

# MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY

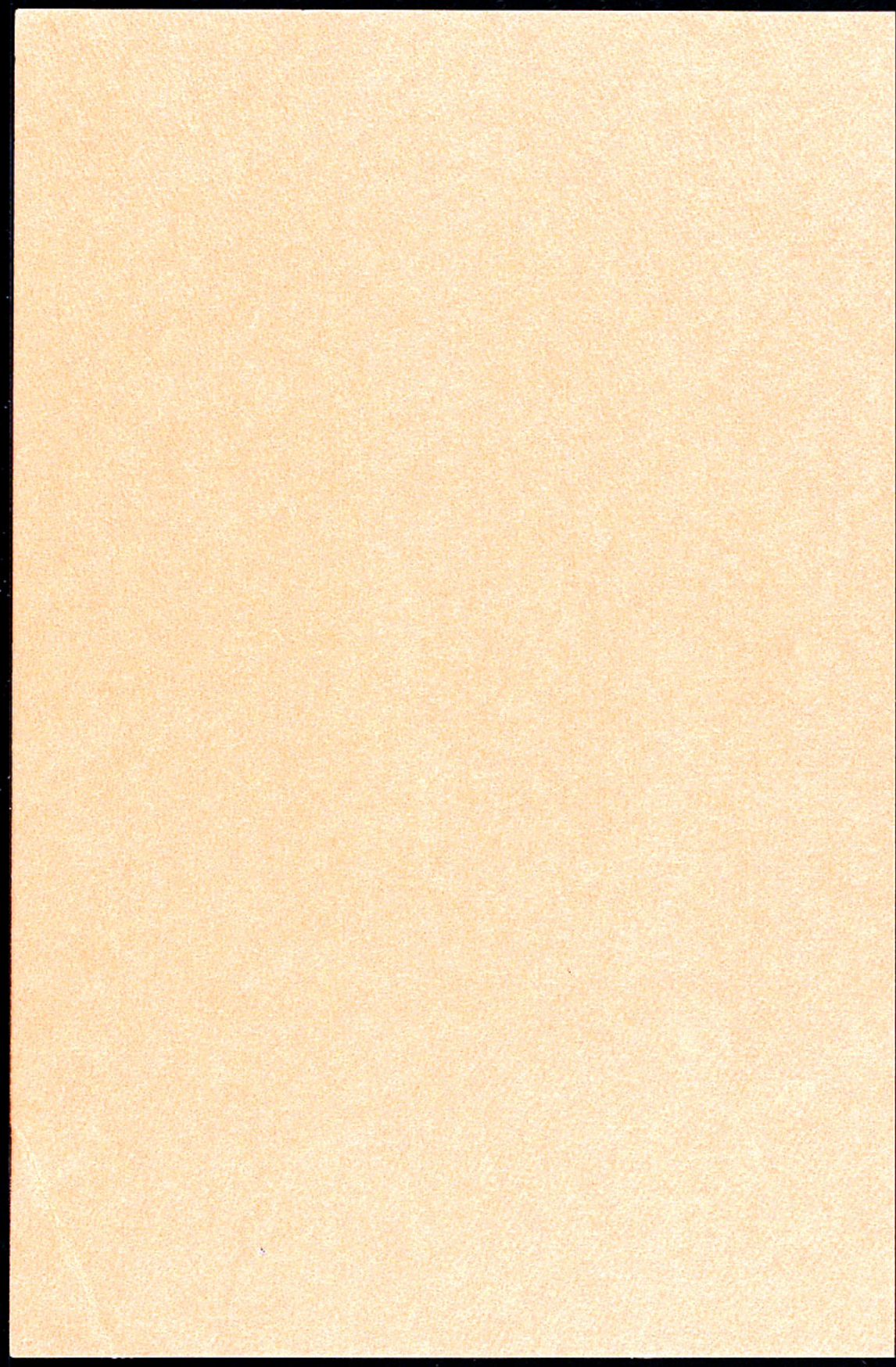


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# MICHIGAN JEWISH HISTORY

אשר ישאלון בניכם מחר את תבנותם...  
יהושע ד:כ"א

*When your children shall ask their parents in time to come . . .*

Joshua 4:21

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The Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, founded in 1959, promotes the study and research of Michigan Jewish history, publishes periodicals, collects documents and records which are deposited in the Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library, and commemorates sites of Jewish historical significance.

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## HENRY FORD'S ANTI-SEMITISM AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS

By David L. Lewis

*Editor's Note:* At the semi-annual meeting on December 4, 1983, the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan presented Dr. David L. Lewis, professor of business history in the Graduate School of Business Administration at the University of Michigan, as its guest speaker. A native of Illinois, Dr. Lewis earned a B.S. degree from the University of Illinois, an M.S. degree from Boston University, and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Michigan. Dr. Lewis has written numerous articles on the history of the automobile industry in the United States, particularly on the Ford Motor Company. He is the author of the highly acclaimed book, *The Public Image of Henry Ford*, and is co-editor with Laurence Goldstein of *The Automobile and American Culture*. He is also a member of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan. For his address to our meeting, Dr. Lewis selected as his topic the historical consequences of the anti-Semitism of Henry Ford I. He was introduced by JHSM President Bette Roth.

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Thank you, Bette. It gives me much pleasure to speak to an organization of which you are president, and to tell its members that you are some of the best students I've had in 18 years of teaching at the University of Michigan.

May I also say that I am privileged to appear here as a means of repaying a debt to several members of the Detroit Jewish community who have assisted me in my research on Ford-Jewish relations. Phil Slomovitz,\* Leonard Simons, and the late Alfred A. May have reminisced and shared literature with me, and opened doors to others who, in turn, have been helpful. To each of these men, and particularly to Messrs. Slomovitz and Simons, with whom I've maintained a warm, personal relationship for many years, I express my heartfelt gratitude for their aid, and for their friendship as well. In their names, I am donating to the Society its honorarium for this appearance.

In conformance with the title of my talk, I'll discuss the origins of Henry Ford's anti-Semitism, the manner in which Ford's anti-Semitism expressed itself and, finally, the repercussions—the legacy—of the auto magnate's anti-Jewishness.

Ford's anti-Semitism is traceable to several sources. One was his boyhood. He grew up in the rural area that is now Dearborn, where the only Jews ever seen were roving peddlers, and where such images as Shylock and Fagin prevailed. Ford himself had little formal education, and in many ways he was ignorant. His anti-Semitism thus had more of loutishness about it than of deep-seated bigotry or malice. Later, Ford's ignorance made it easy for him to conclude, as he did, that an international Jewish banking power had started World War I and kept it going, and that Jews were seeking to destroy Christian civilization.

\*Founder and former publisher of *The Detroit Jewish News*.

Ford also was influenced by anti-Semitic friends, including Thomas Edison, and associates, principally his chief secretary, Ernest G. Liebold. Liebold, as general manager of Ford's national weekly newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent*, was chiefly responsible for that medium becoming the leading purveyor of Ford's anti-Semitism.

In making harsh accusations against Jews, as did the *Independent* for 91 straight weeks in 1920-22, Ford referred less to race or religion than to certain traits which he abhorred and for which the term "Jew" seemed convenient. He also sincerely believed that in exposing "the international Jew's" attempt to disrupt Gentile life by war and revolt—and thus finally gaining world control of politics, commerce, and finance—he was performing a great service to mankind. Ford felt that "good" Jews should rejoice in the expose of the "international" element, while acknowledging that all Jews might feel the "sting" of the *Independent's* campaign.

Ford's anti-Semitic campaign was preposterous from almost any standpoint. For marvel of invention and effrontery, the series of newspaper articles had no parallel in all of the literature of anti-Semitism except for Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. The *Independent* actually revived that hoary forgery, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, which contended that Jews everywhere were conspiring to attain world domination. A flavor of outraged rural puritanism pervaded many of the charges. Jewish interests were held responsible for a decline in public and private morals, for intemperance, for high rents, short skirts, rolled stockings, cheap movies, vulgar Broadway shows, gambling, jazz, scarlet fiction, flashy jewelry, nightclubs, and so on.

Jews were baffled by the attacks. The general press largely ignored them. Jews informally began an informal boycott of Ford vehicles. Although this boycott was not successful, Ford impulsively discontinued his anti-Semitic campaign in early 1922. But in doing so, he retracted nothing and, indeed, later boasted that his articles had opened the minds of Americans to possible evils.

From 1922 to 1924, the *Independent's* criticism of Jews was only sporadic, like its criticism of arms-makers, bankers, bootleggers, Wall Street, and Hollywood. During this period, however, other products of Ford's anti-Semitism were at work. Between 1920 and 1922, Ford arranged for the publication of four brochures, each containing a score or more of the ninety-one articles in the *Independent*, as well as a more comprehensive compilation of these articles entitled, *The International Jew*. More than 3,000 of these publications were distributed. *The International Jew* was translated into most European languages by foreign anti-Semites. The booklets undoubtedly influenced many readers, all the more because they carried the imprint not of a crackpot publisher in an alleyway, but of one of the most famous and successful men in the world.

In 1924, the *Independent* launched its second series of anti-Semitic articles under the general title "Jewish Exploitation of Farmer Organizations." The articles dealt in large part with the activities of Aaron Sapiro, a prominent Chicago attorney who, as a counselor in farm economics, had written a standard contract for cooperative farmers. Sapiro was accused of cheating his clients, after which he sued Ford for a million

dollars. During the trial, Ford's editor, William J. Cameron, accepted full responsibility for the articles. Ford was destined to take the witness stand, but did not do so because of an auto accident. While he was recovering, a mistrial was declared, giving Ford a chance to settle the case out of court. In doing so, he apologized to Sapiro and publicly apologized to Jews for his past attacks, all of which he now retracted. The retraction was the first public recantation of anti-Semitism in history.

Ford's motives in issuing the public apology were complex. Undoubtedly, his business was adversely affected by Jewish hostility. He also must have been aware of increasing public criticism of his obnoxious campaign. Also, he was genuinely frightened over the prospect of going on the witness stand in front of 118 million Americans.

From a public-relations standpoint, Ford's retraction scored heavily in his favor. For a half-dozen years after 1927, the auto king enjoyed excellent relations with the Jewish public. The *Dearborn Independent* was defunct; *The International Jew* was dormant. Moreover, the Ford Motor Company bought much advertising space in Jewish publications.

The honeymoon ended in the early 1930s when copies of the uncopied *The International Jew*, often with Ford's name on the title page or with his photograph inside, began turning up in large numbers throughout Europe and South America. Ford, through his secretary, Liebold, provided a green light for these translations. Jews increasingly began to suspect Ford of duplicity, and their fears were reinforced in 1938 when Ford, on his seventy-fifth birthday, accepted the Grand Cross of the Supreme Order of the German Eagle, the highest honor Germany could then bestow on a foreigner. Ford was the first American and the fourth person to receive the award, created by Hitler himself in 1937. The citation accompanying the medal recognized Ford's pioneering in making motor cars available for the masses. Hitler's personal congratulations were also extended to Ford.



Henry Ford beams as he accepts the Grand Cross of the German Eagle in recognition of his "pioneering in making motor cars available for the masses." Ford was the first American and the fourth person (Benito Mussolini was another) to receive the award created by Hitler in 1937, the highest honor the Reich could bestow upon a foreigner. The decoration was presented in Ford's office by Consul Karl Kapp of Cleveland (right), with Consul Fritz Hailer of Detroit (left) in attendance. Kapp read the citation at Ford's 75th birthday dinner, attended by fifteen hundred prominent Detroiters. Hitler's personal congratulations were simultaneously extended to the magnate.

The acceptance of this award made a vivid impression on American Jewry. Ford was verbally horsewhipped by Jews and Gentiles alike, yet refused to renounce the medal. Finally, Ford, after a conference with Rabbi

Leo M. Franklin—with whom he had developed a friendship when they were neighbors between 1908 and 1915—permitted Rabbi Franklin to issue a statement denying that Ford's acceptance of a medal involved any sympathy on his part with Nazism. But this statement lost some of its effectiveness when it was attacked by Father Charles Coughlin and muddled by Ford's chief aide, Harry Bennett.

The upshot was that Ford products were shunned by Jews in the most complete boycott of automotive vehicles by any group in American history. Jews virtually stopped buying Ford products, and some of their Gentile sympathizers did the same. This boycott was to cost the Ford Company tens of millions of dollars in lost sales.

Public opinion surveys showed that Ford's anti-Semitism was known to about eighty percent of the citizenry. Informed of this, and of the Jewish boycott, Henry Ford was unmoved. In fact, he refused to admit the existence of any sort of boycott, even after sales officials showed him figures and charts which could lead him to no other conclusion.

Shortly after America's entry into World War II, Ford, in a burst of patriotism, undertook to close the wide gulf which separated him from the Jewish public. His efforts at this time to explain his attitudes brought to a close his own generation-long involvement with Jews.

Ford's prejudices were born of ignorance, but after consideration, he came to believe in their validity. On various occasions, he apologized to Jews or "clarified" his stand toward them. But his apologies were self-serving; his anti-Semitic beliefs remained with him to the end. His anti-Semitism was the darkest blot on his career.

Having examined the origins and nature of Ford's anti-Semitism, let us now consider its repercussions.

One legacy has to do with the circulation of anti-Semitic literature linked to Henry Ford, the practice of which has repeatedly embarrassed the Ford Motor Company and the Ford family. Henry Ford II, for example, has continually found it necessary to declare publicly that *The International Jew* and books based on it were published without the authorization of his grandfather, the Ford Motor Company, or himself. Taking note of Henry II's first such disavowal, in 1947, the *Canadian Jewish Review* observed, "He was doing something which he probably will be called on to do at intervals during his whole life because his grandfather unloosed an evil which will not be cleaned up in the grandson's time." The *Review's* observation has proved all too correct. From that day to this there has continued to be an outpouring of anti-Semitic literature related to Ford.

In 1964, for example, the *Thunderbolt*, organ of the National States Rights Party, serialized many of the *Dearborn Independent's* anti-Jewish articles, running Ford's by-line and official company picture with each. That same year, Gerald L. K. Smith proudly announced that "a new popular edition of Mr. Ford's 'International Jew' was available in bulk quantities." The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith asked the Ford Motor Company to stop Smith from reprinting and circulating the tract. Since the literature was not copyrighted, the firm could only express its inability to intervene. In 1966, Smith, correctly claiming that Henry Ford never changed his original opinion of Jews, serialized *The International Jew*



in his magazine, *The Cross and the Flag*, and re-offered for sale bound copies of *The International Jew*.

Articles in *The International Jew* were revived again in 1972 in a book, *None Dare Call It Conspiracy*, which was distributed free on a massive scale by the John Birch Society. After I mentioned this fact in my 1976 book, *The Public Image of Henry Ford*, the Birchers demanded a retraction, threatening to sue if I did not. I didn't retract, and their bluff called, they didn't sue.

Neo-Nazi publishers and other anti-Semites, including Arab organizations, also have repeatedly reissued *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The reprints and literature promoting them usually say that the documents were endorsed and previously published by Henry Ford.

The Liberty Bell Press of Reedy, West Virginia, for example, since 1977 has been selling, through a Washington-based distributor, reprints of *The International Jew* at \$7.50 each, or twenty-four dollars for a four-volume set. A Phoenix, Arizona, publication now offers an abridged copy of *The International Jew* for four dollars.

The *Los Angeles Times*—in its October 30, 1983 edition—while reporting that anti-Semitism, like some creature crawling out of a swamp, is stalking Argentina again—noted that a new edition of *The International Jew* is being offered for sale in that country. Financing for the book, according to a source in the house which published the edition, came from the Arab League and/or the PLO, each of which has offices in Buenos Aires.

Another repercussion of Henry Ford's anti-Semitism relates to the Ford Company's and Ford family's special, sustained effort to regain and maintain the good will of Jews.

Without question, the Ford Company has cooperated more fully with Jewish organizations and done more for world Jewry than any other American firm during the past four decades. In 1951, for instance, while Henry II was serving as chairman of the National Conference of Christians and Jews' first national special-gifts campaign, the company gave one million dollars to the Conference for a national headquarters building in New York. In addition to this gift, the company has made substantial donations to Yeshiva University and the Albert Einstein Medical Center, and contributed generously each year to national Jewish organizations and causes. General Motors and Chrysler, on the other hand, have never given



Rabbi Leo M. Franklin (left) confers with Henry Ford in the 1930s. Rabbi Franklin and Ford were neighbors and close friends during the 1910s, when they lived in Detroit's present-day Boston-Edison Historic District. Rabbi Franklin reluctantly terminated the friendship shortly after Ford launched his first anti-Semitic campaign in 1920.

special attention to the Jewish community. Indeed, it can be argued, as Al May, Ford's longtime adviser on Jewish-related matters, told me in 1975, General Motors (and by implication Chrysler) have never done anything in behalf of Jewry.\*

The Ford Company has also taken extraordinary care to avoid any misunderstanding with the Jewish community. When, for example, the Anti-Defamation League once charged that there was a "serious underutilization" of Jews in white-collar positions within the auto industry, Chrysler and GM withheld public comment. Ford, however, immediately issued a public denial of the charges as they applied to the Ford organization, and the next day flew four officials, headed by a vice-president, to New York to confer with the League's general counsel. Following the meeting, the counsel, who described the gathering as a "happy" one, contrasted the Dearborn firm's prompt response to GM's and Chrysler's dilatory replies.

To the new and unstable state of Israel, Ford in 1949 extended the most liberal credit terms ever offered to a buyer of Ford trucks. During the 1950s, the company began exporting passenger cars to Israel from the U.S., England, and Germany. The 13-member Arab League, which in 1951 set up a Boycott Office to monitor and blacklist firms doing business with Israel, protested Ford's cooperation with the Jewish state, but stopped short of declaring a boycott of the company's products. The Arab League also expressed disapproval of the Ford Company's gifts of funds and equipment to Israel's Weizmann Institute of Science, Hebrew University, and Technion, and Henry Ford II's personal gifts to the United Jewish Appeal.

Executives of Ford Overseas Automotive Operations, who administered an assembly plant in Alexandria, Egypt, a dealer-assembly operation in Casablanca, Morocco, and dealerships throughout the Arab world—representing a company-dealer investment of \$60 million—pleaded with Henry II to soft-pedal his personal contributions to Jewish causes and requested permission for the company to donate an equal sum to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees. These same officials also asked Henry II to resist mounting pressure from American Jewish and Israeli leaders to set up a dealer-assembly plant for trucks and tractors in Israel. The company, argued the executives, outsold all rivals in the Arab world, and should not sacrifice its eighteen percent share of the Arab market for the relatively small number of vehicles sold in Israel.

Henry II endorsed a matching company donation to the refugee agency. He insisted, however, on pushing ahead with plans for expansion in Israel, and sent technicians to Israel to start up a dealer-assembly plant for knocked-down vehicles. In making this move, Henry II and his company obviously were thinking more of the large American Jewish market than the small Israeli market.

Although committed to expansion in Israel, the company also tried to appease the Arab League. It was unable to do so. The League in 1966 declared

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\*It should be noted that in the recent past, both General Motors and Chrysler have contributed to the Allied Jewish Campaign of the Jewish Welfare Federation of Detroit. The Ford Motor Company, however, is the only one of the three which still contributes—*Ed.*

a boycott of Ford vehicles—a ban which remains in effect today and shows no signs of being rescinded. Ford's Egyptian plant and Moroccan facility were closed; its dealers, unable to obtain new vehicles and parts, were phased out. Ford lost an estimated 200 million dollars in sales during the first three years of the boycott, according to the Boycott Office. In contrast, General Motors, which had exported cars and trucks to Israel since the late 1940s and privately informed Arab leaders that it had no intention of establishing an assembly operation in Israel, increased its sales to Arab countries.

The boycott of Ford took a new dimension in 1975, when Henry II visited London's money market in search of Arab financing for Detroit's Renaissance Center. The Arabs, pointing to the inclusion of Ford's name on their blacklists, summarily rejected Henry II's appeal. The Ford Motor Company itself subsequently pumped 100 million dollars into the "RenCen."



This trumped-up photograph of Henry Ford (*left*) and Aaron Sapiro was distributed in 1927 by the Hearst newspapers.

The Arab boycott affects Ford's sales and profit picture more dramatically with each passing year. Today, Ford annually sells fewer than 2,000 vehicles in Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia, while being boycotted in all other Arab countries. General Motors sells about 12,000 vehicles annually to Arab nations, the bulk of the cars and trucks going to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Meantime, the Arab market has grown from the sale of 14,000 vehicles in 1965 to an estimated annual sale of 850,000 vehicles in 1982. The Middle East has become Japan's fourth-largest export market, behind the U.S., Europe, and Southeast Asia; and some European firms also do a substantial business there. Saudi Arabia alone is Toyota's second-largest export market. The importance of this market to Toyota was clearly revealed in 1981. That year, Ford and Toyota were negotiating a joint U.S. production venture; Saudi Arabia warned Toyota to expect retaliatory action from Arab nations if it aligned itself with Ford. The Ford/Toyota talks subsequently cooled, then were broken off. Various factors may have soured the proposed deal for the two firms but, in my opinion, Saudi Arabia's warning was sufficient of itself to kill it. Toyota, unlike Ford, had no intention of sacrificing the lucrative Middle Eastern market. Later, it negotiated a U.S. joint venture with GM.

In atoning for the sins of its founder, Ford has adopted and adhered to Middle Eastern policies which have cost it hundreds of millions of dollars in lost sales and tens of millions of dollars in lost profits, and these figures will mount with each passing year.

Just as Ford Motor Company has done more in behalf of Jewry than any

other non-Jewish-owned company in the U.S., so has Henry Ford II done more for Jewry than any other Gentile business figure. To his credit, he has never wavered in his decision to sacrifice the expanding Arab market. In 1967 he permitted his company to accept an award of merit from the American-Israel Chamber of Commerce and Industry for assembling vehicles in Israel. Three years later he told a delegation of Jewish visitors to his office, Phil Slomovitz among them, that his only regret over his decision was "the harm imposed on Ford's Arab dealers who were innocent victims." In 1972, Ford visited his company's Nazareth assembly plant, whose 1,200 employees built commercial vehicles and the Escort car. "I have been a friend of Israel for many years," he told the transport minister, "and after my visit here, I am even a bigger friend."

It is not too much to say that Henry Ford II has done more for Jews than any other American Gentile over the past four decades. He repeatedly has been honored for his efforts in behalf of Jewry. A few years ago, the Technion established a Henry Ford II Chair in Transportation, the first to be named for a non-Jew at the university. Ford was honored, said Evelyn de Rothschild, international chairman of Technion's Board of Governors, "in recognition of his many years of interest in the Technion, his opposition to the Arab boycott, and his support of Israel."

Almost all Jews acquainted with the Ford story, including those who have neither forgotten nor forgiven the first Henry Ford, are gratified by the friendliness and generosity of the Ford family and the Ford Motor Company toward the Jewish community since the late 1940s. "The grandchildren, and Mrs. Edsel too," observed Isidore Sobeloff, then the head of the Detroit Jewish Welfare Federation, "are just fine, just wonderful." "It would be difficult to find a family which is so completely free of racial or religious prejudice as the Ford family," echoed Rabbi Leon Fram.\* "The new generation of Fords," declared Phil Slomovitz in a statement typical of many he has made on the subject, "looks back at the era of their grandfather with a sense of deep regret, rejecting whatever smacked of prejudice and of anti-Semitism." It is a measure of Phil's fairness as a journalist that, when writing about Henry Ford's anti-Semitism, and he often does, he always mentions the other side of the coin—the family's efforts to atone for the sins of the founder.

In all the history of American business, I know of no other case study remotely like that involving Ford and the Jewish community. It is Exhibit A in teaching us that history does count, that it can cast a long shadow and, for Ford, a very expensive shadow at that.

Ford's involvement with Jews also is a prime example of the maxim that something good sometimes comes from something bad. Henry Ford's anti-Semitism was bad. But the Ford Motor Company's and Ford family's efforts to redress his wrongs are good. Long-term, the Company's and the family's contributions to world Jewry, even at considerable sacrifice, may stand as the most important and lasting repercussion of Henry Ford's anti-Semitism.

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\*Founder and Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Israel, Detroit.

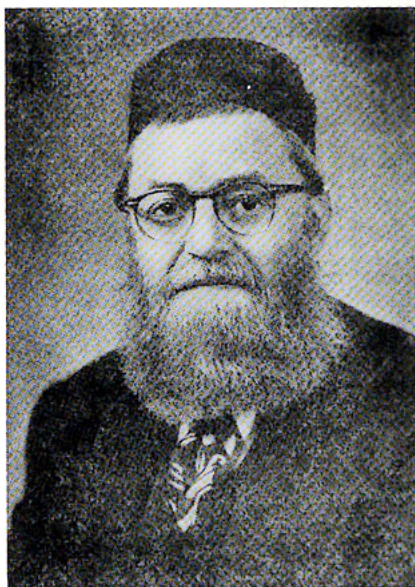
## DETROIT JEWRY AND THE BREZNER HASIDIM

By H. Saul Sugar

In 1926, a group of Jews originally from the eastern European town of Berezno\* and living in Detroit, learned that Rabbi Yosef ("Yoseleh") Ben-Zion Rabinowitz, a relative of the Brezner Rebbe, was in the United States. He had been hired by a synagogue in Baltimore to conduct High Holy Day services. The Detroiters got in touch with him and invited him to serve as their spiritual leader. He agreed to come to Detroit, but shortly after his arrival he told his friends that he would stay only on the condition that he be helped to establish his own synagogue. His idea met with enthusiastic approval, and thus was born Congregation Beth Shmuel, which existed as a Detroit congregation for forty years.

Rabbi Rabinowitz, born in the town of Arel (near Berezno), was the tenth in the chain of Brezner leaders that stretched back to the early 19th century in eastern Europe. Berezno, prior to World War II, was a town of about 5,000 Jews. It was located 10 kilometers from the Malinsk railroad station on the way from Rovno to Vilna in the province of Volhynia (Volyn), which at different times belonged to either Russia or Poland. (Today it is part of the Soviet Union, located in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.)

The Brezner Hasidic dynasty was founded in the early 1800s when the Gentile landowners in the vicinity of Berezno sought to increase their wealth by attracting rabbinical leaders and their followers. One of the landowners brought in Rabbi Yechiel Michael ("Michel") ha-Levi Paznik from the city of Stolin, White Russia. Yechiel Michael was the son of Rabbi David ha-Levi (died 1810), the *magid* of Stepan,



Rabbi Yosef Ben-Zion Rabinowitz.

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\*The name of the town was usually pronounced "Brezno" by its Jewish residents.

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H. SAUL SUGAR was born in Detroit and earned an AB degree from the University of Michigan. He was graduated from the University's Medical School with an M.D. degree in 1935. Formerly the chief of the ophthalmology department at Sinai Hospital of Detroit, he is currently on staff at Henry Ford Hospital. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan. Both of his parents were born in Berezno.

and was also a student of Rabbi Dov Baer, the *magid* of Mezhirech. He was succeeded by his son, Yitzhak (died 1865), who was, in turn, followed by his son, Yosef ("Yoseleh") (1834-70). Avraham Shmuel succeeded his father, Yosef, and was rebbe until his death in 1917 at the age of sixty-seven. His oldest son, Yitzhak, succeeded him, serving as rebbe until 1939. Although he attracted many new Hasidim, in his later years Yitzhak was forced to go to the United States to seek financial help from his followers. He died shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War. His son, Aharon ("Areleh"), succeeded him, but was killed in the forest, a victim of the Holocaust. Inasmuch as Aharon had no sons, a successor was chosen from one of his relatives, Rabbi Hayim Toibman, who was followed by his two sons, Rabbi Areleh (the elder) and Rabbi Gedalya. Gedalya was also killed in the Holocaust, and the mantle of leadership finally fell upon his cousin, Rabbi Yosef Ben-Zion Rabinowitz, by that time a resident of Detroit, Michigan.

The congregation which Rabbi Rabinowitz founded in 1926 held its first services in a rented hall above a store at 8951 Twelfth Street and Taylor; the rabbi and his family lived in an adjoining apartment. In 1932 the congregation set its sights on a house at 1736 Blaine east of Twelfth. Built seven years earlier and originally assessed at \$60,000, it was in the hands of a bank. The congregation made an offer, and the bank sold them the house for \$2,500 cash. The first floor was converted into a synagogue, and the rabbi's family lived in the upstairs quarters.

The congregation prospered and in 1948 built a new synagogue at 12837 Dexter Boulevard and Buena Vista. The old synagogue on Blaine was sold to Congregation Dovid Ben Nuchim, which remained at the site until 1954; it is today a Baptist church.

The new synagogue had seven hundred seats, sufficient for the almost four hundred families that were members. It had a library of nearly three thousand volumes, a modern *mikveh*, and a social hall.

The congregation remained at the Dexter location until 1959. The synagogue was sold again to Congregation Dovid Ben Nuchim, which remained there until 1965; today the building is owned by a Baptist congregation.

Following the move from Dexter, the members did not re-establish a synagogue, and Beth Shmuel ceased to exist as an active congregation. Late in 1966, however, the name was resurrected for the sponsorship of High-Holy Day services in a vacant storefront at 15215 W. Seven Mile Road between Sussex and Whitcomb in Detroit. These were the last religious services held in Detroit under the aegis of Beth Shmuel. Early in 1967, Rabbi Rabinowitz and his wife immigrated to the state of Israel. When the rabbi had originally made it known to the congregation that he wished to make *aliya*, he requested and received permission to set up a new synagogue in Israel with the name of Beth Shmuel. The assets derived from the sale of the synagogue on Dexter were used to purchase two apartments in a building under construction at 44 Rabbi Herzog Street in the Tel Aviv suburb of Givatayim. One apartment was for the rabbi's family, the other to house the synagogue. The apartments were ready by the time the Rabinowitzes arrived.

Rabbi Rabinowitz died in Israel on December 17, 1967. His wife, Sima (who was also his cousin), remained in Givatayim. She subsequently became ill, and the Rabinowitzes' son, Philip, a Conservative rabbi in Chicago, brought her to stay with his family. She died in 1982 and is buried in Israel.

Rabbi Yoseleh and his wife had three children: Philip, Motel and Sarah. They and their children, mindful of their Brezner heritage, lead active Jewish lives.

Philip Rabinowitz, although still a member of the Chicago Board of Rabbis, is involved in executive search work. His wife, Renee, is a practicing attorney. They have two children, Shana and Harley. Shana is married to Eli Levin, a certified public accountant. She has a master's degree in Jewish education, and has completed a law degree. Harley, who was ordained by the Hebrew Theological College in Skokie, Illinois, is the assistant principal of the Hillel Torah Day School in Chicago.

Motel Rabinowitz, comptroller of a nursing home and hospital in New York, is married and has three children: Miriam, Joseph, and Aaron.

Sarah Rabinowitz, who died in 1979, was married to Rabbi Mayer Moskowitz, headmaster of the Ramaz Jewish School in New York. There are four Moskowitz children: Rachel (Winkler), the head of a Jewish day school in Brooklyn, New York, is married to a psychiatric social worker and has a one-year-old child; Abraham, a practicing attorney, is the father of twin daughters; Meshulam, a psychiatric social worker, is married; Yoel, a graduate of Yeshiva University, is active in Zionist circles.

In the Detroit area, all that remains of Rabbi Yoseleh's community are three surviving members of the defunct Brezner Aid Society: Anna Grober, Ida Havis, and the author's mother, Goldie Sugar Broner. The others are interred in the small Brezner Cemetery which is now part of the Chesed Shel Emes Cemetery in St. Clair Shores. Unfortunately, all records of the Brezner Aid Society were lost in a basement flood. Some of the records of Congregation Beth Shmuel, however, were secured by the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan in 1973 and were deposited in their archives.

Although the Brezner Hasidim are no longer with us, they still live in the memories of the descendants of Rabbi Yoseleh and his followers.

### SOURCES

- Bigil, Dr. Gretz. *Mein Shteteleh Brezno* (Yiddish). Tel Aviv: Shavuot, 1943.  
Rabinowitz, Rabbi Philip: Letters and telephone interviews.

## DEDICATION OF AN HISTORICAL MARKER IN MEMORY OF DAVID E. HEINEMAN

Members, friends, and supporters of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan gathered at the Detroit Historical Museum on Sunday, October 16, 1983 to dedicate a bronze plaque in memory of David E. Heineman (1865 - 1935), designer of the flag of the City of Detroit.

The bronze plaque was designed by James E. Conway, curator of architectural history of the Detroit Historical Department; its cost was borne completely by the Jewish Historical Society.

JHSM President Bette A. Roth greeted the assembly and spoke on the significance of the dedication to local Jewish and general history. She also introduced the subsequent speakers. Phillip Applebaum, JHSM immediate past president, gave a brief historical review on the efforts to commemorate David E. Heineman's design over the previous twenty years (text reproduced below). Norman McRae, a member of the Detroit Historical Commission, extended greetings. Leonard N. Simons, DHC commissioner emeritus, presented a light-hearted review of the life and accomplishments of David E. Heineman (reprinted in *The Detroit Jewish News* 10/21/83). Solan W. Weeks, director of the Detroit Historical Society, also extended greetings. Philip P. Mason, director of the Walter P. Reuther Library-Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs (Wayne State University), included in his remarks the text of a letter from David E. Heineman detailing his work on the flag (reproduced on the following page).

### Text of Dr. Mason's Remarks:

We are all here today to dedicate a plaque in honor of David E. Heineman, and also to pay tribute to this man who contributed so much to the Detroit community.

Eleven years ago, I was privileged to participate in the ceremony—along with Leonard Simons—to recognize David Heineman and his significant work in designing the flag of Detroit. I am also pleased to be here today.

Leonard Simons has done a fine job of giving us an account of Heineman's accomplishments. I, too, have always been interested in David Heineman's research on the early history of the Jewish people in Michigan. He was a pioneer in this field of research—as he was in so many other areas.

But it was this historical interest which undoubtedly led David Heineman to design Detroit's first flag. According to his own account, the idea for such a flag came to him while he was marching in a Memorial Day Parade along Woodward Avenue in 1906. He noticed how "squatty" the City Hall looked for lack of a flag at its upper corners.

The details of Heineman's work on the flag are found in a letter which he wrote to Miss M. Burton of 27 Brainard St. in 1915:



LAW OFFICE OF  
**DAVID E. HEINEMAN**  
1706 DIME BANK BUILDING  
DETROIT, MICH.

May 23, 1915

Dear Miss Burton:

Replying to your inquiry, I beg to say that the official flag of Detroit was designed by myself while I was a member of the Common Council sometime in 1907 or early in 1908, and the first flag was made by Mr. Goss from a sketch in pen and water colors which I made for Commissioner of Public Works, Haarar, who gave the order to Mr. Goss for the city. This original sketch is down at the Art Museum, where for several years it was framed and placed at the entrance of the printing room.

The first time the flag was displayed on the City Hall was Pennant Day, June 12th, 1908, pursuant to a resolution of the Common Council (J.C.C. 1908, P. 759). About this time the City Hall was remodelled and the City flag, adapted to a shield shape, was put in stained and painted glass in the window above the President's desk, where it is now to be seen. It is also to be seen in painted glass on the transom glass between the inner and outer rooms of the Mayor's office. It is extensively used on the public documents of the city. I happen to have in my hands as I write, a copy of the Comptroller's last annual report which was given to me a moment ago in the Comptroller's office, and I find a very beautiful, gold-embossed impress of the City Flag in shield form on the cover and also a smaller one on the title page.

The same arrangement of it is also to be seen in granite at the top of the Maybury Monument. A cigar firm manufacturing the "Miss Detroit" cigar have given the flag a great deal of local and state advertisement by their labels.

I need not say to you that the idea of a flag is to combine the City Seal with the Standards under whose sovereignty Detroit has been, the old French, the British, and twice the stars and stripes.

There never was any resolution of the Common Council, describing the flag in heraldic words, but it has been given official sanction not only by continued usage but by directions to have it made and displayed as the city flag. The Commissioner of Public Works had the first flag made by official direction to that effect, whether by the Council or Mayor I do not know.

As I stated, the flag was first adopted very shortly after I designed it and in pursuance of my notion that the city ought to have an official flag. The reason I did not prepare a formal ordinance was because it struck me as savoring too much of a millinery description and at that time there would have been quite a number of persons who would have only seen that side of it. Since that time a great many cities have adopted city flags and as these make for local pride, it will follow that they will be quite generally adopted by the cities of the country.

The post card was gotten up by the Detroit Photochrome Company and this has been the means of advertising the flag all over the world.

Yours truly,

David E. Heineman



Dedication of a plaque in memory of David E. Heineman (designer of the flag of the City of Detroit) by the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan at the Detroit Historical Museum, Detroit, Michigan on Sunday, October 16, 1983. Left to right: Philip Mason, director, Walter Reuther Library, Wayne State University; Norman McRae, commission member, Detroit Historical Commission; John Buckbee, director, Detroit Historical Society; Bette A. Roth, president, Jewish Historical Society of Michigan; Solan Weeks, director, Detroit Historical Museum; Leonard Simons; Phillip Applebaum.

### **Text of Mr. Applebaum's Remarks:**

This day is certainly a cause for celebration for Detroit and its Jewish community, but we should not view this occasion as merely the dedication of a bronze plaque, but better to consider it within its historical context, for it is the culmination of a series of events begun many years ago.

The flag designed by David E. Heineman was officially adopted by the Detroit Common Council on April 20, 1948. A stained-glass window depicting the flag was later installed above the rostrum in the Council chamber of the old Detroit City Hall. Before the building was demolished in 1961, the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan secured the window. About ten years later, at the suggestion of Solan Weeks, the window was installed above the main entrance to the Detroit Historical Museum. On April 20, 1971 the Detroit Common Council passed a resolution in memory of David E. Heineman, and in gratitude for his flag design. On April 20, 1972 a large group of citizens gathered in the Detroit Historical Museum's Round Hall for the official dedication of the stained-glass window. Walter Green, chief executive assistant to Mayor Roman S. Gribbs, read the mayor's proclamation in commemoration of Mr. Heineman; Mel Ravitz, president of the Detroit Common Council, read the Council resolution proclaiming the day David E. Heineman Recognition Day in Detroit. . . .

In 1980 the Board of Directors of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan approved a project to have a bronze tablet in commemoration of David E. Heineman installed in the Detroit Historical Museum. Shortly after assuming the presidency of the Society in the summer of 1981, I got in touch with Solan Weeks and set to work on the project.

This entire Heineman project, from the rescue of the stained-glass window and its dedication in the museum to the idea of a bronze plaque owes its inspiration to Allen A. Warsen, who founded the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan in 1959, and has since been our Honorary President. His efforts to get the public recognition that David E. Heineman so well deserves have been boundless. He has written to, spoken to, prodded and pushed all of us involved in this project into action. I know that this day gives him the greatest satisfaction. Not long ago he celebrated his eightieth birthday, but because of failing health he is now confined to a nursing home and cannot be with us this afternoon. Nevertheless, we extend to him our thanks for having the inspiration and resolve to see the entire chain of David E. Heineman commemorations from beginning to end.

The Jewish Historical Society of Michigan acknowledges with grateful appreciation the following members and friends whose generous contributions made the David E. Heineman commemorative plaque possible:

Mort E. Feigenson  
Irving I. Edgar  
Abraham Satovsky  
Oscar D. Schwartz  
Leonard N. Simons  
George M. Stutz  
Bette A. Roth  
Reuben Levine  
Philip Handleman

### **Text Of The Marker:**

#### THE DETROIT FLAG

The official flag of the City of Detroit was designed in 1907 by David Emil Heineman, President of the Detroit Common Council, prominent civic leader, and first historiographer of Michigan Jewry.

Mr. Heineman's design reflected important phases in Detroit's long and exciting history, and included the City's seal and motto. This design was later incorporated in the beautiful stained glass window which was located above the rostrum of the Council Chamber in Detroit's Old City Hall.

This window now stands above the entrance to the Detroit Historical Museum as a memorial commemorating David E. Heineman's many contributions to Detroit's heritage.

Presented by the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, October 1983.

## BOOK REVIEW

**The Fishers—A Family Portrait.** By Phillip Applebaum.  
Detroit: Harlo Press, 1982. xi + 153 pp. illustrations

**Reviewed by Bette A. Roth**

Max Fisher is, and has been, one of the most important figures in Michigan, American and World Jewry within the past forty years. Not only that, he has served as *shtadlan* to U.S. presidents and statesmen of both political parties. His leadership of the Jewish Agency as well as of major American Jewish organizations has been a magnificent example of astonishing energy, philanthropy, commitment.

*The Fishers—A Family Portrait*, is not a biography of this remarkable man, but is rather a warm, human story of a family. Beginning in Czarist Russia, Phillip Applebaum skillfully traces the migration to this country of Velvil Fisch, Max's father, who came to this country at the turn of the century, changing his name to William Fisher. William exhibits the same traits of enterprise, energy and business acumen which his son would use to become not only a financial giant, but a man for whom the concept of *tzedaka* is a primary motivation in helping his fellow man.

William Fisher was devoted to his family and determined that they share his life in the *goldene medina*. Only one sibling, his brother Beril (Ben Fisher), seized the opportunity; his odyssey shares the focus of this book.

The Fisher family settled in Salem, Ohio. Applebaum relates to us the childhood experiences of Max and his siblings in a small midwestern town, always within the context of the Jewish experience, so that we understand why and how Jews chose to live in centers bereft of large Jewish populations and the effects of this experience on them.

He explains the transition from small town to large metropolis, for the Fishers moved, first to Cleveland and then to Detroit where they have remained. Applebaum traces the Fisher family's venture into the oil business, and the role Max played in making the venture such an American success story.

The discreet portraits of the families of both William and Ben Fisher are painted with delicate skill by the author so that we feel that we know, not only Max Fisher, but his relatives and offspring as well. The volume is a lovely and understated story of this renowned family.

The five appendices provide facts not included in the text: genealogical information, a chronology of family dates, and Jewish names of members of the family.

In sum, Phillip Applebaum has written a first-rate story. He does not gossip or pry. Nevertheless, he presents a needed addition to the repository of the American-Jewish experience.

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BETTE A. ROTH is the president of the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan. She co-authored with Eli Grad *Congregation Shaarey Zedek 5622-5742—1861-1981* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982).

## GENEALOGICAL BRANCH

The Jewish Historical Society of Michigan is pleased to announce the formation of a Genealogical Branch whose purpose it is to assist JHSM members in their research of family history. Research need not be limited to family in Michigan.

The Genealogical Branch has already held several meetings, and has hosted guest speakers who have discussed various genealogical research methods and tools. The Branch is already in touch with Jewish genealogical societies across the country, and also has plans to publish a newsletter which will be circulated nationally.

Any regular JHSM member may become a member of the Genealogical Branch and receive the newsletter for a fee of ten dollars per year in addition to ordinary JHSM dues.

With our archival and research resources, the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan is uniquely equipped to sponsor genealogical research.

The response to the initial Branch meetings has been very strong. Additional volunteer help, however, is needed, especially with the newsletter. For more information on Genealogical Branch activities, contact Sarah Bell, (313) 354-3130.

## CORRECTION

*Michigan Jewish History* June 1983: In the article, "Jack A. Robinson and Perry Drug Stores, Inc.," the caption to the photograph on page 14 should read: Hanuka Party, December 1940. Jack is seated third from left. To his left is his sister, Frances, and to her left is their grandfather, Velvil Aizkowitz. Jack's mother, Fannie, is standing directly behind Frances.

## NEW MEMBERS

We warmly welcome our new members with the hope that their association with us will be fruitful and rewarding.

Esther Adler	Mrs. Leonard Handler
Joseph Adler	Mervin Jacobson
Jeffrey Aisen	Lois Kadushin
Susan Barr	Brian R. Kaye
Mildred Bazell	Fran Kaye
Leah Jordan Bisel	Barbara Koltonow
Douglas Dovitz	George B. Losonci
Michael Feldman	Cynthia Mandelbaum
Mrs. Albert Fergerler	Joel D. Marwil
Stanley Finkelstein	Charles Newman
Bernard Friedman	Albert H. Reifler
Ruth Friedman	Barbara Shapiro
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Dean Gettleson	Edward F. Stein
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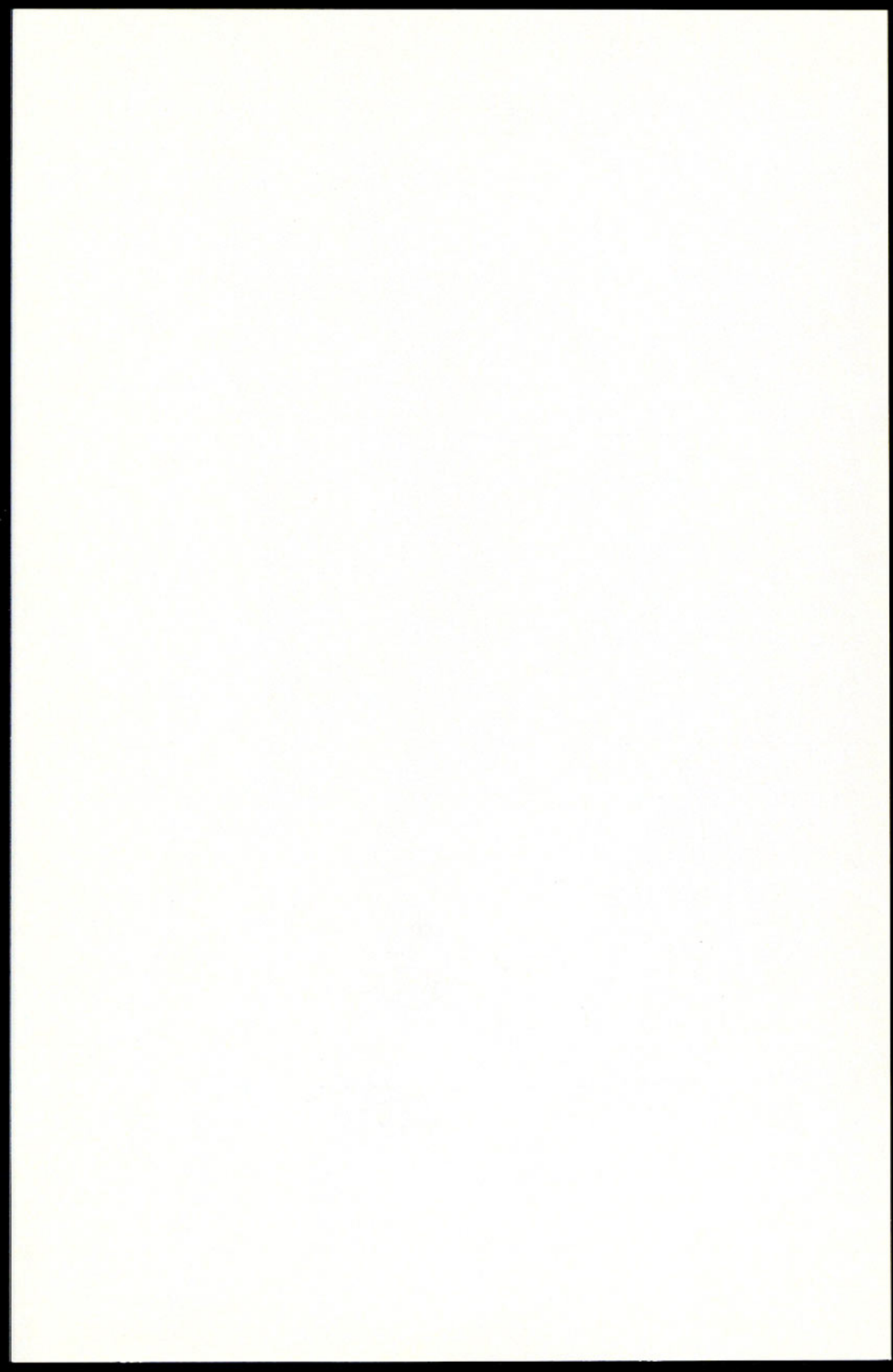
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