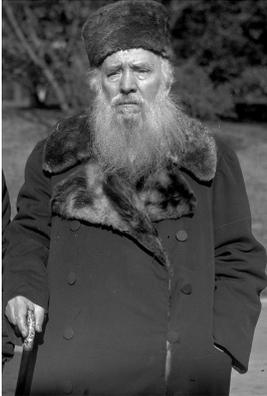


Tradition, Tradition!



As the son of a father whose family was devoutly Catholic and a mother who was a lifelong Episcopalian; married to a woman whose Italian heritage on both sides was centuries deep into Catholicism, it came as a surprise to me to find that not only did I have some Jewish relatives... I had, in my family tree, one of the leading rabbis of his day.

Gabriel Wolf Margolis was born in Lithuania and studied with Rabbi Joshua of Vilna, the uncle of the Hafez Hayyim. He was ordained in 1869 and quickly gained a reputation as being an uncompromising traditionalist. After the pogroms of 1903, he fiercely opposed the Jews who embraced the revolutionary movement but he failed in an attempt to have them declared as being no longer members of the Jewish community.

He accepted an offer to serve as chief rabbi of seven congregations in Boston but disputed with the Agudat Harabbonim (union of Orthodox Rabbis) over kashrut (the set of dietary laws for the Jewish people to follow, familiarly known as kosher). He welcomed a move to New York where he served as rabbi of Adath Israel, a lower East Side congregation, for over a quarter century. The membership of his congregation continually grew, ultimately reaching over 10,000 souls.

Moshe Sherman said, referring to Gabriel Wolf Margolis: "The major thrust of his efforts to transplant the European world of Jewish piety and observance to the United States proved to

be difficult" – at least in his generation when Americanization was the primary interest of immigrants and especially of their children.

At the time of his death, he was recognized as the oldest active rabbi practicing in the United States. Gabriel Wolf Margolis was the granduncle of the husband of my wife's grandmother.

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