

PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

I. Edward Kiev (1905–1975)

Philip E. Miller

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
New York, NY

Judaica Librarianship has been fortunate to receive assistance from the I. Edward Kiev Memorial Library Foundation. Many younger *Judaica* librarians, especially those in synagogues, schools, and centers, may not be acquainted with the late Rabbi Kiev's contribution to our profession. We are therefore pleased to present this account of his life as the first in a series of profiles and biographies of notable librarians in our field. In the case of Rabbi Kiev, this presentation is not meant to be encyclopedic, but rather impressionistic, for he was a very private person, not readily given to talking about himself and his background. While I believe this article is historically accurate, it is based on anecdotes told by others and on my own observations.

Youth

Isaac Edward Kiev, the son of Nathan and Anna (Radin) Kiev, was born in New York City on February 28 (some sources record March 5), 1905, and was raised on the Lower East Side. From a life-long friend of our subject (an attorney), I learned that Rabbi Kiev's father died very young, leaving his penniless widow to raise their child. The attorney went on to describe her as a *tsedeykes*, a very pious and charitable woman, who, in spite of her own impoverished state, was ever ready to extend a helping hand to anyone in need. Not atypically, Rabbi Kiev attended a traditional *heder* before he attended public school. From this home and school environment he learned Jewish traditions and values which marked his life, well before the inevitable pull of Americanization.

At that time, there were settlement houses on the Lower East Side which attempted to enrich and improve the lives of its youth by providing a safe alternative to the crime-ridden streets. The settlement houses offered clubs and classes to supplement what the youngsters learned in school, and thus furthered the process of Americanization. One of the "uptown" German-Jewish women who was very concerned with the welfare of these "downtown" Eastern European Jewish children was Louise Waterman Wise, wife of Rabbi Stephen S. Wise. 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

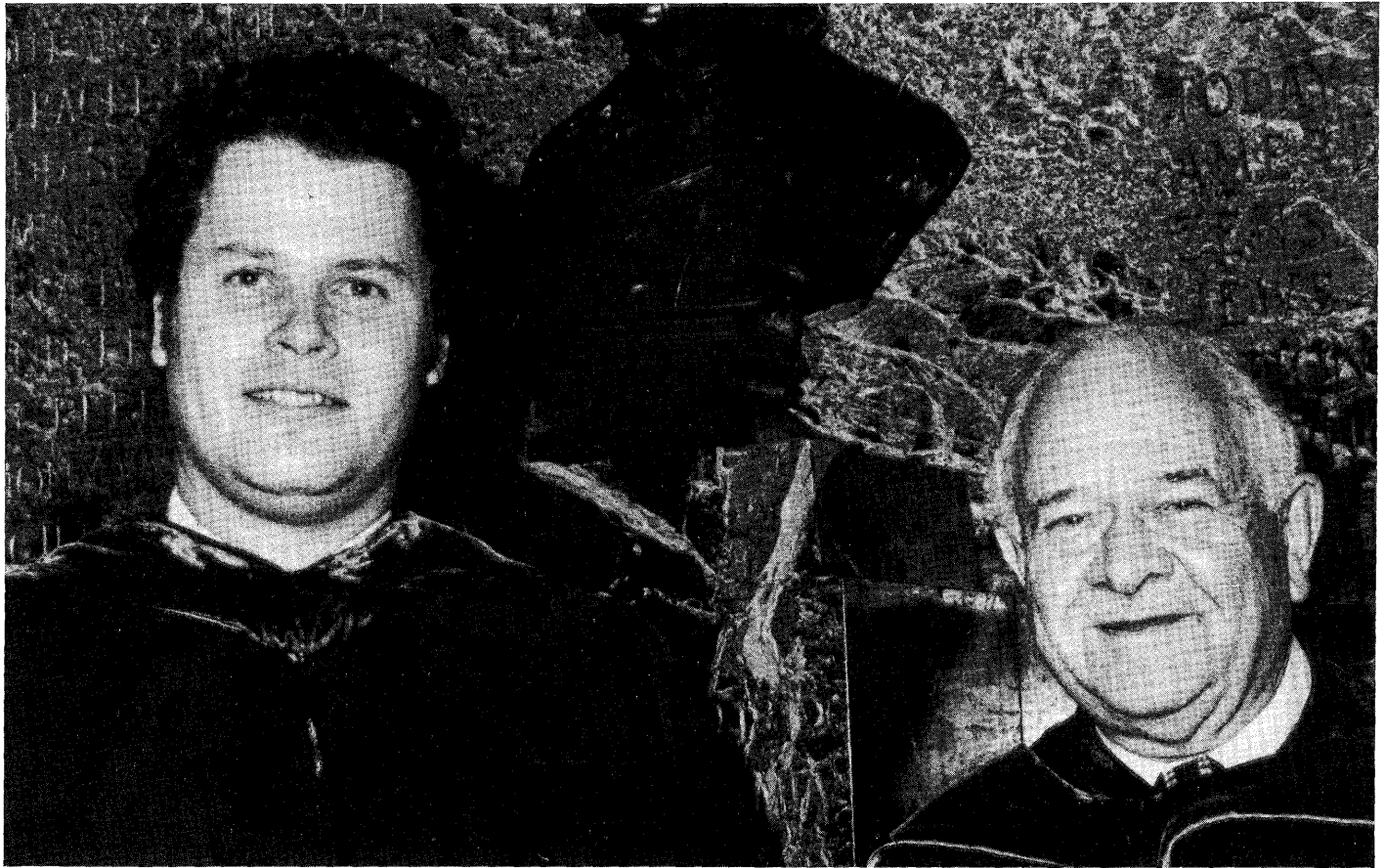
W. Baron, Librarian of the Institute between 1927 and 1930, and Shalom Spiegel, Librarian between 1930 and 1942. The position of Librarian was, at that time, an onerous responsibility thrust upon a junior member of the faculty. While it was the Librarian's job to oversee the running of the library, especially 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 *mokher-sforim*. 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.



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 Klau Library in New York.

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).

When it came to assisting students, researchers, writers, or anyone who came to the library seeking information, Rabbi Kiev was in a class by himself. Gifted with a prodigious memory, he was able to recall countless bibliographic citations with re-

markable ease; he was an absolute master of Judaica. Perhaps this was more than a fortuitous accident, however; for more than twenty-five years—from volume 9 (1950/51) until volume 33 (1976)—Kiev prepared the bibliography of American non-fiction books for the *Jewish Book Annual*.

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—repaid, as it were, his efforts in assisting him 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 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 *yortsayts* (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.

Rabbi Kiev . . . served as president of the Jewish Librarians Association (a forerunner of the Association of Jewish Libraries).

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."

Dr. Philip E. Miller is Librarian of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, New York, and a former President of the Association of Jewish Libraries (1982-1984).

THE FIRST RABBI

*Research into the Earliest Synagogues and Temples—
and the Rabbis and Lay Leaders who Debated Change.*

by RABBI I. HAROLD SHARFMAN, D.H.L.



ORTHODOX & REFORM:

*History of the Origins of Polemic Warfare
Between Orthodox and Reform Judaism
in Pre-Civil War America*

*With Over 260 Rare, Early Photographs,
768 pages, Limited Quantity, \$59*

SEND FOR BROCHURES:

Pangloss Press P.O. BOX 4071, MALIBU, CALIFORNIA 90265

A CAREFUL HISTORICAL STUDY OF JEWS IN PRE-CIVIL WAR AMERICA. As told through the Life and Times of the first ordained Rabbi in the United States: Abraham Rice; describing the mass migration of German Jews to America (1840-1880); and the conflict of a challenging Reform Judaism when nearly every Orthodox Synagogue in the United States became transformed into a Reform Temple.

This biographical study presents the emotional and intellectual warfare between Orthodoxy and the newly emerging Reform movement in America, transforming synagogues into temples, with incessant conflict between Portuguese, German, Prussian-Polish, Chasidic, and secular Jews.

In this book's preparation Rabbi I. Harold Sharfman spent many months in studying the early records of the earliest synagogues in America; and collected 260 rare photographs of early American-Jewish life.

THE WILSON INDEXES

When You Need an Answer Fast and it Has to be Right

Offering broad coverage, unparalleled accuracy, and unmatched currency, the Wilson Indexes are your key to important literature in business and law, science and technology, art, education, the humanities, the social sciences, and general reference.

Now you can search these renowned indexes in print, online, on CD-ROM, and with patron-accessible software.

THE READERS' GUIDE INDEXES

Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature

"The widest and most timely coverage of popular periodicals published in the U.S."

—CHOICE

The ideal research tool for high school and college students, public library users and teachers, *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* is an easy-to-use index to 175 popular magazines covering a broad range of topics, including: • News and Current Events • Business • The Arts • Computers • Health • Fashion • Politics • Crafts • Food & Cooking • Education • Photography • Science • Sports • History • Home Improvement • Plus hundreds of other areas of general interest.

Availability

In Print: Eighteen monthly and semi-monthly issues with quarterly cumulations; annual cumulative volume. Retrospective coverage from 1900 to date; annual subscription: \$140 U.S. and Canada, \$155 other countries.

Online & CD-ROM: Coverage from 1/83. CD-ROM annual subscription \$1,095.

Abridged Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature

Ideal for smaller libraries, *Abridged Readers' Guide* indexes sixty of the most popular general interest magazines covered by the unabridged *Readers' Guide*. Subscribers receive exactly the same timely, thorough indexing and convenient format provided by the unabridged version, at about half the price.

Availability

In Print: Nine monthly issues with three cumulations; annual cumulative volume. Retrospective coverage from 1960 to date; annual subscription: \$70 U.S. and Canada, \$80 other countries.

Online & CD-ROM: Coverage from 1/83. CD-ROM annual subscription \$1095.

Readers' Guide Abstracts

"A significant innovation."

—CHOICE

Available in both microfiche and print versions, as well as online and on CD-ROM, *Readers' Guide Abstracts* allows readers to decide at a glance whether the full text of an indexed article will meet their needs. Conveying the tone and content of an article indexed in *Readers' Guide*, the *RGA* helps researchers pinpoint information directly from the abstracts. The microfiche version of *RGA* is typeset to replicate the printed *Readers' Guide*, with row and column headings, bold face and italic type, making it easier to read than the computer print-out type style of comparable services.

Availability

On Microfiche: Eight cumulated issues (each issue contains at least one year of coverage, each annual volume contains two full years of coverage); durable display/storage kit supplied with each volume; each issue arrives shrink-wrapped and already filled with alphabetical dividers; 48X magnification; retrospective coverage from 9/84 to date; annual subscription: \$675 U.S. & Canada, \$750 other countries.

In Print: Ten issues per year, including semi-annual cumulations in February and August; annual subscription: \$199 U.S. and Canada, \$229 other countries (with subscription to *Readers' Guide* or *Readers' Guide Abstracts* in print, CD-ROM, or microfiche); \$229 U.S. and Canada, \$259 other countries (with subscription to *Abridged Readers' Guide*); \$249 U.S. and Canada, \$279 other countries (without subscription to *Readers' Guide*, *Abridged Readers' Guide*, or *Readers' Guide Abstracts*).

Online & CD-ROM: Coverage from 1/83 (indexing), 9/84 (abstracting). CD-ROM annual subscription \$1,995.

THE
H.W. WILSON
COMPANY

950 University Ave., Bronx, New York 10452



To Order

or for more information on these or any of the Wilson Indexes, simply call toll-free:

1-800-367-6770

In New York State call 1-800-462-6060; in Canada, call collect 212-588-8400.