

Carolina Israelite ^[1]

Carolina Israelite

by Bryna R. Coonin, 2006

Carolina Israelite, a [newspaper](#) ^[2] published in [Charlotte](#) ^[3] from 1944 to 1968, was the creation of journalist, social critic, and humorist Harry Golden (1902?-81). Golden, who changed his name from Harry Goldhurst after serving a prison sentence for postal law violations, grew up on New York's Lower East Side. He moved south for what he thought would be temporary work at the *Charlotte News* but settled permanently in Charlotte in 1941. The actual date of the first edition of the *Carolina Israelite* is unknown, but it is generally considered to be February 1944. The front page of the first issue featured a masthead with symbols of a menorah and a Torah; under the title was the statement: "To Break Down the Walls of Misunderstanding-And to Build Bridges of Good Will." The headline celebrated Brotherhood Week, recently proclaimed by President [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#) ^[4].



Masthead of the Carolina Israelite, 1956. Image from the Race & Education in Charlotte exhibit, University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

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The *Carolina Israelite* consisted almost exclusively of essays and writings by Golden, as well as advertisements. Some exceptions were letters to the editor, a column on men in the armed forces, a few guest essays, and in later years occasional columns and book reviews by Golden's sons. The prototype of the *Carolina Israelite* was the *American Freeman*, a personal journal published by Golden's friend [Emanuel Haldeman-Julius](#) ^[6] in Kansas, in which the publisher discoursed on atheism, socialism, literature, and his boyhood experiences. Golden himself largely adhered to this structure throughout the years of the *Israelite*, which reflected his personal commitment to liberal causes and [civil rights](#) ^[7], a lifetime of voracious reading, and the Jewish immigrant experience of his boyhood.

Golden often used [humor](#) ^[8] to clarify his points. In the wake of the Supreme Court [school desegregation](#) ^[9] decisions, he introduced his "Vertical Negro Plan" ^[10] in the May-June 1956 issue of the *Israelite*. He pointed out that in the South, white and Black people had no trouble *standing* next to each other at the same bank tellers' windows, walking side by side through the same five-and-dime stores, or wheeling carts through the aisles of the same supermarkets. He argued that "vertical integration" had thus been achieved; it was when these different races tried sitting next to each other that problems arose. So Golden suggested some minor changes, such as replacing seats in schools with stand-up desks and removing seats at lunch counters. With everyone vertical, he explained, peaceful integration would be assured. When *Time* magazine publicized the tongue-in-cheek Vertical Negro Plan in 1957, the *Israelite's* subscription list included 20 U.S. senators, 40 members of Congress, and such luminaries as William Faulkner, Earl Warren, Ernest Hemingway, Bertrand Russell, [Harry Truman](#) ^[11], and Golden's longtime friend Carl Sandburg.

Golden lived and worked in a rented office on the north side of Elizabeth Avenue in Charlotte. He was lecturing in New Jersey early in 1958 when a predawn fire caused by a faulty flue destroyed his home, his books, and all material relating to the *Israelite*-including much of the subscription list that took him 15 years to build. Parts of the list were restored with the assistance of the laboratories of the Charlotte Police Department, and the remainder was rebuilt by the use of extensive publicity asking subscribers to notify Golden. He announced that due to the fire, the next issue would be a little late (although, as the *Charlotte Observer* ^[12] pointed out, issues were always a little late).

Later in 1958, Golden signed a contract with World Publishing to publish a collection of essays from the *Israelite*, which became his best seller *Only in America*. This book made Golden famous and eased his financial burdens. It also led to regular appearances on the *Tonight Show* with Jack Paar, which Golden credited with increasing the circulation of the *Carolina Israelite* to more than 40,000 subscribers at its peak in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

After the fire, Golden moved to a white Victorian home on the south side of Elizabeth Avenue, where he remained until the paper folded in 1968. The final issue (vol. 25, no. 6, January-February 1968) contained an advertisement from the *Nation* lamenting the departure of the *Carolina Israelite* but promising that "Harry Golden will continue to be heard through our pages."

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Additional Resources:

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Masthead of the Carolina Israelite, 1956. Image from the Race & Education in Charlotte exhibit, University of North Carolina at Charlotte. <http://speccollexhibit.omeka.net/items/show/73> [5] (accessed September 6, 2012).

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