

The Influence of Progressive Judaism in Poland—an Outline

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In the historiography of Judaism in the Polish lands the influence of Reform Judaism is often overlooked. The opinion is frequently cited that the Polish Jews were tied to tradition and did not accept ideas of religious reform coming from the West. This paper fills the gap in historiography by giving some examples of activities of progressive communities and their leaders. It focuses mainly on eminent rabbis and preachers such as Abraham Goldschmidt, Markus Jastrow, and Izaak Cylkow. Supporters of progressive Judaism in Poland did not have as strong a position as representatives of the Reform or Conservative Judaism in Germany or the United States. Religious reforms introduced by them were for a number of reasons moderate or limited. However, one cannot ignore this movement in the history of Judaism in Poland, since that trend was significant for the history of Jews in Poland and Polish-Jewish relations.

In the historiography of Judaism in the Polish lands, the history of the influence of Reform Judaism is often overlooked. The opinion is frequently cited that the Polish Jews were tied to tradition and did not accept ideas of religious reform coming from the West. This opinion is perhaps correct in terms of the number of “progressive” Jews, often so-called proponents of reform, on Polish soil, in comparison to the total number of Polish Jews. However, the influence of “progressives” went much further and deeper, in both the Jewish and Polish community. And one should not overlook this aspect when discussing the issue of the history of Judaism in Poland.

Michael Meyer, the most prominent contemporary scholar of the history of Reform Judaism, also writes that the history of the impact of Reform Judaism in Central and Eastern Europe is neglected by modern historians of Judaism and Jews. However, Meyer’s only article on Eastern Europe is limited

mainly to Russia, but he writes that there are also signs of reform in the Polish lands.¹ In his view there was only one small group from a German synagogue in Warsaw that introduced a radically reformed worship and a sermon preached mostly in Polish. However, the Polish progressives, mostly wealthy and assimilated, had no consciousness of belonging to the worldwide movement.²

Reform Judaism centers in Polish territory were mostly synagogues or prayer houses known as “progressive,” “reformed,” “German” or “Polish,” or “Temple.” Unfortunately, the historiography of the Jews in Polish territory in the nineteenth century pays much more attention to the processes accompanying the Haskalah and reform, that is, acculturation, assimilation, secularization, and integrationism, than to purely religious aspects. Those few works on the influence of the reform relate primarily to the history of individual communities and synagogues, rarely addressing religious issues of changes in the liturgy, rabbis and preachers, the sermons they preached, and modifications to worship.³ Almost none of the great preachers and advocates of the Polish-Jewish fraternity in the nineteenth century, including Abraham Goldschmidt, Izaak Cyłkow, Izaak Kramsztyk, Szymon Dankowicz, Ozjasz Thon, and many other progressive rabbis, have larger biographical or critical studies of their legacy, except for Markus Jastrow.⁴

New ideas of Reform Judaism had already reached the Polish lands in the early nineteenth century with the settling of German Jews in the Prussian partition zone. In 1802 Isaac Flatau, a Jew who came from Prussia, founded a private synagogue on Daniłowiczowska Street in Warsaw, which from the

¹Michael A. Meyer, “The German Model of Religious Reform and Russian Jewry,” in Meyer, *Judaism within Modernity: Essays on Jewish History and Religion* (Detroit, 2001), pp. 279–281.

²Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Detroit, 2001), p. 339. See also his “Religious Reform,” in *YIVO Encyclopaedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, www.yivoinstitute.org/pdf/reform.pdf, pp. 2–3.

³On these aspects see the important article of Stephen D. Corrsin, which is also a review of M. Meyer’s studies on Reform Judaism in Eastern Europe (Stephen D. Corrsin, “Progressive Judaism in Poland: Dilemmas of Modernity and Identity,” in Z. Gitelman, L. Hajda, J.-P. Himka, R. Solchanyk, eds., *Cultures and Nations of Central and Eastern Europe: Essays in Honor of Roman Szporluk* [Cambridge, MA, 2000], pp. 89–99).

⁴See my recent book: Michał Galas, *Rabin Markus Jastrow i jego wizja reformy judaizmu: Studium z dziejów judaizmu w XIX wieku* (Rabbi Marcus Jastrow and his Vision of Reform of Judaism: Study of the History of Judaism in the 19th Century) (Krakow, 2007). There are also details about the religious reforms in Warsaw in the nineteenth century.

outset was called a German synagogue. Originally, worship in the synagogue did not differ from services in other synagogues in Warsaw. What stood out was the reformers' dress and the language in which they preached. More radical changes were made only after the death of the synagogue's founder, when it ceased to be a private synagogue and became a synagogue of the progressive community in Warsaw.⁵

The first changes in the liturgy were introduced by a preacher named Abraham Goldschmidt.⁶ In the 1840s, the synagogue's choir was included as a part of worship, and a preacher dressed in a white chasuble preached from the pulpit in German. The synagogue was also experiencing a rapid increase in attendees. In response, an initiative was undertaken to build a new synagogue that would be located near the old one. The new synagogue received the official name of the Synagogue at Daniłowiczowska Street, although its authorities wanted to call it the synagogue of German Israelites. The new synagogue cultivated Reform rituals and strictly adhered to the Reform order during religious services. German sermons were preached in this synagogue until 1859, when Markus (Mordechai) Jastrow (1829–1903) started to preach in Polish.

With the support and recommendation of Heinrich Graetz and Rabbi Abraham M. Goldschmidt, who moved from Warsaw to Leipzig, Jastrow was appointed as a preacher of the German Synagogue at Daniłowiczowska Street in 1858. Goldschmidt even sent a letter to Warsaw congratulating him on his election: "I did not want a bungler to succeed me to act as a foil, on the contrary I wanted to see the work created by me, and thank God, fairly well developed, to be well cared for and advanced. . . . You have a congregation the like of which hardly can be found in Germany, friendly, receptive, not yet blasé, on the contrary, rather given to enthusiasm."⁷ The committee of the synagogue signed a contract with Marcus Jastrow for five years. In the contract Jastrow was obliged among other things to start preaching in Polish no later than at the end of the first year of his work in Warsaw. He was also obliged to organize and teach in the congregational religious school.

Unfortunately, there is not much information about the changes that were introduced to the liturgy in the progressive synagogues in Warsaw and generally in Polish lands. One of the first changes, besides the order of the religious services, was to shorten the liturgy. In order to do so, part of the *piyyutim* for

⁵Galas, *Rabin Markus Jastrow*, pp. 68–76.

⁶For more on A. Goldschmidt see Galas, *Rabin Markus Jastrow*, pp. 63–66, 71–73, see also index.

⁷American Jewish Archives SC 5686, p. [21].

Rosh ha-Shana were to be omitted from the prayer book of medieval accretions. Sara Zilberstejn writes and confirms that an official prayer book prepared by Mannheimer for the Jewish community in Vienna was introduced in Warsaw, but not without doubts and discussions.⁸

Jastrow also had other models for reforms. His teacher and spiritual leader was Michael Sachs, so it is understandable that he undertook to prepare a Polish translation of his prayer book, although with some reservations. In his 1859 letter to Isidor Monasch, son of Ber Loebel Monasch from Krotoszyn, one of the best known Jewish printers and publishers in the nineteenth century, Jastrow wrote:

“As far as a siddur is concerned, we have published one in a Polish translation, but it is not selling well. Jews prefer a German translation to a Polish one. The Polish [siddur] according to them reminds them of Catholicism. If you find a good translator, an educated Pole, to translate the translation by Sachs correctly and in a good style it would be valuable, but the financial results [of such undertaking] might be questionable.”⁹

But already in the introduction to the *Techynoth* edition of 1861 Jastrow had changed his position and suggested that it was necessary for Polish translations of the prayer book to be published. He praised the author of the translation for this decision, stated that similar books were already available in all European languages, and hoped that this book would constitute the beginning of a range of religious works in the Polish language.¹⁰

It is clear that from the moment Jastrow began to preach in Polish and began to feel more comfortable in that language, he spread the idea of publishing religious works in the Polish language for use by members of his own synagogue, but also for the wider Jewish and Polish public.

According to the agreement with the Board of the Synagogue, Jastrow was also to direct a religious school for boys and girls. With his qualifications and experience of being a teacher in Berlin, he immediately and eagerly set to work. From the beginning the school had enjoyed popularity. Initially, the number of students was about 80, with only half of the students paying tuition. On May 26, 1860 the first ceremony of confirmation of boys and girls was held during Jastrow's term of office in Warsaw.

⁸Sara Zilbersztejn, “Postępowa Synagoga na Daniłowiczowskiej,” *Biuletyn ŻIH*, Vol. 74 (1970): 31–57.

⁹American Jewish Archives SC 5686, p. [26].

¹⁰*Techynoth: Modlitwy dla Polek wyznania Mojżeszowego* przez Rozalię z Felixów M.S[aulsową] (Warsaw, 1861). [Przedmowa] Dr. M. Jastrow, pp. V–VI.

The ceremony was an important event in the synagogue, and Jastrow received official thanks from the president, Adam Epstein, and the Committee for carrying it out. Confirmation of girls and boys together had to be the event which was perceived as a major innovation in implementing reforms in the synagogue. It was an event that certainly did not go unnoticed in the entire Jewish community of Warsaw.¹¹

However, the same ceremony conducted in 1846 in Lviv by the progressive Rabbi Abraham Kohn was rather seen as an attempt by Christianity to influence Judaism, and unfortunately ended tragically.¹² Although Warsaw was a more tolerant city, the event affected the subsequent history of the school. The fact that the number of students fell to 30 in the same year, 1860, is probably due to this ceremony.

The introduction of Polish as the language of sermons was an important event in the history of this congregation. It was accepted with more satisfaction as Marcus Jastrow was able to preach in Polish and introduce this custom to this synagogue. This innovation became very important as the congregation grew because its new members did not know German. Only two small collections of Jastrow's sermons have been published, one in German with two sermons and one in Polish containing eight sermons.¹³

Sermons are one of the most important sources of information about the theological advancement of Jastrow and the whole congregation in Warsaw. Unfortunately, until now they have not been researched by any historian of the reform of Judaism from outside Poland. Very meaningful are his sermon collections in Polish dated 1861 (March–September). Those sermons were created in response to specific historical events of that period, which is reflected in their very title: *Kazania miane podczas ostatnich wypadków w Warszawie r. 1861.* (*Sermons Delivered During the Last Incidents in Warsaw in 1861*). Those sermons are the only surviving book publications in Polish signed by Jastrow.

¹¹Michał Galas, *Rabin Markus Jastrow*, pp. 92–94.

¹²On this tragic event see Michael Stanislawski, *A Murder in Lemberg: Politics, Religion, and Violence in Modern Jewish History* (Princeton, 2007) and Bałaban Majer, *Historia lwowskiej Synagogi Postępowej* (Lwów, 1937).

¹³Markus Jastrow, *Israels Auserwählung: Zwei Predigten am ersten und zweiten Tage des Wochenfestes (Schabuot) 5620 in der Synagoge zu Warschau (genannt: Synagoga przy Ulicy Daniłowiczowskiej) gehalten und auf dringendes Bitten vieler Gemeinde-Mitglieder herausgegeben von Prediger Dr. M. Jastrow* (Berlin, 1860); Jastrow, *Kazania miane podczas ostatnich wypadków w Warszawie* (Poznań, 1862).

In fact, the first sermon in the collection is dedicated to the souls of the victims of the anti-Russian protest—whom Jastrow calls co-brothers—who died on February 27, 1861. Such an affirmation of the common fate of Christians and Jews in contemporary and eternal life is Jastrow's contribution towards the development of Polish-Jewish brotherhood in those times. Jastrow also highlights in these Polish sermons that equality of all people is the basis of the Jewish religion. He also emphasizes that misery caused by existing divisions is not only the fault of people but also the will of God. He writes that

God is a fair Justice of the world and thus in His unequalled wisdom He demeaned this country, this country that we lived in for centuries, this country of our fathers, our fatherland, because of the division and separation of those who could be happy if united; in the same way He will elevate our country when we have given such an excellent and eternally remembered proof of the return to God and to love of our neighbors that He ordered, when our country visibly and under heaven's tent has showed to the whole world a rare example in the history of brotherhood of all its sons, the excellent reconciliation of all children of one mother, divided thus far.¹⁴

In Warsaw, Jastrow quickly became a very popular personage not only among members of his synagogue, but also among the Jewish and Polish communities, particularly because of his involvement in Polish patriotic actions against the Russian occupation. After the funeral of five victims killed during the anti-Russian protest, which took place on Saturday, 2 March 1861, in which Rabbis Dov Ber Meisels (1798–1870, the chief rabbi of Warsaw), Izaak Kramsztyk (1814–1889, the preacher of the so-called Polish progressive synagogue), and Marcus Jastrow took part, Jastrow wrote, that “[n]ever was Poland less bigoted and less intolerant as in the times when all God's houses of all faiths were full of patriotic speeches and national songs and Catholic processions and pilgrimages were accompanied by political emblems.”¹⁵ This spiritual and political inspiration had an obvious religious background for Jastrow, but one which was not specific.

In October 1861, rabbis closed synagogues in solidarity with the closing of all churches in Warsaw. Those events caused the arrest and detention in the Citadel of three Warsaw Rabbis (Jastrow, Kramsztyk, and Meisels). After three months Jastrow, a Prussian citizen, was deported to Prussia instead of being sent to Siberia. (After a few years' stay in Germany and a brief return

¹⁴Markus Jastrow, *Kazania*, p. 18.

¹⁵Markus Jastrow, *Die Vorläufer des polnischen Aufstandes: Beiträge zur Geschichte des Königreichs Polen von 1855 bis 1863* (Leipzig, 1864), p. 50.

to Warsaw, he moved to the U.S. in 1866, where he became rabbi of the Congregation Rodeph Shalom in Philadelphia. His activities made him one of the leaders of religious transformations in American Judaism, both Reform and Conservative.¹⁶⁾

Jastrow advocated a moderate religious reform of Jews that would lead to the Polish Jews' becoming "the Poles' religion of Moses." In his opinion, the way to that goal was to educate young people in a new spirit, so that their participation in the cultural and political life of the countries in which they lived became possible. He did not limit himself to only verbal statements, but he put his ideas into action.

After Marcus Jastrow, Rabbi Izaak Cylkow (1841–1908) assumed the position of preacher of the synagogue and served there from 1865 to 1910. Cylkow, a graduate of the Warsaw Rabbinical School, was the first preacher who came from the circle of the Warsaw progressives. He was also the editor and translator of the bilingual Hebrew-Polish edition of the Hebrew Bible. During his office at the Synagogue at Daniłowiczowska Street, the synagogue once again became too small, and a decision was made to build a new, larger one. In 1878 he opened a new synagogue on Tłomackie Street, which could accommodate more than 2000 people. The synagogue was known as "The Great" until World War II and was the most impressive of the Warsaw synagogues.¹⁷

From 1826 until 1863 yet another institution in Warsaw, the Rabbinical School, was related to the progressives. This school was created through the initiative of the more radical advocates of reform who on the one hand opposed orthodoxy, in particular Hasidism, and on the other hand, supported efforts of Jews to assimilate. The founding of the Rabbinical School shows how important education was for the progressives. They hoped, first, to add secular material to Jewish education. Secondly, they hoped to introduce the achievements of "Wissenschaft des Judentums" into traditional Jewish studies, even at the expense of cooperation with non-Jewish authorities and support of cultural assimilation. Polish (and not German or Hebrew) was the official language in the Rabbinical School. Over the years the school had over 300 graduates, but unfortunately none of them became rabbis (except after ad-

¹⁶For more about Jastrow in the U.S., see Michał Gałas, *Rabin Markus Jastrow*, pp. 167–259.

¹⁷About Cylkow see Michał Gałas, ed., *Rabin Izaak Cylkow w setną rocznicę śmierci* (Kraków, 2010).

ditional training, for example, in Berlin). For this reason, the activities of the school and its achievements were evaluated in a variety of ways.¹⁸

Not all the progressives, especially those associated with the School of Rabbis, accepted the activities of the “German” synagogue. In 1852, a new synagogue carrying the name “Polish” was opened on Nalewki Street in a building belonging to the Rabbinical School, so called because the preaching was done in Polish. The first preacher was the aforementioned Izaak Kramsztyk. The competition between the two progressive synagogues in Warsaw did not last long because soon the “German” synagogue also adopted the Polish language for sermons. The turning point in the relations between the two synagogues became the reason for Jastrow’s published quote in 1860, saying that “the obligation of Jews in Poland is to become Poles of Mosaic persuasion.” Soon the progressives from both synagogues met at the new Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street. Supporters of progress published many publications and magazines in Polish; the most important one was journal *Izraelita* published in the years 1866–1915, which became a major platform for the progressives on Polish territory in the nineteenth century.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, ideas of the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment), Reform Judaism, and the “Wissenschaft des Judentums” spread into other Jewish communities in the Polish lands, especially Galicia, Lviv, and Krakow.

The beginnings of a progressive synagogue in Lviv date to the forties of the nineteenth century, when a synagogue was built with the name “Deutsch-Israelitischen Bethause.” At the end of the nineteenth century, the name was changed to “Progressive Communal Synagogue,” or simply “Great” or “Temple.” The first preacher of the synagogue was Rabbi Abraham Kohn, who arrived in Lviv in 1844 from Hohenes in Tirol.

From the beginning Rabbi Kohn was severely criticized by Orthodox Jews for making changes in their synagogue, such as the use of the German language in sermons. But the sharpest conflict occurred in 1846 when he organized a confirmation ceremony for boys and girls. His opponents saw this event as an attempt to introduce Christian traditions into the synagogue. As a result, Rabbi Kohn was attacked on the streets of Lviv, and finally poisoned

¹⁸About the Rabbinical School see e.g. Antony Polonsky, “Warszawska Szkoła Rabinów: orędowniczka narodowej integracji w Królestwie Polskim,” in Michał Galas, ed., *Duchowość żydowska w Polsce: Materiały z międzynarodowej konferencji dedykowanej pamięci profesora Chone Shmeruka* (Kraków, 2000), pp. 287–308.

in 1848 by a supporter of orthodoxy.¹⁹ However, even with conflicts, the synagogue was able to continue changing, eventually even installing an organ.

Rabbi Kohn was succeeded by a series of distinguished rabbis: Rabbi Moritz Loewenthal, who came from Germany, then Rabbi Simon Schwabacher, who came to Lvov from Bavaria but soon left for Odessa. In 1862, Rabbi Ber Loewenstein became a rabbi of the Reform community in Lviv. He introduced certain changes to rituals in the synagogue which resulted in the synagogue's becoming a place of worship not only on the Sabbath and holidays, but also on other occasions—for example, he even celebrated a convention for the fire department. Loewenstein was succeeded by Rabbi Ezekiel Caro, who was recommended by Rabbi Adolf Jelinek from Vienna. He held this position from 1891 to 1915. During this time he was able to install an organ in the synagogue. In 1903, an assistant of Rabbi Samuel Wolf Guttman was employed to preach sermons also in Polish. Caro went to Vienna during the First World War, and after his death Rabbi Guttman took his position. During the interwar period, Rabbi Levi Freund, who preached his first sermon in 1921, played an important role in the progressive synagogue. Ezekiel Levin, who was also a doctor of philosophy of Jagiellonian University, was the last rabbi of the progressive synagogue. He was also a well-known Zionist activist and the most moderate among all rabbis of the progressive synagogue in Lvov. As J. Bussgang described it, "Rabbis Kohn and Caro were more Progressive than Loewenstein and Freund. Rabbi Levin shifted somewhat towards orthodoxy."²⁰ This direction is rather symptomatic for progressive societies in Poland during interwar period.

It seems that the community of the progressives in Lviv was one of the strongest at the end of the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century. From Lviv came eminent leaders and scholars such as Moses Schorr, Markus Braude, Ozjasz Thon, David Neumark (Rabbi and scholar at Hebrew Union College), and Marcus Ehrenpreis (Rabbi in Sofia and Stockholm).

In Krakow, the so-called Mendelsohn's Bible was already studied in the 1820s in progressive circles. In 1844 in Krakow, the "Association of Religion and Civilization" was formed, and in 1861 a new synagogue for proponents of progress called "Tempel" was founded (which exists to this day).

¹⁹See Michael Stanislawski, *Murder in Lemberg*; Majer Bałaban, *Historia lwowskiej Synagogi Postępowej*.

²⁰Julian Bussgang, "The Progressive Synagogue in Lwów," in *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, ed. Antony Polonsky, Vol. 11 (Oxford, 1998): 127–153.

In 1868 Rabbi Szymon Dankowicz was hired as a preacher, who was both well educated and fluent in the Polish language. His nomination aroused many hopes since he spoke and preached in Polish. Dankowicz was also to receive a position as the assistant to the main city rabbi, Szymon Schreiber. This project was received with such bitter criticism by the orthodox that in 1869 supporters withdrew with the intention of creating their own reform community with the name *Zbór Izraelitów Postępowych w Krakowie* (*Community of Progressive Israelites in Krakow*). Unfortunately, this plan failed because the Austrian authorities forbade creating more than one community in one town. From that time on both communities, reformed and orthodox, had to exist next to each other and look for compromise. As a result, supporters of reform had to revise some of their views, and the rabbi of Tempel synagogue was assigned the position of private preacher. However, that was not enough for Dankowicz's aspirations, and he left Krakow in 1874.²¹

A period of stagnation among supporters of Reform in Krakow was broken by the appointment of Ozjasz Thon as a preacher in Tempel synagogue, where he was rabbi for almost 40 years from 1897 until 1936. His personality to a great extent had an impact on the further history of the reformed community in Krakow. Ozjasz Thon was a very special person in the history of Jews in Krakow in the 20th century; he came from the community of progressive Jews in Lviv and received religious and secular education in Berlin. Despite his activities in the Zionist movement, he accepted a position as rabbi and preacher of the reformed synagogue Tempel in Krakow. But in his preaching he frequently talked about subjects connected with Zionism and about patriotism towards the country in which Jews had to live. During an initial meeting with the representatives of the Council of Tempel before he accepted his nomination he said: "You can recommend what kind of dress I have to wear for the cult, you can demand as many times and for how long I should speak, but what I have to say to present the problems, is my own exclusive business. In this sense I want to have my personal independence and I am not going to do without it."²²

²¹For more about that period see Hanna Kozińska-Witt, *Die Krakauer Jüdische Reformgemeinde 1864–1874* (Frankfurt a. M., 1999); Kozińska-Witt, "Stowarzyszenie Izraelitów Postępowych w Krakowie 1864–74," in *Duchowość żydowska w Polsce*, pp. 309–326.

²²H. Pfeffer, *Ozjasz Thon 1870–1936*, p. 22. About Thon see N. Hollander, *Jehoszua Thon—Preacher, Thinker, Politician* (Montevideo, 1966) and Emanuel Melzer, "Pomiędzy polityką a duchowością: dr Ozjasz Thon—rabin z Krakowa (1870–1936)," in *Duchowość żydowska w Polsce*, pp. 327–352.

Ozjasz Thon was active in many areas including as a Zionist activist, a politician, and a thinker. As rabbi of Tempel synagogue he stressed the necessity of improving education (he was the first chairman of the network of Tarbut schools in Poland) and introducing the achievements of civilization into everyday life (but he was strongly against any assimilation). The ideas of reform receded into the background under his leadership, and he became the spiritual leader of a considerable part of Jewish community in Krakow.

However, progressive communities were small in number and limited to larger cities, especially in the lands under Prussian occupation. In the nineteenth century, progressive communities in the Polish Kingdom existed in Lodz, Kalisz, Wloclawek, and Galicia-Lviv, Tarnopol, Brody, Kraków, and Stanislawow. During the interwar period, they existed in almost all major cities of the Polish Republic. Almost everywhere, Reform was adopted through the German language, and only after some time did it give way to Polish. The Polish model for progressives in the nineteenth century was the reform of Vienna, called "Vienna rite," developed by the local rabbi and preacher Isaac Noah Mannheimer and cantor Solomon Sulzer.

Advocacy of progressive Judaism greatly weakened with the twentieth century. As in other European countries, including Poland, one could observe a process of assimilation and secularization among the progressives, which often either led to acceptance of Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Calvinism or resulted in a total departure from religion. On the other hand, conflicts in the Orthodox communities at that time were not so deep, and therefore they were better able to counteract the idea of the reform of Judaism. Thus, in the early twentieth century one can see changing positions of the more moderate progressives, most of them supporting the idea of Zionism.

What united supporters of Reform in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was the idea of creating institutions on Polish soil at the academic level that would teach in the spirit of "Wissenschaft des Judentums" modeled on Jewish Seminaries in Wroclaw and Berlin. It was not an easy task, especially after the experience of the Rabbinical School in Warsaw. After the construction of the Great Synagogue in Warsaw, reformers planned to organize a Main Judaic Library, which was proposed to be the nucleus of the new educational institutions. However, the attempt had to be postponed for some time, and the idea was revisited only with the establishment of an independent Poland.

The initiator of such an institution was Rabbi Abraham Samuel Poznanski (1864–1921), a preacher and rabbi at the Great Synagogue in Warsaw and Cylkow's successor. He was also a well-educated scholar of Oriental Studies and the history of Jews and Karaites. Because of his knowledge and personality he was invited to take the chair at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New

York; however, unfortunately his poor health and early death prevented the realization of his goals.

His successor, Rabbi Moses Schorr (1874–1942), professor of Oriental Studies at Warsaw University and Doctor Honoris Causa of the Jewish Theological Seminary,²³ undertook those goals successfully. In 1925, owing to his efforts the Society for the Propagation of Judaic Studies was created, whose main task was setting up the Institute for Judaic Studies, which finally opened in 1928. Its initiators were a group of professors, teachers at different universities drawn from progressives circles, and rabbis of progressive synagogues, including Professor Majer Balaban, Professor Moses Schorr, Dr. Ignacy Schipper of Lviv; and Rabbi Ozjasz Thon of Krakow. They were also the first lecturers at the Institute. Initially, the main task of the Institute was the training of teachers of Mosaic religion and Judaic subjects for schools, but the teachers soon realized that there was an urgent need to organize a department to educate rabbis for the progressive circles in Poland. In the end, the Institute had two departments: rabbinic and historical-social. Particular emphasis was placed on the way rabbis were taught, which was different from the Orthodox and Hasidic system of education. The rabbis trained at the Institute were expected to have an extensive knowledge of Jewish tradition, its history and secular subjects, and a very good knowledge of Polish. Rabbis Markus Jastrow, Izaak Kramsztyk, and Ozjasz Thon serve as examples of well educated progressives.

To become a student at the Institute one had to be a student of the Faculty of Humanities at the state university and receive a master's degree before completing the studies at the Institute. In 1936, the Institute moved its location to the Main Judaic Library building located near the Great Synagogue.²⁴

When the activities of the Institute began to bear fruit, an attempt was undertaken to consolidate the communities gathered around progressive synagogues in Poland. In the 1930s, the first congress of progressive synagogues was organized, during which the Central Union of Progressive Synagogues was created. There was also a Union of Rabbis with a Higher Education Degree that differentiated itself from the Union of Rabbis in Poland.

Supporters of progressive Judaism in Poland have never had as strong a position as representatives of the Reform or Conservative Judaism in Ger-

²³This association with the Jewish Theological Seminary can also be traced to the religious program of the Institute of Jewish Studies in Warsaw.

²⁴Marian Fuks, "The Institute for Judaic Studies in Warsaw (1928–1939)," in *Jewish Historical Institute—The First Fifty Years 1947–1997* (Warsaw, 1996), pp. 29–41.

many or the United States. The religious reforms they introduced were for a number of reasons moderate or limited. However, one cannot ignore this movement in the history of Judaism in Poland, since this trend was significant for several reasons. The progressives from Poland—for example, Marcus Jastrow, David Neumark, and Markus Ehrenpreis—were also the promoters of reforms abroad. Despite the strong initial relationship with German culture, in the second half of the nineteenth century proponents of reform identified themselves with Polish culture, which is well illustrated by their self-identification as “Poles of Mosaic persuasion.” That relation with Polish culture was extremely significant and is meaningful even today. Polish progressives from the very beginning thought that it was their obligation to write in Polish. Their works written in the nineteenth and especially in the twentieth century are very important for Jewish historiography in general, but are above all important for Polish-Jewish historiography. It would not be possible after fifty years of neglect to revive Jewish studies at Polish universities without such a treasure of knowledge. Many of their books were reprinted and have served as handbooks for students, and that situation will probably won’t change for some time.