Rabbi Kiev was very much involved in activities that promoted Jewish libraries and Jewish books. He served as secretary to the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, the body responsible for the reporting and inventory of surviving Jewish artifacts from the Holocaust. He served as president of The Jewish Librarians Association (a forerunner of the Association of Jewish Libraries) between 1951 and 1959. Rabbi Kiev was involved with the Council of Archives and Research Libraries in Jewish Studies from its inception. He was also very active in the Jewish Book Council, serving as treasurer between 1954 and 1958, secretary from 1958 to 1966, and as an associate editor of the *Jewish Book Annual* (1952–1975).

On his 65th birthday, Rabbi Kiev was presented a Festschrift: *Studies in Jewish Bibliography, History and Literature in Honor of I. Edward Kiev*. (New York: Ktav, 1971). In it, 43 colleagues—constituting a veritable “who's who” of Jewish scholarship—re-paid, as it were, his efforts in assisting them in their research.

**Love of Hebrew Literature**

Rabbi Stephen S. Wise considered it a religious obligation for Jews to buy products of the Yishuv in Palestine. In the case of his seminary, it meant buying the Hebrew books printed there. Consequently, the J.I.R. was one of the few American Jewish libraries in the 1920s and 1930s actively collecting modern Hebrew literature.

Rabbi I. Edward Kiev (right), four days before his death in 1975, at an academic convocation in honor of the centennial of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. On Rabbi Kiev's left is Philip Miller, who succeeded him as Librarian of the Klaub Library in New York.
Rabbi Kiev had a deep and abiding love for Hebrew and a fascination with its development as a modern language, with both slang and technical terminology. He especially loved children's books in Hebrew, for the monolingual Sabra represented an ideal for him. He had no patience with Israelis who peppered their speech with what he called "lo'azisms." Kiev felt strongly that Hebrew should be a language dependent upon no other, just as Israel should be a state dependent upon no other.

For many years, Rabbi Kiev served as the chairman of the Israel Matz Fund, a foundation which subvents Hebrew writers in Israel and in the Diaspora. He corresponded with a number of men and women of Hebrew letters, and regularly received letters at the J.I.R. library from such writers as Uri Tzvi Greenberg, Shimshon Meltzer, Shin Shalom, and Reuven ben Yosef. Kiev looked forward to his annual visit to Israel, not only to visit his family there, but to see his literary friends as well.

Especially touching was Rabbi Kiev's observance of literary yortsays (anniversaries). Using the list provided every year in the Jewish Book Annual, he would arrange displays to commemorate both famous and forgotten Hebrew writers. On the appropriate day, Rabbi Kiev would set aside time to read from their works, and would absent himself from the library during chapel tefillah in order to recite kaddish for the writers.

The Final Years
Rabbi Kiev made it plain to one and all that he was not looking forward to retirement. He told me that he simply could not imagine a time when he would not be involved with the library and its books, especially in assisting students and researchers in their library work. Kiev had his wish, for on November 3, 1975 he was stricken at work.

His funeral, held in the auditorium of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, was a fire marshall's nightmare. The more than five hundred persons in attendance represented nearly every aspect of Jewish intellectual and spiritual life in New York City. Among those who came to pay their respects were colleagues from many Jewish libraries; members of the faculties of the City University of New York, Columbia University, the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York University, and Yeshiva University; rabbis who occupied Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform pulpits; and Hebrew and Yiddish writers.

During the nearly half-century that Rabbi I. Edward Kiev worked in the J.I.R. library at 40 West 68th Street, the collection grew from under 10,000 volumes to over 100,000. He, more than any other individual, was responsible for its growth, its breadth, and its depth. And for as long as the library was on West 68th Street, many, especially the regular visitors to the library from outside the College-Institute, routinely referred to it as "the Kiev library."

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