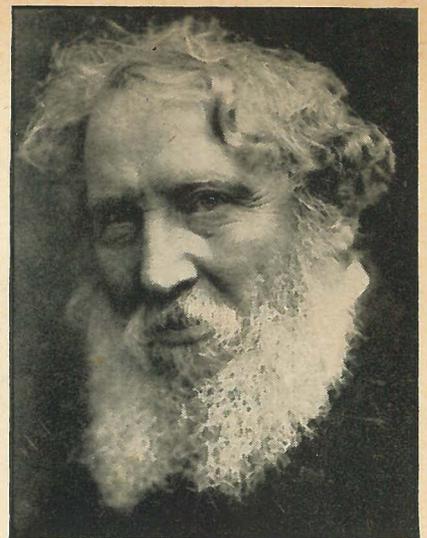




PRESIDENT ADLER



JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
God's covenant with Israel is an inescapable covenant.



Wide World, Hans Knopf—Pix
PRESIDENT SCHECHTER

Jews, the sense of being a chosen people is dim or extinct.

Conservative Judaism is newer still, and born in the U.S. It represents a middle way between Orthodox and Reform Judaism. Its founders considered Orthodoxy too adamantly withdrawn from U.S. life, Reform too spiritually attenuated. They fashioned a synagogue service in which English is used but Hebrew predominates. Men & women sit together, as they do in Reform congregations; the men cover their heads, as among the Orthodox. Conservative Jews are taught that, as Jews, they have been chosen by God for a spiritual purpose—but that those of other faiths, including Christians and Moslems, have also been chosen. Conservative Judaism is the middle ground on which Rabbi Finkelstein has taken his stand.

"Service Is Not Exclusive." The citadel of Conservative Judaism is the Jewish Theological Seminary, and Rabbi Finkelstein has been its president for eleven years. With his flashing eyes, floating hair and black beard heavily streaked with grey, he looks, at 56, like a reasonable modern facsimile of an Old Testament patriarch. Sometimes he talks like one, sometimes like the scholar he is—and sometimes like the successful fund-raiser that he is, too.

His personal life is Orthodox enough to satisfy a Pharisee. Each morning he rises at 5:30 so that he can attend synagogue services before breakfast. Then for an hour or two before the day's work at the seminary, he prays and studies the Torah. Most of his faculty are equally observant of Jewish law and tradition. But Orthodox Jews are scandalized that some of the seminary's 23-man board of directors are members of Reform synagogues.* And even some Conservative Jews are shocked at Finkelstein's habit of inviting Christian theologians (e.g., Reinhold Niebuhr, of Union Theological Seminary, just across the street) to talk to his students. President Finkelstein has an answer to such

objectors: "The job of special service to God is not exclusive to the Jews."

The Great Confession. Louis Finkelstein was born in Cincinnati on June 14, 1895. His father, Simon J. Finkelstein, a strong-minded Orthodox rabbi from Slobodka, Lithuania, moved to a congregation in Brooklyn when Louis was seven. It was there, in Brooklyn's heavily Jewish Brownsville district, that Louis grew up.

The everyday routine in an old-school Orthodox home might make a Scotch Presbyterian Sunday seem frivolous. But Louis seemed to have been born with a rabbinical cap on his head. "I can't remember a time," he says, "when anything meant more than the study of the Law."

Like every Orthodox Jewish boy, he first learned the great monotheistic confession of faith which every devout Jew hopes to have the strength to repeat on his

deathbed: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One." He learned the complex system of ritual blessings with which the Orthodox Jew sanctifies every important action of the day: the thanks on awakening (for the day, for the power of sight, for the creation of the earth, for the power to walk, for the renewal of his strength, for not being an idolator or a slave or a woman*), the blessings before & after meals, and the special thanks to be offered on such occasions as the sight of trees in springtime, the ocean, a rainbow, or the getting of new possessions.

He learned the 13 points of the creed of the great 12th Century rabbi, Maimonides, the Jewish Aristotle: the belief in God's existence, in His unity, incorporeality, timelessness, and approachability through prayer; the belief in prophecy, in the superiority of Moses to all other prophets, in the revelation of the Law and its immutability, in Divine providence, Divine justice, the eventual coming of the Messiah; the belief in the resurrection and in everlasting life. He memorized the civil and canon law of the Talmud in great early-morning gulps, often leaving home at 5:30 a.m. to study in the synagogue before school. For at least an hour a day, with a rabbinical tutor, he puzzled out the vowelless Hebrew and the interpretations of the sacred text.

Baseball for Rabbis. Louis' closest friend was another young Torah student almost as sobersided as himself. Solomon Goldman descended from a line of eleven rabbis. Now head of Anshe Emet synagogue in Chicago and one of the most respected scholars in U.S. Judaism, he remembers his friend Louis as painfully shy. In Goldman's house he would often lower his head and walk past Goldman's mother and sisters without a word. Goldman attributes this to Finkelstein's piety: to walk with the head held high, Jewish tradition teaches, is bold and immodest.

For all his painful shyness, Louis Finkel-



SCROLL OF THE TORAH
Clear and strong.

Newspictures

* A Jewish woman, at this point in her morning prayers, humbly thanks God that He has created her according to His will.

* Among them: U.S. Senator Herbert H. Lehman.