
UNITED STATES
JEWRY,
1776–1985



Volume I

JACOB RADER MARCUS

UNITED STATES JEWRY, 1776-1985

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Hebrew Union College

Jewish Institute

of Religion

VOLUME I



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TO MY DEAR ONES WHO HAVE PASSED FROM TIME TO ETERNITY

My father, my mother, my brother, my wife, my daughter

THE HISTORIAN WHO WORSHIPS
AT AN ALTAR LOWER THAN TRUTH
DISHONORS HIS CAUSE AND HIMSELF.

—*Henry F. Hedges,*
A History of the Town of East-Hampton, N.Y.

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PREFACE

In the following chapter I make the statement that “American Jewish history is the record of the Jewish experience on American soil.” Even as there is a history of the Germans, the Irish, and the Scots in this country there is a history of American Jewry. These Children of Abraham lived in two worlds, the Jewish and the American. For 95 percent of his time the Jew is an American citizen; for the other 5 percent he is a Jew; his life in the general community, the Gentile world about him, absorbs him almost completely. Isaac M. Wise, the organizer of Reform Judaism, had this in mind when he once wrote: “The Israelites in America have no history because they have no interests apart from the people of the United States.” Though I shall not fail to deal in detail with the Jews as citizens, as an integral part of the larger American community, I am primarily interested in describing them as Jews. I stress the 5 percent, not the 95 percent. To that extent this work is strabismic.¹

Jews are a small but significant group; they have had an impact on America, on its cultural, economic, political life since the day the first Jew landed on Roanoke Island in 1585. They merit a history. As yet there has been no full-bodied scientifically conceived, history of the Jew in the United States. To be sure there are many one-volume histories of the Jews or “Hebrews,” but very few are based primarily on research in the sources. As early as 1800 Gershom Seixas wrote a Hebrew oration touching on the beginnings of Jewish life on this continent. In 1861 Hazzan Jacques Judah Lyons of Shearith Israel, New York, began collecting documents preparatory to writing a history of American Jewry. Arnold Fischel, lecturer in that same Sephardic synagog, was also interested in studying the history of the Jews in this land; in 1859 he addressed the New York Historical Society on this subject. In 1888, Isaac Markens, a journalist, wrote *The Hebrews in America* but in 1910 when Gotthard

Deutsch wrote his *History of the Jews* he dismissed American Jewry in a few pages; compared to the European Jews, Jewry here was not important. Peter Wiernik, a Yiddish newspaper editor, published the first full length *History of the Jews in America* (1912). The impulse of Lyons and Fischel to write about American Jewry was probably sparked by the nationalism that flourished in the days of the Civil War; in all probability Wiernik's book was written to help immigrant Jews from the Slavic lands identify with American Jewry, to teach them to appreciate what this land had to offer.²

For whom am I writing? For scholars and general readers who are curious and intelligent. The plan for these volumes is a simple one. The first unit seeks to justify in detail the reason for writing a multivolume work on American Jewry; the second unit treats of Jews in the early national period, 1775-1840; the third discusses the rise and dominance of the German Jews in America, 1841-1920. Concurrent with the Central European community there is another, the East European, 1852-1920, which is discussed in the fourth unit. These two groups, "Germans" and "Russians," were distinct and separate yet all Jews, natives, Germans, Russians, Poles, Galicians, Rumanians, were inextricably united. Jews are responsible one for the other; this is Jewish tradition. Despite mutual hostility and suspicion the older émigrés had no choice but to help the newcomers and the trans-Vistula newcomers viewed the established settlers as social exemplars and dispensers of charity. Unfortunately the Jews from Rumania and the Slavic lands are treated primarily as the objects of history, not the subjects of history, though, to be sure, in the next unit the East Europeans, concurrent with the Germans, are treated as subjects of history. The vast materials dealing with the "Russians" in the United States cannot be fully exploited by any one individual. One newspaper—the largest, the *Forward*—had eleven local and regional editions.³

American Jewish history from 1775 to 1920 is limned in depth in these four volumes but the last unit covering the period from 1921 to 1985 is sketched briefly. I have not attempted to do a full length study of American Jewry after 1920; the available source material is enormous. The xerographic machines can be a curse as well as a blessing! However I believe that I have sensed the important trends of these years, for I have been studying American Jewish history since 1916 when I first published an article for the Wheeling, West Virginia, *Jewish Community Bulletin*: "America: The Spiritual Center of Jewry." I refer to the years, 1921-1945 as those of the Emerging American Jewish Community; the post-World War II years, 1946-1985, mark the beginnings of the Golden Age of Jewry on this continent. In the years between 1775-1920 Jews were completely "American" but ethnic differences were paramount in their lives; after 1921-1925 when the immigration acts went into force, when the

gates were closed to Jews, intra-Jewish ethnic hostility tended to disappear; a Jewish melting pot dissolved Europe's disparate national loyalties; all Jewish natives now thought of themselves only as Americans; they were no longer Germans, Russians, Poles, Rumanians, Balkans.

It has just been noted that the sources for the twentieth century are insurmountable for one individual. To an extent this is true too of all the data from Revolutionary times on to 1921. A few statistics will point up this obvious fact. The National Archives houses but 1 percent of the records of the country's government agencies; the United States authorities publish over 500,000 articles, books, and papers every year. A generation ago, a Chicago manufacturer of duplicating machinery reported that source materials accumulated at the rate of 500,000 pages a minute. No man can master more than an infinitesimal fraction even of the important documents for American Jewish history. The historian is faced with the prospect of digging a Panama Canal with a teaspoon. Nevertheless the historian copes. He ferrets out the basic trends and supporting data and succeeds like pollsters who can draw relatively reliable conclusions from a poll of a fraction of 1 percent of the population. In 1970 I addressed myself to the task of writing the history of America's colonial Jews—about 500 families all told. It took three volumes to accomplish this task; now I propose to tell the story of 5,000,000 Jews in four volumes. It is obvious that I will have to select my material with great care, but at the same time I will have to make sure that no major event or trend has been slighted. The writing of any book on the whole of American history or on one of its ethnic groups is a daring venture.

My "style" is narrative, descriptive, but also interpretive and analytic. Illustrative data are always supplied, otherwise my conclusions would have no connotation. I wish to be faithful to experience and to fathom motives. In every forest there are trees that tower over all others; there have always been aggressive and innovative leaders in the Jewish community; I have not failed to give them their due. This history, like most general American histories, recounts the tribulations of immigrants. All newcomers who came to these shores have much in common: they struggled, they survived; yet no two ethnic groups are totally alike. There are great differences between the Irish and the Jews. Jews are different because they are Jews; they stand out like a sore thumb in Christian America where Sunday is the day of rest, where even the public schools savor of Christianity, and the municipalities erect Christmas trees.

Unlike all other general and Jewish historians I have set out deliberately to redress the balance where women are concerned. They are the majority; they cannot be ignored. Up till now they have been invisible in the various histories of American Jewry as they have been in general histories. Women have a story to tell; they were participants and shapers of

all that came to be. I am not resurrecting their history since it was never alive; it must be given life. This is no easy task; there is little that has been written about them; the cult of true womanhood required that women serve, that they be seen, but not heard.

There is one source I have failed to catalog in the bibliographical Key to these volumes, my "recall." I became cognizant of Jewish life about me as early as 1902. At that time there were but 1,200,000 Jews in this country; now there are over 5,000,000. I have grown up with this Jewish community; I have observed it for almost 80 years and have served as the head of national and local organizations. Thousands of Civil War veterans were still alive when I was a lad; in later years I was a good friend of Mrs. Tom Clay, the daughter of Benjamin Gratz (1792-1884), one of Kentucky's first Jewish settlers. I cannot help but be aware of what I saw; I require no documentation for the obvious; all this is grist for my mill; I am a trained historian. When approached to relate his experiences, an old Jewish immigrant once said: "By myself I'm a book!" I am tempted to say the same; I have been teaching Jewish history at the Hebrew Union College since 1920.

In order to evaluate my presentation the critical reader of these volumes may well ask: what is your approach, your philosophy of history? This is a fair question. My answer is that if one is committed to a specific philosophy of history he is already biased in the choice of his data. The facts must speak for themselves; I am committed to no philosophy; I am devoted to the critical method. I matriculated in the Hebrew Union College at the age of fifteen; practically all my teachers were German Ph.D's; they taught me the method to which I still adhere. I believe there is such a thing as objective truth; one can describe an event as it actually was. The historian always wants to know what happened and why. There may be no pure objectivity in historical writing, but I have striven for it; no one, I fear, can jump out of his skin. It may be held against me, too, that I am not devoid of prejudice. This is true; I pride myself that I am not filiopietistic; I despise anti-Semites; I like Jews; I am convinced that they are an unusually gifted lot. Despite my attempt to approach all data dispassionately I am not entirely free of romanticism; the story of Jewish survival and achievement in this land fascinates me. But, I repeat, I am no exultant revisionist; no proud hagiographer. As a historian I seek to reflect reality through the mediation of my training, experience, and critical evaluation of sources. I am not on the side of the angels, I am on the side of Darwin's apes; I believe in the inviolability of the method which I espouse. No historian can avoid a degree of present-mindedness but I have consciously striven to be past-minded; history must be studied in its own setting; it is not necessarily a prologue to the present. The American Jews must be painted as they were and judged by the standards of their times.

The professional American historian may well ask: "Do you believe in conflict or consensus?" Even the most casual student of Jewry in this land realizes that conflict is constant; yet it is patent that though the Jews have ridden off in all directions since the seventeenth century intellectually, institutionally, affectively, consensus never failed to override most disparities. In crises Jews worked together; their ultimate goals were the same and always present; they emerged triumphant; Jews were, are, one.

Jews are a historic people but only too often they are devoid of a sense of history. They failed to preserve their records. For lack of adequate sources it is frequently impossible to come to definitive conclusions. Even "full" documentation leaves doubts about human motivation. Thus the conscientious historian is constrained to dot his paragraphs with "apparently," "probably," "maybe," "it would seem." I dislike hedging but I have no choice. When I am convinced that I am right in my thinking I do not hesitate to express myself unequivocally. Conviction is the precipitate of a lifetime of research. If in the pages that follow readers miss some of their "Jewish" heroes—now securely entrenched in the pages of some popular histories—it is not an accidental omission on my part. They have been excluded because there is no proof that they were Jews. Men named Myer, Emanuel, Simons, Kauffman, are not necessarily members of the Chosen People. There are many names which Jews and Gentiles shared in common; Moses was a common surname borne by Christians in colonial America. Critical readers will certainly discover in later volumes of this work that Reform Jewry is dealt with in greater detail than the more numerous Orthodox and Conservatives Jewries. The reason is that congregational records for these latter two denominations are sparse; the Reformers—Central Europeans with some schooling—kept and preserved their minutes and are thus more easily described by the historian.

In at least one respect this history of the Jews in the United States is a marked departure from all others. Since the middle 1700's the majority of Jews has always lived outside of New York; this was certainly true in the 1920's when Jews were found in nearly 10,000 cities, towns, and hamlets. There were then 1,500,000 Jews in New York, 4,000,000 in the country at large. It is imperative to build from the bottom up, not from the top down; the balance between New York and its highly visible and articulate national leaders and institutions and the more numerous Jews in the hinterland must be maintained. Most national Jewish leaders lived in New York City; before the late twentieth century there were relatively few Jews of national stature in the towns of the interior. However, there were notable exceptions in Philadelphia, Washington, Cincinnati, Chicago; they were influential. Though I am not enamored of the Carlylean thesis that a country's heroes are very important in shaping the destiny of

a people there can be no question that many eminent American Jews have helped make history not only in the Jewish but in the larger general community. I am however committed to the thesis that the story of the Jew in this land lies not in the vertical eminence of the few but in the horizontal spread of the many.⁴

Is there a golden thread that runs through American Jewish history? Woodrow Wilson once told Simon Wolf, American Jewry's dedicated Washington lobbyist, that general American history was "too large a stage; the play moves with too varied a plot for any spectator to see more than a typical incident here and there," though he did admit that there were chief figures and main motives in the epic drama we know as America. Edward Channing disagreed with Wilson; he maintained that the central recurring theme in American history was the "victory of the forces of union over those of particularism." Is it possible that the story of the Jew in this land is a series of unrelated histories? Definitely not. The leitmotif of Jewish history in this country is the constant attempt, the determination, to create and further a distinct community with its synagogues, its schools, its charities. It is as simple as that. In Jewry where there is no community there is no history. This work concerns itself primarily with Jewry as an organized collectivity.⁵

Much of the material in these four volumes is arranged topically. Such an approach is unfortunately bound to invite repetition. Each of these four volumes stands on its own two feet; I have not hesitated to use data cited in other volumes. In some instances repetition has been unavoidable; some facts, important in themselves, illuminate multiple facets of American Jewish life; Rabbi Isaac Leeser is an important figure in nineteenth-century Judaism, education, journalism. I have my own views on the use of the title "rabbi." As early as the eighteenth century the community religious factotum was recognized by the Gentile community as a "rabbi." For me a rabbi is the duly elected leader of a congregation; he is hired to conduct services and to preach. Often, here in the United States, he is a man who has no document authorizing him to officiate at religious services. In some instances—this we know—"rabbis" possess certificates issued by so-called rabbis who were themselves unauthorized practitioners. Leeser, Isaac M. Wise, Stephen S. Wise, three of the most prestigious religious leaders in Jewish America, were not trained and ordained in rabbinical seminaries. Often, too, the nineteenth-century non-diplomat was more learned than the twentieth-century graduate of a prestigious rabbinical college.⁶

No glossary has been appended to this work, for many Hebrew and Yiddish words are now English and are defined in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged*. Unfailingly I give preference to the Webster spellings. Frequently I clarify immediately

the meaning of a foreign term employed in the text. The transliteration of Hebrew and Yiddish words employed is a modified form of the standard system used in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* and in the publications of the Yivo Institute for Jewish Research. Diacritical marks are omitted. I have not hesitated to use the mistransliterations of Hebrew and Yiddish phrases which were used by most founders of Jewish institutions. They have the right to spell, or misspell the names of their organizations as they see fit. Like other American Jewish historians I often transliterate Hebrew and Yiddish words scientifically though this type of transliteration was eschewed by most Jews. Using proper transliterations of the Hebrew is anachronistic, unhistorical, but all of us are guilty of this practice; it is a convention which we hesitate to discard in formal historical writing. Actually the pronunciation of some vowels and consonants in the synagogue is at variance with the transliterations of the college trained Hebraist.

No formal bibliography has been appended to this volume. The Key to symbols, abbreviations, and short titles serves this purpose for it lists the basic works, magazines, articles, and manuscript sources used by the author. The Key rarely includes books or articles cited but once; these are described fully in the notes. Very frequently the notes include duplicate references. This is done to aid scholars because many of the works cited are difficult of access and are found in few libraries. Sources are often recorded which are at variance with the author's views; these additional references are given solely to provide more literature for the subject under discussion; the author's conclusions are given in the body of the text. Because I am frequently dependent on undocumented clippings I do not always cite page or column.

In any large work prepared over decades, one receives help from many individuals and institutions. It is now my privilege to thank those men and women who have responded to my appeals for help. My colleagues and staff in the American Jewish Archives have never failed me; I have leaned heavily on all of them, Fanny Zelcer and Kevin Proffitt archivists, Eleanor Lawhorn and Jacqueline Wilson secretaries. Abraham J. Peck, the administrative director, has worked closely with me every step of the way; his concern has touched me deeply. I am very grateful. Dr. Malcolm H. Stern, historian and genealogist, responded speedily to all my queries. The American Jewish Historical Society, the Cincinnati Historical Society, and the Cincinnati Public Library have also responded generously, patiently; they have been most helpful in according me aid and counsel. Dr. Herbert C. Zafren and his staff in the Hebrew Union College Library have been a tower of strength; there is probably no library in the country better equipped to aid scholars who work in the field of American Jewish history. Let me hasten to thank those who have worked closely with me in my study. Judith M. Daniels of the University of Cin-

cinnati, Rabbi Judith A. Bluestein, Rabbi Douglas Kohn, and Birgitta Mehdi have slaved to check my data, arrange my notes, and copyedit the text. Literally, their help has been invaluable. Etheljane Callner who has been with me for almost four decades has typed the manuscript and hovered over this work with the meticulousity and dedication that have always distinguished her. Her constant encouragement when the going was rough has meant more to me than I can voice in words. Mr. Aaron Levine, a retired corporation executive, has never failed me when I turned to him for counsel. Thank you, Aaron, for your advice and guidance. My dear friend Leonard N. Simons of Detroit, Michigan, the prominent civic worker and philanthropist, has always taken a deep interest in all my work, encouraging and sustaining me in my efforts. It is a privilege to enjoy his friendship and to express—in this formal fashion—both my gratitude and affection. And now I turn to my colleague and dear friend Stanley F. Chyet, Professor of American Jewish History on the Los Angeles campus of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Almost thirty years ago when he aided me with my *Colonial American Jew*, I wrote these words of thanks:

He has helped me in matters of style and content with all the devotion of a friend and a conscientious scholar. It is literally impossible for me to express all that I owe him. It is my fervent prayer that the disciples he raises will enrich him with that same courtesy, kindness and friendship he has always showered on me.

I am happy to repeat these words of thanks for all he has done to make this work possible.

And finally there are the many who at some time or another have aided me in the preparation of these volumes but whom, for a variety of reasons, I am regretfully obliged to leave unnamed. My most grateful thanks to them all.

Jacob R. Marcus

American Jewish Archives
On the campus of the
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Cincinnati, Ohio



CHAPTER ONE

WHY STUDY AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY

American Jewish history is the record of the Jewish experience on American soil. That is clear enough, but what is not so clear is: What constitutes a Jew? There are several definitions. A common Gentile definition is: Anyone is a Jew about whom there is the slightest recollection of Jewish origin. According to Jewish canon law, the halakah, every child of a Jewish mother is a Jew. Most probably this decision, rooted in an ancient Hebraic tradition, reflects a matriarchal age when it was a wise son who knew his father. Arbitrarily, to be sure, the author of the present work on American Jewry has decided that any individual with one Jewish parent is a Jew, even if “born” and reared as a Christian. Thus, for the purposes of this work, Senator Barry Goldwater was the first major party Jewish candidate for the Presidency. It is only too true that Jewish history is often the story of a community which shines in the reflected glory of those Jews who ignore the community that gave them birth. If practitioners of Judaism only were to be included in a study of the American Jew then a substantial percentage of all would have to be excluded. Jews are an ethnos not a church.

As late as 1900 Jews in the United States constituted little more than 1 percent of the total population! Why then study American Jewish history? Jews are eager to know the history of their people; that is its own justification. Knowledge is identification, security. Jews wish to know how other Jews lived in this land, what they accomplished. They were and are part of the American polity; studying Jewry throws light on the larger general community. Almost untrammelled by European traditional hatreds and disabilities, America’s attitude toward its Jews savors of the unique. Here in the United States the “medieval” Jew of Eastern Europe was for the first time completely emancipated. What did *égalité* do for him, for America? Did this emancipation bear fruits of righteousness?

The Jews here are heirs of a great culture; their fathers wrote the Bible, both the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament and much of the New Testament. Jesus was born, lived, and died as a Jew. Islam, too, emerged from Judeo-Christian tradition. Sigmund Freud was a Jew and Karl Marx was the scion of a distinguished rabbinical family; today there are possibly more worshippers of Marx than there are of Jesus. Though Jews are small in numbers, they are not an obscure group or an unimportant part of general American history. They are significant in the areas of commerce and scholarship, and occasionally even in politics. There were three Jews in President Kennedy's cabinet: Arthur Goldberg, Abraham Ribicoff, and Douglas Dillon. The clothing and cinema industries owe much to Jews. The development of nuclear energy was furthered in large measure by them; Abraham Selman Waksman, Jonas Salk, and Albert Sabin will long be remembered among the great scientists and benefactors of humanity. Today, Reform Judaism may well be the largest liberal religious movement in the world.

By the end of World War II—if not earlier—America was already playing an increasingly important role in World Jewish history. About 2,500,000 immigrants had poured into this country since the middle 1830's; millions of dollars had been sent overseas to support poor and oppressed Jews, especially in Eastern Europe. American liberty is a commodity the Jews here have insisted on exporting ever since 1840 when they raised their voices in protest against the torture of Jews in Damascus. It was this American Jewry that influenced President Truman to look sympathetically upon the new Jewish state proclaimed in Palestine. Eddie Jacobson, the President's onetime business partner, interceded with Truman at a critical moment when the President appeared resistant to Zionist importuning and amenable to the anti-Zionist pressures of his own State Department. Despite the unquestioned importance of the State of Israel, many maintain that the mainstream of Jewish history lies in the United States. Today, this Jewry is the greatest the world has ever known, certainly in size, wealth, and general culture. No Jewish group has ever been as free. American Jews exercise a significant measure of hegemony over World Jewry; they send billions to the State of Israel. American Jewry in the late twentieth century is potentially a great Jewish cultural center and is well on its way to a Golden Age of its own.

Why study American Jewish history? It is not without pragmatic value for the American Jew. History is not a science but a record of human behavior and human experience. What has happened may happen again. We can profit from the past. Even he who runs may read; Jews must fight not only to secure civil and political rights but also to hold onto them, else they risk losing them. Liberal Jews have learned that Reform Judaism cannot live on ideology alone; without ceremonial and rit-

ual the Jewish collectivity cannot maintain itself. Individuals who depart from the norms accepted by the Jewish masses are pushed to the periphery and ultimately fall off into oblivion. A study of history brings perspective. It teaches us to assess what is happening, to sense the direction in which Jewry is moving. A perceptive community can then plan socially and, if successful, assert itself as the subject, not merely the object, of history.

WHERE THE JEWS COME FROM: BACKGROUND

It may well be that historical prurience—curiosity—is the prime reason why we delve into the past experiences of American Jewry. How, when, why, did Jews come here? Where did they settle? What happened to them? Were the twenty-three who landed at New Amsterdam in 1654 the very first Jews in this country? Of course not! No Jew is *ever* the first Jew anywhere. There is always one before him. The twenty-three were probably met at the Battery by Jacob Barsimson; Solomon Pietersen, an assimilated Jew, had preceded Barsimson; Solomon Franco, a dubious bird of passage, had been in Boston as early as 1649. And before Franco? In 1585, thirty-five years before the Pilgrim Fathers landed, Joachim Gaunze, a Jewish mining expert, stepped off the gangplank at Roanoke Island.¹

Let us go back to the beginning. In the beginning there was Arabia and the eastern Fertile Crescent. Then came Palestine and the rise and fall of several commonwealths: the ancient United Monarchy of David, the Divided Monarchy of Israel and Judah; finally there was the Hasmonean kingdom. There were the Ten Commandments, the prophets, the great struggle for freedom of conscience and worship in the days of the Maccabees. The Romans, like the Russians and the Americans in the twentieth century, evinced an interest in the eastern Mediterranean; Jerusalem had fallen under Roman sway some generations before the Herodian Temple was razed in 70 C.E. After the fall of Jerusalem, a new Jewish center emerged in the Mesopotamian valley ruled by Zoroastrian Persia. A center? A center is a land or a region where Jews enjoy some degree of security and where rabbinic learning prospers. Centers always exert a large degree of hegemonic spiritual authority. The center is for World Jewry the government-in-exile of an epoch. It was in Persian-controlled and subsequently Muslim Arab-ruled Mesopotamia that the Jews produced a body of literature they called the Talmud. It became and remains authoritative for normative Jewish belief and practice, even more so than the Hebrew Bible. But by the eleventh century, because of political unrest and successful foreign invasions, Muslim Mesopotamia was already on the wane. With the decline of the Asian Arab states came the end of Jewry's spiritual dominance by the rabbis and academies of the Middle East.

Now, for the first time in Jewish history, the Jews acquired noteworthy European credentials with the dawn of a Golden Age in Arab Spain. A Jewish community enjoys a Golden Age when among its leaders are men preeminent in general and Jewish studies. The classical example is Ismail ibn Nagrela—Samuel the Prince as he was called—in the principality of Granada. This eleventh-century polymath was a talmudist, mathematician, grammarian, philosopher, linguist, calligrapher, and poet. He became vizier of his country and personally directed its armies in time of war. Imagine Bernard Baruch, Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Arthur Goldberg, or Bella Abzug writing a Hebrew poem or an essay on talmudic methodology. Unfortunately for the Jews of Spain the Arabs were crushed in the Christian Reconquest of the peninsula; new Christian states arose to supplant the Muslims. Their philosophy was simple and direct: only a good Christian could be a good subject; the Jews would have to go, and by the end of the fifteenth century they had gone. Associate Justice Benjamin N. Cardozo of the United States Supreme Court was one of the distinguished heirs of the ensuing Spanish-Portuguese diaspora.²

Uprooted, Sephardic (Spanish-Portuguese) Jewry now withered, but a new Jewish center rose on the plains of Poland. For the next 450 years the Law went forth from the academies of Poland and the Germanic lands. This was the age of the Ashkenazim (Northern European Jews). In the very flower of its youth, however, the Polish community was dealt a staggering blow. The oppressed Eastern Orthodox peasants of the Ukraine rose in revolt against their Polish Roman Catholic masters and the Jewish stewards dependent on the Polish landlords. Then Tatars, Swedes, and Russians invaded a weakened Poland, and again Jews died by the thousands. In desperation many turned to a Messiah who failed to deliver them: Shabbethai Zevi, the mystical savior of the magic year 1666. Two generations later, still seeking “escape,” many Jews in Eastern Europe turned to the Master of the Good Name, the Baal Shem Tov: Israel ben Eliezer, the founder of the latter-day Hasidic sect which in a variety of manifestations still flourishes throughout the Jewish world. Others, more realistic than the Hasidic mystics and the classical pietists, hoped to find their messianic age in a modern new world: Man, not God, was to be the new savior.

All this presupposes the death of medievalism, but the medieval past died hard, very hard. As late as 1761 a hungry moronic Jewish beggar wandered into an Alsatian church and ate a consecrated Host, for him a cracker, food. Unwittingly he had committed a sacrilege, a capital crime, but mercy prevailed and his sentence was commuted to hard labor for life in prison. Less than a generation later with the coming of the French Revolution he would not even have been arrested. Actually the French Revolution was the culmination of complex forces fermenting since at

least the sixteenth century. Most important of all was the Commercial Revolution. World commerce flourished on Western Europe's new oceanic highways to India and the Americas. European colonies and demands for new markets stimulated industry, manufactures, and a higher standard of living. France, Prussia, the Netherlands, England emerged on the North Atlantic littoral as new national states subject as much to burghers as to kings and barons. It was immaterial whether economic theoreticians talked of mercantilism, physiocratism, or capitalism, of controlled markets or free markets. They all had one goal in mind, power and wealth. The theocentric world of medievalism was dead. All would be well on earth as long as God remained in his Heavens and left men to manage their own affairs.

The new economic changes which ultimately would mean so much to the Jew were underpinned by rationalizing and humanitarian gestures and convictions. Philosophers talked and wrote of natural rights and natural religion, of Deism and Enlightenment, but they linked philosophy to reality when they declared that all men were entitled to life, liberty and property. It was in this crucial century, the years between 1650 and 1750, that a new Jewish center took shape in the mainly German-speaking lands of Central Europe, stretching all the way from Alsace to the borders of Poland. In the burgeoning world of international commerce and industry this Central European development was the first of the modern Jewish communities. The hated Jewish usurer of the early seventeenth century now became a respected banker. Economically, culturally, socially, the Jew started up the ladder. In 1743 a hunchbacked Yiddish-speaking student knocked at the gates of Berlin; a generation later he was a textile manufacturer and a recognized German stylist, aesthete, and philosopher, winner of a Berlin Academy of Science prize in competition with Immanuel Kant. This man was Moses Mendelssohn.

It is clear that most Jews would not think of leaving an ascendant and liberalizing Europe, but it is equally obvious that there would always be individuals willing to seek an ever larger measure of opportunity in the overseas colonies. European settlers were desperately needed there. Jews were encouraged to go by mercantilistically-minded governments and by wealthy Jews ever ready to sponsor the migration of impoverished coreligionists. In 1649, just one year after the treaty was signed at Muenster bringing to an end the fierce religious wars between Protestant and Catholic powers, a lonely Jew walked the streets of Boston. He, too, like Mendelssohn in Berlin, was symbolic of the future. In 1492 Spanish Jews had moved eastward after the expulsion; in 1648, with the Cossack massacres in Eastern Europe the stream of immigration turned westward until suspended by the enactment of the American Immigration Act of 1924. By the late seventeenth century there were already dozens of European settle-

ments in the Western World, and there was hardly one that did not shelter a handful of secret or professed Jews who had spilled over from Europe.

THE FIRST AMERICAN JEWS: MEXICO, SOUTH AMERICA, AND THE WEST INDIES

The oldest colonies in the New World were those of the Spanish and Portuguese and they were closed to Jews as Jews. But as the historian, Kayserling, has pointed out: If Spanish Jewish history ended with the Inquisition, American Jewish history began with the Inquisition. The forced converts of the Iberian Peninsula fled to the colonies because the Holy Office of the Inquisition persisted in hounding them. Jewish blood, the Holy Office insisted, was predisposed to heresy. In the New World, the Iberians of Jewish ancestry, whom Christian Spain denigrated as Marranos or Conversos or New Christians, hoped at least to survive as human beings, if they could not survive as practitioners of their own distinctive Judeo-Christian way of life. There were others of converso stock who had long since lost interest in Judaism but sailed for the New World colonies because they saw a bright economic future for themselves overseas. Columbus himself was probably no Jew, as some have maintained, although it is true that he was encouraged and given aid by converso capitalists. "Not jewels but Jews were the real financial basis of the first expedition of Columbus," wrote a Johns Hopkins historian.³

According to the Jewish calendar, the expulsion from Spain took place on the Ninth of Ab, the anniversary of the fall of Jerusalem. The very next day Columbus set out on a voyage that would uncover a new land destined in the distant future to offer refuge to millions of Jews fleeing from European disabilities and pogroms. Pious Jews are fond of quoting the talmudic maxim: "Before God brings the disaster he provides the remedy" (Meg. 13b). Luis de Torres, Columbus's interpreter, probably one of the first men over the side after sighting land, settled down in Cuba to become America's first Jewish settler though if the Indians encountered here were, as some of the Spanish thought, remnants of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel, de Torres was only a Jewish latecomer to North America.

By the late sixteenth century Spanish and Portuguese New Christians had scattered all the way from Cuba to the Philippines and on into China. What was their occupational distribution, their class differentiation? They were anything from beggars to governors, and in between one could find an assortment that included farmers, priests, merchants, and miners. An openly Jewish community life was of course impossible, but those who retained Jewish loyalties had cells and when they assembled furtively they

practiced what came to be a distorted twilight version of Judaism. The largest of these “communities” were in Peru and in Mexico. Are they to be regarded as Jews? Yes, for they deemed themselves Children of Israel and were in constant touch with unconverted Jews who had wandered in from Europe. By the mid-seventeenth century crypto-Jewish Marranos had been driven deep underground; many had been pitilessly rooted out by the Holy Office. As early as 1528 one of the conquistadors who had fought with Cortez in Mexico was burnt at the stake as a judaizer. This was Hernando Alonso, a smith, who perished in Mexico City almost a hundred years before the Pilgrims set foot on Plymouth Rock. In January, 1639, the Inquisition cremated Dr. Francisco Maldonado de Silva in Lima, Peru. Although the father, a New Christian, had reared the son as a Roman Catholic, the young man somehow found his way back to Judaism and secretly practiced his new-old faith until betrayed by a sister whom he had attempted to convert. While rotting in prison, he managed to fashion a rope of cornhusks and swung himself out of his cell to bring words of comfort to fellow prisoners. When many years before his execution a member of his family warned him to give up his Judaism, Maldonado de Silva answered that “even if he had a thousand lives he would gladly lose them in the service of the living God.” He was put to death because he denied Jesus. Less than a decade later Jesuit missionaries serving in the wilds of America were tortured and murdered by Indians. These priests affirmed Jesus. The traditions of these martyrs, both Christian and non-Christian, were destined to bring a glow of pride to unborn generations of Catholics and Jews.⁴

Not all of the New World was Spanish: Brazil, explored by the Portuguese with the aid of Jewish-born mariners and pioneers, soon became an important outpost. More so even than in the Spanish colonies, the Jews—New Christians—were among the Portuguese colony’s Pilgrim Fathers, and when the crowns of Spain and Portugal were united in 1580, crypto-Jews infiltrated every Christian settlement in Latin America. Whatever there was of Jewish life in Brazil necessarily remained subterranean until 1624 when the Protestant Dutch began their conquest of the northeastern tip of the bulge. In the next decade Recife (Pernambuco) fell under Dutch control and was soon sheltering a great Jewish community, the first to be legally recognized in the New World. In its heyday it numbered about a thousand souls. Jews arrived from every corner of Europe and, though the Protestant Church and the Christian merchants vociferously resented the newcomers, they established themselves firmly in the colony. Holland and her West India Company were resolved to obtain a return on their investment. The new Jewish settlement was metropolitan in character; there were synagogues, a cemetery, a rabbi, schools, kosher meat, confraternities—among them one that raised money for the needy

Jews of Palestine—and even Jewish-owned gambling houses, which were compelled to close on the Sabbath. There was no comparable Jewish life in North America until the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

That Brazilian community vanished in 1654 when the Portuguese reconquered the land, compelling Protestants and Jews to depart. The reconquest gave birth to a Brazilian Jewish Diaspora. Many returned to Europe, but some later came back to the New World. A few of the exiles turned to the French dependencies, finding a temporary haven on Martinique and Guadeloupe and a grudging refuge during the next century on Saint-Dominique. Colbert, the far-sighted mercantilist, sought to open the French islands to these industrious émigrés. More permanent Jewish settlements were established during the 1650's and the succeeding decades in the Dutch colonies of Surinam and Curaçao and on English Barbados and Jamaica. Surinam and the Caribbean colonies were richer, more valuable, and consequently more important than the contemporary colonies on the North American mainland. To no small degree, the prosperity of the West Indies was built on sugar. That was the cash crop. Early Jewish settlers in Brazil may have helped bring sugar cane to the New World in the sixteenth century, and for the next three centuries they were tied up with the industry. Like their neighbors, they were slave owners and their mulatto children were occasionally reared as Jews. Some Jews owned plantations and sugar mills; others were merchant-shippers exporting Caribbean staples and South American specie. Directly or indirectly the Islanders tapped the Spanish South American trade. In exchange for local dyewoods, indigo, coffee, cacao, sugar, and molasses, Jewish shippers imported and sold Dutch and English manufactures and North American provisions. But most Jews, town dwellers, were petty tradesmen. Despite their many opportunities, life was not easy for these frontiersmen. This was particularly true on Jamaica. The Christian merchants and even some of the planters were often hostile. The steady traffic, the coming and going between Europe and the Islands, kept Continental prejudices fresh. The Jews constituted a substantial percentage of the urban whites; they stood out on Jews Street; Christian mercantile rivals berated them as "low-life thieves." Jamaica saw anti-Jewish disabilities persist till the middle of the eighteenth century when the British authorities slowly bore down on the obstreperous Islanders. A world of mercantilism and imperial integration left scant room for prejudice against businessmen.

The Jews of Surinam and the Islands were not intimidated. They tended store and built their communities, patterned on Recife and Amsterdam. As recently as 1825, Curaçao was the largest Jewish settlement in the Western Hemisphere. The Caribbean Islands were studded with congregations, numerous cemeteries, and pious associations which per-

formed almost every conceivable social and philanthropic task. It was not uncommon to meet with knowledgeable Hebraists, for Caribbean wealth attracted immigrants of intellectual achievement; the Antilles were deemed an extension of Europe. The Spanish-Portuguese tradition of belles lettres—all but totally absent in the contemporary North American colonies—made itself felt, and it is not improbable that the well-to-do cultured Sephardic planter and businessman predisposed the conservative Britons toward the emancipation of English Jewry; Jews and pro-Jewish publicists stoutly maintained that, if given rights, the Jews in Britain herself could measure up to the colonials. The blend of general and Jewish learning is exemplified by the Haham, or rabbi, of Kingston, Jamaica, Joshua Hezekiah De Cordova. Here was the Sephardi at his best, a Latinist, linguist, student of the sciences, and adept in Bible and Talmud. It was the Haham De Cordova who wrote the first English work on Judaism to be published in the New World. *Reason and Faith* he called his defense of Judaism against Deists and atheists. The book was twice reprinted in the United States, for the first time in 1791.

COLONIAL NORTH AMERICA

NEW NETHERLAND AND ASSER LEVY

One of De Cordova's grandnephews was a pioneer Texas newspaper publisher, a land promoter, who helped lay out the city of Waco. Today this unconverted Jew rests peacefully—one hopes—under a large stone cross erected by his pious Christian descendants. The Texan De Cordova is said to have owned more than a million acres of land in 1854. But just 200 years earlier the first Jews to settle in North America had barely owned the shirts on their backs. They were Brazilian refugees who had been taken captive by Spanish privateers as they fled from Recife. Twenty-three of them landed at Dutch New Amsterdam in late August or early September, 1654. The following spring saw Jewish merchants of substance arrive from Amsterdam. The first community was now established.⁵

These Jewish newcomers of 1654-1655 were not made very welcome by Peter Stuyvesant, the Calvinist director general of the colony. He wanted no infidel Jews; he wanted no Catholics; indeed he despised all non-Calvinist Protestants. "Giving them [the Jews] liberty, we cannot refuse the Lutherans and Papists," the Governor wrote the West India Company in October, 1655. Less than a year earlier, in Amsterdam, the Sephardim had excommunicated Spinoza. Jews, too, despised and feared heretics and "troublemakers." Stuyvesant denied the Jews almost every right and liberty. Hardly a country in all Europe was as restrictive as New

Netherland. David Ferera, found guilty of contempt, was fined 800 guilders, an enormous sum, and in addition was ordered to be scourged at the stake and then banished. This was bad, but the Quakers in the colony received even harsher treatment. One of them was tortured and nearly beaten to death.

But the Jews were not pacifists. Knowing full well their value, they fought vigorously for the right to carry on trade. A new age was in the making. Holland and England wanted Jews. Cromwell admitted them to London; the Dutch and the English competed for them on the wild Guiana Coast; Amsterdam Jewish merchants were stockholders in the Dutch West India Company, an enterprise never unconscious of the biblical verse deemed supportive of mercantilism: "In the multitude of people is the king's honour, but in the want of people is the destruction of the prince" (Prov. 14:28). The company overrode the zealous Stuyvesant and by 1657 the Jews had won enough rights to survive in New Netherland. As soon as there were ten male adults, they conducted services. Within two years they owned a cemetery and started filling it, largely no doubt due to the tremendously high rate of infant mortality. The colony's Jews traded on the Hudson and the Delaware, bought tobacco in Maryland, shipped products to Holland and the Caribbean, and, with or without permission, opened modest retail shops. Yet by 1663 the little community had begun to melt away. That year it returned its borrowed Scroll of the Law to the mother congregation in Amsterdam. Had Stuyvesant and his ungracious cohorts succeeded in killing the community? Not necessarily. The Jewish settlers left because there were greater opportunities in Surinam, Curaçao, and in the English West Indies. At no time in the seventeenth century were there more than a couple of hundred Jews in the North American tidewater. Ten years after the Brazilian émigrés landed at the Battery, Stuyvesant capitulated to the English and New Amsterdam became New York. The English now ruled the coast all the way from Maine to the Carolinas.

The Jewish community faded away, but individuals stayed on. Among them was a man named Asser Levy, a petty trader in Fort Orange and New Amsterdam. Levy was apparently too poor to pay the military exemption tax imposed on the Jews because, as the governor said, the trainbands were unwilling to serve with them. A tough, energetic man, always an aggressive personality, Levy refused to pay the tax and ultimately won the right to stand guard and be recognized as a burgher. Under the British he became a merchant, an importer, and an amateur attorney. Though not endowed with prophetic insight he opened a slaughterhouse quite appropriately on what is today Wall Street. In later years his influence extended even into New England, where he spread his sheltering wings over a Jewish peddler who had been tried and fined for

“lascivious dalliance and wanton proffers to severall women.” The year he intervened for the amorous peddler, he sat on a jury trying a case in which Stuyvesant, the former director general, was the defendant. The jury found for the defendant, the very man who had once invited Levy to leave New Netherland. Later, when Levy’s estate was inventoried, the court listed goblets, a special lamp, and a spice box, all needed for the observance of the Sabbath. They also found two swords and a gun. All these items aptly characterize the man who would become the symbol of continuity. As a Jew and as a citizen, he had hewed out a home for himself on this remote North American frontier.⁶

SETTLERS AND SETTLEMENTS

For the last seventeen years of his life Levy lived under English rule. Jewish history in North America was now part of English history to 1776. American Jewry was to remain pitifully small, never more than one-tenth of one percent of the population into the nineteenth century, and never more than 1 percent of World Jewry till as late as 1850. Very few Jews set out for America; after all, Europe was then flourishing, an era of wealth and culture and political liberalization was opening. There were no savage Indians lurking in Berlin and London; Sephardic émigrés in the southern colonies feared the Spanish threat in Florida, and, in any event, Iberian Jews practically stopped coming after 1720 since by then the Inquisition had become quiescent; the wars with the French were to drag on in the Americas from the 1680’s to the 1760’s. From what places, then, did the Jewish settlers come? Some straggled in from the Caribbean; most immigrants, however, were Central and East European villagers.⁷

Why did these Ashkenazim come? The teenager Michael Gratz was an adventurer. He had already been to distant India; now he would try his luck in America: “I must learn . . . how things are done in the world.” Some of the newcomers were fed up with the disabilities Europe persisted in imposing on Jews. As late as 1770, the Westphalian principality of Lippe Detmold issued this pronouncement:

All foreign beggars, collectors, [German] Jewish peddlers, Polish Jews, jugglers, bear trainers and tramps are forbidden access to this country under penalty of sentence to prison. All gypsies caught will be hanged and shot.⁸

Like his fellow Christian immigrant, the Jew came here primarily to improve himself economically, and often he succeeded. Young Jacob Franks, who landed here in the first decade of the eighteenth century, seems to have made both ends meet by teaching Hebrew. Before he died he was one of the country’s largest army purveyors and one of the most influential men in all of North America.

Who came? The rich? Did rich Americans flock to Alaska in the mid-nineteenth century? Jacob Franks's brothers, already successful, stayed in London. Brother Jacob made good here and married the daughter of Moses Levy. Back in England the successful Levy clan had dispatched Moses to the colonies where he speedily built an economic empire of his own. His brothers, too, remained home. Frontier North America was simply not an inviting prospect for European Jews in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This country would play no important role in world history till the second half of the nineteenth century. Among those who came were Jewish remittance men, misfits never able to make a living anywhere, and Jewish indentured servants. A few "transports" were landed, criminals condemned to exile by the British for their misdeeds. Fifteen-year-old Feibel, the son of Jacob Joseph, the Dover "rabbi," was sentenced to serve seven years in the colonies because he had stolen a handkerchief worth ten pennies. But Feibel was exceptional: the typical immigrant was a young unmarried man who came to these shores aided by relatives and fortified with cash or a modest stock of goods or a line of credit in London.

Where did they settle? They made their way in all sixteen British provinces from Quebec to West Florida, although there is no evidence of Jews in Maine, New Hampshire, and East Florida in the days before the Revolution. They were found in Montreal, Quebec, and Halifax, in the larger tidewater towns of the Atlantic coast, in Pensacola, Mobile, and Franco-Spanish New Orleans. Communities were established in Montreal, Newport, New York, Philadelphia, Lancaster, Charleston, and Savannah, but there was no guarantee of immediate speedy growth for any of them. New Amsterdam-New York, Newport, Charleston, and Savannah saw a "community" rise only to fall before a new conventicle rose on the vestiges of the past. Though New York was one of the smaller provinces numerically, it sheltered the mother synagog, but even so never counted more than 400 Jews, and that may be a liberal estimate. There were no Jewish settlements in the two largest provinces, Virginia and Massachusetts. The tobacco colony could not use capital-poor shopkeepers; the New England Jews apparently preferred Newport to the more competitive Boston. The Puritans were not particularly hospitable. The seven established North American communities served as regional and subregional centers for the Jews scattered in the backcountry. These Jewish frontiersmen were active as trader-outfitters and shopkeepers as far north as Mackinac and as far south as Augusta, Georgia.

POLITICAL RIGHTS AND DISABILITIES

If Jews were found almost anywhere, it was because they enjoyed immunities which enabled them to make a living. By 1657 the Dutch had

granted the Jews privileges indispensable for carrying on business. After the English took over, they extended these rights, allowing Jews legally to practice crafts, to sell at retail, and to hold religious services. In these ameliorative grants the London government was exemplary, for by the year 1700 the Jews had been assimilated into the English economy. Yet certain disabilities still persisted on this side of the Atlantic: cemeteries and synagogues were not incorporated; Jews were taxed for the support of church establishments, and honorific offices were denied them, although they were allowed in some colonies to vote for provincial officials. (On a local level it is hard to imagine that the Jewish shopkeeper was denied the franchise. Would Easton, Pennsylvania, dare discriminate against Myer Hart, one of the original settlers and its leading shopkeeper?)

Back home the mercantile-minded British government was not happy with the lack of adequate naturalization laws embracing all non-Catholic aliens in the colonies. (Native-born Jews were deemed native-born Englishmen.) More liberal and far-visioned than the colonists, Parliament in 1740 passed an imperial Plantation Act that made it possible to naturalize any Jewish alien in the American colonies. Jews could now buy and sell anywhere in the Empire under the protection of the Acts of Trade and Navigation. In those days, however, naturalization did not open the way to public office; that was restricted to Christians, primarily Anglicans. Liberty is relative. In 1751 Pennsylvania proudly celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its charter of privileges by casting a bell in London that carried the Old Testament inscription: "Ye shall proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." The bell was brought to these shores in the *Myrtilla* owned by Levy and Franks, but David Franks, already a third-generation American, was excluded from some of the charter's prerogatives because he would not "profess belief in Jesus Christ." Rhode Island, Roger Williams's soul child, disabled its Jews through sundry devices. Even after the enactment of the imperial Plantation Act, the Rhode Island colony refused to naturalize Aaron Lopez, destined within a decade to become Newport's most eminent merchant. The province that would be willing to entrust its most delicate negotiations to his judgment—its stake in the future of the Newfoundland fisheries—was the province that had refused to naturalize him.

Jews were not deterred by what was in effect anti-Jewish legislation. Four of the seven towns in which Jews settled had church establishments with their discriminatory taxation. Sunday closing laws were annoying:

Henceforth let none on peril of their lives,
Attempt a journey or embrace their wives.

Jews often labored under special disadvantages. They had to padlock their shops on both Saturday and Sunday, for in prerevolutionary times most

were strict observers of the Saturday Sabbath. A Maryland merchant, Jacob Lumbrozo, was charged with blasphemy in the 1650's because he had denied the divinity of Jesus. That, under the terms of the Toleration Act, was a capital crime, but he escaped punishment. Did he save his life by converting to Christianity? It was the first and last time that any Jew was charged with blasphemy. North American Jews made no public fight for political privilege as did their bellicose coreligionists on Jamaica. The Anglo-American Franks clan was among the proprietors of the new colony of Vandalia, yet assented to the proposal to grant immunities to Christians only; Francis Salvador in South Carolina's rump Provincial Assembly was no more heroic. Very likely he offered no protest when Protestantism was declared the established religion of the new state, thus continuing the disabilities already traditional in the colony. Were the Jews unusually supine? They kept their mouths shut and accepted a secondary status because they were convinced that there was nothing that they could do to improve it; they realized that on the whole they lived in the freest country in the world. Here in the colonies there were no compulsory ghettos, no tough anti-Jewish guilds, no special jeopardy to Jewish life and limb, nothing analogous to the situation which in the 1770's saw Baptists in Virginia jailed for their religious convictions.

ECONOMIC LIFE

Many of the Virginians who came to Williamsburg in 1759 to see Shylock's story told in *The Merchant of Venice*, had probably never glimpsed a Jew—and probably did not know that the local physician, Dr. John de Sequeyra (Siccary), was a Jew. There were very few flesh and blood Jews then in Virginia because the province had no large towns; Jews were city folk and, for the most part, had not followed the plough for a thousand years. There were some Jewish demi-farmers in the colonies: for example the Hayses of Westchester, the clan that published the *New York Times* in the twentieth century. Down South the Jews were pioneers in the cultivation of grapes and were among the first entrepreneurs to further the silk industry in Georgia as well as the marketing of indigo in South Carolina. Francis Salvador grew indigo on his plantation in the Ninety Six District. This cultured English immigrant had come to the colonies to rebuild the family fortunes; the Salvadors had once owned 100,000 acres in the Carolina hinterland. In the new province of Georgia, the Sheftalls ran cattle in the pine barrens; they were ranchers as well as merchants. Mordecai Sheftall's brand was the 5S because he had five youngsters. Mordecai's half brother Levi was also a rancher—the L diamond S—but made his money as a butcher. Despite the fact that Jews were kept out of the crafts in Europe, some artisans were always to be found in every land. In America, too, there were few trades which could not boast of at least one Jewish

practitioner. Some Jews, like Myer Meyers, were silver and goldsmiths. Meyers was a fine craftsman, and his skill and taste are still reflected in his silver Torah ornaments and in the baptismal bowl he fashioned for a Presbyterian church. Some of the artisans were specialists, performing artists, who toured the provinces astonishing the yokels. Henry Hymes could balance nineteen wine glasses on his chin to a height of almost six feet. The gamut of men in the professions—no women—included congregational employees, interpreters, amateur attorneys, physicians, and surgeons. None was notable, though Dr. Sequeyra solemnly assured his patients that if they ate tomatoes they would never die. This is reported by no less a witness than Thomas Jefferson, who certainly lived to a ripe old age.⁹

The real *métier* of the Jew was and is business. In eighteenth-century America, the biggest business of all was army supply, and the Frankeses were, as likely as not, at the top of the heap. In the intermittent War for the World that stretched from the Mississippi to Calcutta between 1689 and 1815, the Frankeses supplied provisions for the American troops. It would be difficult to overestimate their importance in making possible the British conquest of Canada and the transallegheeny West. Army supply was of course a gamble, but even more hazardous were privateering and lotteries, the “stock market” of that day. To lose money on lottery tickets or in privateering, one has to make it somewhere, and Jews made it—such as it was—primarily as shopkeepers selling hard, soft or dry goods in addition to wet goods: it was hardware, cloth, and liquor on which Jews founded their economy. Stocks were small, practically all sales were on a credit basis, and debts frequently had to be collected through the courts. It is interesting to note that not a single Jew is known to have made a living exclusively as a moneylender, pawnbroker, or old clothes dealer. In some towns, nearly 10 percent of the businessmen were Jews, which made for high visibility on Front Street. The local shopkeeper rarely dealt directly with the merchant-supplier in London or Bristol. He bought what he needed from his regional wholesaler. In the world of business there was no one higher than the merchant. The Frankeses were exemplary merchants; they handled everything from enamel fountainpens to newly-built ships, but rarely tobacco, the most important of all the colonial commodities. Merchants, Jews among them, were retailers, wholesalers, commissionmen, bill brokers, maritime insurers, and manufacturers; in short, they were merchant capitalists. Their prime job was to export North American raw materials, provisions, and semi-finished goods in exchange for West Indian staples and British manufactures. They owned ships, warehouses, and wharves, and would not balk at smuggling when their economy demanded it. Diversification was the norm in order to minimize losses and enlarge opportunities.

Aaron Lopez offers a classical example of a great merchant-shipper. He was twenty-one when he came to Newport a Portuguese refugee (1752). Starting as a shopkeeper, he branched out in the coastal traffic and very slowly moved into the transoceanic trade, dispatching ships, lumber, and provisions to English and West Indian ports. Above all else a brilliant manipulator of credit, he was nonetheless highly respected for his integrity. Ten years after he landed, he was on the way to sizable wealth. In 1768 his fleet made thirty-seven coastal voyages; he owned or chartered about thirty ships. Employing the typical domestic or put-out system of that prefactory age, he assembled, manufactured, or processed meats, cheeses, fish, chocolate, rum, potash, and soap. The shoes he ordered made for his trade were worn as far west as Detroit and Michilimackinac; his prefabricated houses were erected in Central America, and he was one of the first Jewish garment manufacturers—specializing, of course, in the proletarian trade. A whaler and a candle manufacturer, he was a member of the United Company of Spermaceti Candles, an unsuccessful cartel. He and his father-in-law, Jacob R. Rivera, were the largest, and for many years virtually the only, Jewish slave importers, persisting in what was at best an extremely hazardous business. By 1774 Lopez was the biggest taxpayer in Newport, a major American commercial center. Yet his death by accidental drowning in 1782 found him insolvent, an economic victim of the Revolutionary War.

Lopez played no part in the fur business. In the eighteenth century furs constituted less than 3 percent of North American exports to the mother country. The trade, however, was all important to the Canadian Jews and bulked large in the affairs of some of their New York and Pennsylvania coreligionists. The Gomezes of the 1720's had a trading post near Newburgh, New York, and the building is still there, the oldest known Jewish structure in the colonies. The fur trade was not for delicate personalities. The Devil's Dance Chamber was dangerous country:

For none that visit the Indian's den,
Return again to the haunts of men;
The knife is their doom, oh sad is their lot;
Beware! beware of the blood-stained spot.

A great deal is known about the Pennsylvania Jewish fur traders. By sheer accident their papers have survived. Actually few of them were traders; instead, they were outfitters, capitalists like Simon, Trent, Levy & Company, who had opened a store at Fort Pitt in 1760 before the fortifications were even completed. Their field man was Levy Andrew Levy, who was captured by the Indians during the French and Indian War. One of the Nunezes of Georgia bought furs in Augusta, and in the wilds of the Old Southwest there was a Creek Indian by the name of Cohen, obviously a souvenir left behind by a Jewish entrepreneur.

Fur trading, army supply, and land speculation were closely tied together: their common locale was the “heart of America,” the area between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River. After the French forces were driven out, British settlers and merchants, Jews among them, moved in to exploit the opportunity they believed awaited them in mining and in selling goods to the garrisons, the Indians, the Illinois habitants, and the onrushing English squatters. Notwithstanding the opposition of the British government many Americans—George Washington was one of them—were determined to establish massive colonies in the area and to peddle acreage to land hungry newcomers. To a greater or lesser degree, the Pennsylvania Jews took part in several such enterprises. They planned to establish colonies between the Monongahela and the Mississippi; one of the colonies included the site of present-day Chicago. All these designs failed, since their claims to millions of acres were never recognized by the new states and the United States Congress. The railroads of the mid-nineteenth century would be more successful in profiting from the huge grants made them by a generous national government. Yet though these early colonizing schemes came to grief, the large stocks of supplies they shipped in, the deals they made with the Indians and others, prepared the way for settlers and pushed back the frontier.

Socially, Jews belonged to one class, a broadly-conceived middle class. Very few were impoverished; only a handful were rich. With all the opportunities available in an America which still hugged the tidewater, why could they not all become rich? They were handicapped by the lack of market and credit information, banking facilities, and sound currencies. The risks on land and sea were numerous and incalculable. At one time or another many if not most Jewish merchants became bankrupt, but almost invariably they bounced back. The typical colonial Jew was a shopkeeper who never went hungry, owned a home and a Negro slave-servant or had a white maid whom he kept until she broke the dishes. He always paid his congregational dues if he had the money and if he was properly dunned. The career of Mordecai Gomez is typical of the successful merchants. When he passed away at New York City in 1750, this Sephardic aristocrat left behind him slaves, silverware, snuff mills, and a number of houses and lots. During a smallpox scare, the Provincial Assembly met in his summer home in Greenwich Village. He did not forget to leave a legacy for the synagog and, what was equally generous, set up an annuity for his mother-in-law.¹⁰

Did the Jews make a significant contribution to the colonial economy? It never occurred to Jewish businessmen to make a contribution; they wanted to make a living, to be left alone, and to enjoy the security of low visibility. Actually they were by no means unimportant purveyors of sorely needed goods in an agrarian economy remote from industrial

sources. In their own modest fashion, the wares of the Jewish shopkeeper served to maintain and raise the colonial standard of living. Through his religious association with fellow Jews, he ignored and transcended colonial barriers. By virtue of his intercolonial traffic, the Jewish shipper brought people and products together, disseminating goods and even ideas. In 1712 Joseph Addison wrote in the *Spectator* that the Jews

are become the instruments . . . by which mankind are knit together in a general correspondence. They are like the pegs and nails in a great building which, though they are but little valued in themselves, are absolutely necessary to keep the whole frame together.

Thus the Jewish businessman contributed to the breakdown of geographic particularism and aided in the decomposition of parochialism. In a way, he too assisted in creating a common American culture uniting the colonies and preparing the way for the new nationalism which would culminate in the American Revolution.¹¹

RELIGION

Mordecai Gomez served four terms as the president of New York's Congregation Shearith Israel. In his will he bequeathed the "Five Books of Moses and one pair of silver ornaments" to his son Isaac, named after a grandfather who had languished as a judaizer in an Inquisitional prison. It must be borne in mind constantly that for the colonial Jew Judaism was important; he would not have remained in colonial America despite its opportunities if he had not been permitted to practice his faith. To ensure that the religion would live and be passed on to his children, he established a synagogue, a cemetery, a school, and a system of charities. These in effect, constituted a community which like the European counterpart upon which it was patterned, was in essence a compulsory one: "Join with us or we will ostracize and excise you. We won't even bury you." What choice did a newcomer have? Was he to convert and join the Christians?¹²

Colonial Jewry's leading businessmen were mostly immigrants with strong religious loyalties; they automatically brought their institutions and practices and folkways with them to North America. These immigrants dominated American Jewish life until the early nineteenth century and never forgot the European rock whence they were hewn. Their Judaism was of the traditional type; there was no other at the time. It was an indoctrinated compound of theology, practices, and religious exercises. The Jews believed in one God who had revealed himself to them alone and had covenanted with them to be their God if they would keep his rituals and adhere to his ethical commands. If they made atonement for sin through good works he would send them a Messiah in his own good time

and restore them to the Promised Land where they would await the resurrection and the great day of judgment. Theology as such was something to accept and forget. The ongoing life cycle ceremonies were more real: circumcision, bar mitzvah (by which the thirteen-year-old boy became a man), marriage, burial, and mourning. The immigrant generation kept the dietary laws, saw to it that the women took their monthly ablutions in a mikveh, and were generally meticulous in celebrating the Sabbath and Holy Days.

The synagogue began in a rented room, moved on to a house, and finally to a new building of its own. Synagogues for the living and cemeteries for the dead were almost coeval. There was a burial plot in New Amsterdam in 1656, but the oldest extant cemetery in the country is that of Newport (1678); New York's Chatham Square graveyard dates from 1682. Two synagogue buildings were erected by the Jews in colonial days: in 1730, fifty-six years before the Roman Catholic Church constructed a permanent sanctuary in New York City, the Jews dedicated their Mill Street synagogue. Newport followed in 1763. During the Revolution, Montreal and Philadelphia consecrated new buildings of their own. The Newport sanctuary was one of the most beautiful of colonial structures, unique in Jewish history in that it was planned for Jews by an Episcopalian who turned to pagan antiquity for his design. Though the sole rite maintained in all colonial synagogues was the Spanish-Portuguese or Sephardic, every Jew, no matter of what background, was a welcome guest, and the Ashkenazic newcomers apparently found it easy enough to adjust to the unfamiliar liturgy. Except for a social club in Newport, the synagogue of that day was the only Jewish organization in town. It was the community's associative center serving a variety of purposes. The leadership, composed of a president (*parnas*) and a board (*mahamad* or *junto*) was entirely lay; the congregational employees were, in effect, hired hands: a beadle (*shammash*), a ritual slaughterer (*shohet*), and a hazzan, a precantor, who chanted the worship service and taught the children. The mohel or circumciser was not part of the official family; very often he was a pious volunteer. No rabbi was ever employed by a North American synagogue until the second quarter of the nineteenth century; no community believed that it could afford the luxury of a talmudic academician—in the unlikely event that such a dignitary would have been willing to settle on this far western frontier of European civilization. As it was, all the employees, *shohet*, *shammash*, and even hazzan, had to hustle on the side to make an extra pound. They could not live on their communal salaries.

CHARITIES AND EDUCATION

The laymen may have had no money for a rabbi, but, despite the burden of double taxation in several towns, taxation by Jewish communal author-

ities and taxation by the established church, there was always money in the treasury for *obras pias*, pious works. The synagogal *mahamad* was a complete social welfare agency in itself. The aid given was in the form of money, food, fuel, clothes, medical attention, and sick care. The local respectable poor who had come down in the world, or had never gone up, were pensioned. Transients coming from all corners of the earth were courteously treated, fed, and more or less gently pushed onto the next leg of their often endless odyssey. Palestinian visitors and “messengers of the Merciful One” came here as early as 1759, but candidates for alms also came from Europe, Surinam, and the Caribbean Islands: such clients were never wanting. Here is the whole story in one laconic sentence: “To cash for lodging, boarding, doctering, and burying Solomon Solomons, £23, 8, 10.” Rehabilitation? The minutes of the New York congregation record pathology not cures. Any self-respecting Jew who wanted to peddle or start a business could always get an assortment of goods on credit. New York’s Shearith Israel lent Michael Judah enough money to open a shop in Norwalk, Connecticut. Theodore Dehone Judah, who planned the first railroad across the Sierras, was Michael’s great-grandson, but by that time the Connecticut Judahs had long been Christians.¹³

No matter how small a community, it was riven with dissension. Bitter hatreds plagued every Jewish settlement, for unhappy men, immigrants struggling to make a living, vented their frustrations on one another. Within a week or so after their landing in New Amsterdam—it was in September, 1654—two Jewish Pilgrim Fathers were confronting each other in the courts. During the next century one of the Nordens of Savannah found a unique way to revenge himself on fellow townsmen. His will reads: “Sheftalls need not come to my funeral.” But the potential for fragmentation was countered by the leadership, the synagogal board, which though, in every community, autocratic in intent, was permissive in practice. After all every Jew was needed, often desperately needed, for a minyan, a religious quorum. The colonial Jew readily understood this equation: no minyan, no services; no Judaism, no survival. Despite “Jewish Wars,” no congregation ever fell apart because of factionalism; in a final showdown, a truce was almost always patched up. Unity had been developing for a long time among the Jews here: the English language, the primary medium of communication, tied them all together, and the Sephardic minority took comfort in the thought that its rite had prevailed in all the congregations. Initial polarization between Sephardim and Ashkenazim was the norm, but then they began to intermarry; ultimately the colonial Jewish community was a melting pot of at least a dozen ethnic elements. Gershom Seixas, the Revolutionary War minister, half-Sephardi and half-Ashkenazi, married an Ashkenazi, and notwithstanding his love for Spanish meatballs learned to smack his lips over a German

pudding, *kugel*. All the congregations leaned heavily on the mother synagogue, Shearith Israel, in New York; the New Yorkers completely dominated American Jewish spiritual life. From Montreal to Savannah, the communities (*kahals*) kept in touch with one another through wandering mendicants, visits, gifts, letters, and an occasional exchange of pulpits by cantors (*hazzanim*).¹⁴

Relations with Jews in other lands were just as intimate. "Every Jew is responsible for his fellow Jew." Diaspora Jews had learned to do without a hierarchy; religion and kinship cemented them firmly together. Shearith Israel was in constant touch with the Sephardim of Bevis Marks in London and with the Dutch and English Jews in the Antilles. The Jews here sought aid and gave aid. Aaron Lopez called upon the Surinamese to help build the Newport sanctuary, and when St. Eustatius in the Caribbean was devastated by a hurricane the New Yorkers helped the Jews there rebuild their shattered house of worship. These, to be sure, were the very people with whom the Jews of North America did business: the synagogue followed trade and trade followed the synagogue.¹⁵

Simon the Just, a Jewish high priest in pre-Christian times, once said: "The world stands on three pillars: the Teaching (Torah), worship, and deeds of loving kindness" (Abot 1:2). It is worth noting that Torah—learning, education—comes first in his scale of values. At all times the purpose of religious instruction was to condition the child to be spiritually, religiously, loyally Jewish, to enable him to establish a right relationship with his God. Ribbis, teachers, were already working at their jobs in New York during the seventeenth century; schools were opened no later than the early eighteenth century. By 1731, a London philanthropist, yearning to pile up merits in the world to come, had enabled the New York congregation to construct a separate school building. This school was *sui generis*; it was a charity, a private, and a communal school all in one; the children of poor families paid no tuition. The curriculum included Hebrew, the prayers, blessings, and translation of the Pentateuch. Girls, too, were admitted to the classes, but of course only the boys were prepared for bar mitzvah. For its time it was a good school: it succeeded in training young Seixas to serve as a competent precentor. By 1755 secular studies were introduced, the three R's and Spanish, though the Spanish was soon dropped. There is every reason to believe that the general subjects taught were adequate to prepare the youngsters to go on as commercial clerks or as apprentices in the crafts at the age of thirteen. No record extant indicates that any effort was ever made to teach adults rabbinic lore, even though there was always a sprinkling of learned men, some of whom possessed Hebrew libraries. The prerevolutionary Jew produced virtually nothing of intellectual value except two English translations of the Sephardic liturgy, the first such publications in either Amer-

ica or England. This is nothing to boast about in an age of great rabbinic learning, a generation that gave birth to the Hasidic Master of the Good Name, to Elijah, the Majestic Genius of Vilna, and to Moses Mendelssohn. But then there were a mere five hundred Jewish families in all America, and most of the Jews here paid only lip service to Jewish culture. They surely enjoyed being Jews, but did the colonies enjoy them?

REJECTION

Did the colonies enjoy the Jews—take pleasure or pride in their presence? A better question would be: Did the typical American—not the elite—enjoy anyone in this sense? Protestants vilified nonconformist Protestants, and all of them, conformist or not, feared and hated Catholics; no church had much use for Jews. Anti-Jewish prejudice among Christians is as old as the Gospels; “Jew” was always a term of contempt; the Jew was almost invariably perceived as the great deicide, the “Christ-Killer,” guilty, as Increase Mather put it, of “the most prodigious murder that ever the sun beheld.” Judeophobia came to the colonies in the baggage of the first immigrants, and the Jew was to remain a second-class citizen in America until the dawn of the nineteenth century. A tightly contested election to the New York Provincial Assembly in 1737 even temporarily deprived Jews of the franchise. Assemblyman William Smith, Hebraist and lawyer, harangued his colleagues on Christ’s sufferings at Calvary. Men wept—and voted—as they listened to the impassioned oratory. In the next decade, Lawyer Smith was afraid to undertake a case against Oliver, brother of the provincial Chief Justice, James De Lancey. Oliver De Lancey and a number of his cronies had broken into the home of a Jew and threatened violence to his attractive wife. De Lancey was drunk, but drunk or sober he had a penchant for Jewish women. Phila, his wife, was the daughter of Jacob Franks; one of their sons, Oliver, Jr., raised as a Christian, became an adjutant general in the British Army.¹⁶

ACCEPTANCE

There is no record of Jews complaining of abuse at the hands of Gentiles. Relatively speaking they were well-treated, and they knew it, for they had the example of the far more vehement prejudice of the British West Indies. The Islands were more European in the traditional anti-Jewish sense; North America, for reasons that are not entirely clear, was emotionally more immune from Continental Judeophobia. It is true that someone saw fit to break the windows of the Newport synagog, but it is equally true that a Barbados mob tore down the entire synagog.

Were Jews more accepted here in North America because of a common Judeo-Christian heritage, because they were the children of the Old

Testament and were deemed Hebraists? There is little—if indeed any—proof that a common belief in the first thirty-nine books of the Bible made for better Jewish-Christian relations. The first Christian colonial émigrés had been Hebraists in an England which sheltered no overt Jews, and their descendants who pursued or were pursued by Hebrew courses at Harvard and Yale would have been exposed to Hebraic subjects had there been not a single Jew in America. Hebraic studies were most intense in colonial New England where Jews were conspicuous by their absence. Learned and pious Christians were perhaps interested in Hebrew; how else would they understand the angels singing psalms in Heaven? They were not interested in Hebrews, Jews. No individual is of one piece. Ezra Stiles nourished a barely concealed contempt for the faith of “professed enemies to a crucified Jesus,” yet esteemed as a dear friend the visiting Palestinian rabbi, Haim Isaac Carigal. There can be no question that the Gentiles here learned to live with their Jewish neighbors; they even published the Jewish calendar in their almanacs. How does one account for their more or less gracious acceptance of the Jews in their midst? Actually the non-Jews had no choice. The decision had been unequivocally made for them in the imperial Plantation Act of 1740: “The increase of people is a means of advancing the wealth and strength of any nation or country.” The Jews were not too conspicuous; there was—fortunately—in North America no unitary religiocultural pattern to which the Jew had to conform or be damned. It may well be, however, that the prime motivation impelling non-Jewish settlers to accept Jews was their need of them. Jews were shopkeepers and extended credit. *That* was important. The story is altogether different with the cultured few (Gentiles) who were often associated with the power structure. Under the influence of Deism and the Enlightenment, many intellectuals had come to believe that religious prejudice was wrong. Truly tolerant and humanitarian, they encouraged Masonry which emphasized religioethical universalism and frowned on Christian credal provincialism. Jews, quick to sense the spiritual, social, and political import of Masonry, became ardent devotees of the movement. It was a passport to better things. Moses M. Hays, an American-born Jewish businessman, introduced into North America and the Islands a Masonic system which was later to be affiliated with the Scottish Rite.¹⁷

The colonial non-Jew accepted the Jew; this explains in large part why the Jew accepted America. A few immigrants, accustomed to an intensely Jewish environment, were unhappy here and left; most of them stayed on. They enjoyed a large measure of social tolerance, civil rights, and economic privilege. Feeling at one with their neighbors, they worked closely with them in business and philanthropy; they were active in all that furthered the social and cultural welfare of the general community.

They marched with the militia; endured Indian captivities, and did what they could to improve the streets, wharves, hospitals, and colleges. As far south as Charleston, Jewish entrepreneurs rallied to the support of liberal Rhode Island College; Newport Jews sent the new school thousands of feet of lumber and even contributed “chierfully” to the erection of a Baptist Meeting House. Aid for the First Baptist Church in Providence was not the first instance of Jewish interest in a Christian house of worship. As far back as 1711 seven New York Jews, the “rabbi” among them, contributed funds to complete the steeple on Trinity Church. No later than the 1770’s, a Union Society of Jews, Catholics, and Protestants emerged in Savannah for general philanthropic purposes, and in that same decade the Newport synagogue raised \$120 to help Thomas Allen support his blind wife and seven blind children—all this in a generation when the Jews were being massacred by the thousands on the steppes of the Ukraine. Something of an index to Jewish acceptance of non-Jewish norms in America, Anglicization of names was typical: Amschel became Answell, Hirsch (deer) became Hart, and the Spanish Pardo became Brown. There is a record of three men, however, who did not find it necessary to change their names to document their Americanization: Sam Moses, Solomon Abraham, and Isaac Cohen. All three were native-born Indians.¹⁸

ACCULTURATION, ASSIMILATION, AND INTERMARRIAGE

Adopting English names is only one aspect of Americanization and superficial in a way. Secular education is much more significant. Every Jewish child in colonial times was given some schooling; most of them attended the primitive private schools that dotted the towns and villages. For Jews, of course, this was all atypical, for in the areas of mass settlement, in Central and Eastern Europe, they received little if any formal training in the three R’s. Because in Europe general education and Christianity were one indivisible whole, Jews eyed all non-Jewish cultural studies warily. In the colonies, however, wealthier American Jews sent their youngsters to the private schools patronized by the aristocracy. Admission was easy; there was no numerus clausus, no Jewish quota such as prevailed in the United States in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Jews and Christians mixed freely in those elite circles. The children studied art and painting and cultivated music: when they grew up, they joined the musical clubs and played in the quartets. Most colleges were open to Jews but few matriculated. They simply saw no reason to attend schools of higher learning, most of whose students were candidates for the Christian ministry. Theology, classics, mathematics? This education buttered no Jewish parsnips. Of course it was not a college-going generation even for Gentiles; nor was it a book-reading generation. For every

William Byrd who read a book, there were many more George Washingtons who had no interest in books. So, in that age of Jonathan Edwards, Benjamin Franklin, and young Thomas Jefferson, the Jews in America could boast of no cultural accomplishments. (The one exception was the *Grammar of the Hebrew Tongue*, published in 1735 by Harvard College. Its author was Judah Monis, a Harvard instructor who had become a Christian.) American Jewry was too small, too obscure, too ill-prepared to make a literary contribution of any significance.

Still let it be accounted a virtue that these immigrants were as receptive as they were to Gentile learning. Clearly, the Jews here were convinced that they and their religion were not threatened by such exposure. Actually, here, too, they had little choice: American culture engulfed them; they were outnumbered a thousand to one. To be sure, like the Pennsylvania Germans, the Moravian Brethren, and the Georgia Ebenezer Lutherans, the Jews might have chosen to isolate themselves—but, in fact, they were not farmers and declined to live apart in a religioethnic enclave; they opted to live in the frontier world of North American opportunity. Portuguese, Spanish, and Yiddish began to disappear: the Gratzes stuck to Yiddish phrases and paragraphs, but stopped writing entire Yiddish letters; Seixas never could speak Portuguese. Not that the Jews meant to become secularists—certainly that was not their conscious intent—but they were governed by self-interest. Shopkeepers and merchants, they had to live and do business with their neighbors. Many of them had Christian partners. In order to survive, they naturally dressed, talked, and decorated their homes like typical English colonials. Culturally they were or rapidly became Anglo-Americans. They assimilated in order to survive and, after all, they liked what they were doing. The immigrant cantor of Charleston was buried under a tombstone that proudly pronounced him a doctor of divinity.

There was an ineluctable drift—however imperceptible it may have been—away from the traditional European Ashkenazic way of life. Stay away from America, Haym Salomon warned a relative: There is “little Jewishness” here, and in a way—a Polish way—Salomon was right. Here was neither ghetto nor rabbi nor talmudic study; classical Jewish legalities had no currency in this market. Here Jews began to make compromises, often unwittingly so, to be sure. They eased off in religious practices, on Sabbath observances, and on kosher foods. A few bold souls wandered into churches to listen to Christian preachers, and some even dared to peek into the New Testament. Those who read books enjoyed reading the English Deists, who, they could not fail to see, were knocking the props out from under Christianity. This straying from immemorial custom and prejudice was a shock to traditionalists, happy and secure in their stereotypes. Dr. Samuel Nunez had sacrificed his fortune when he fled

Portugal to live as a Jew in England and the colonies. Out on the Georgia frontier, his sons ate and slept with Indians, blacks, and Christians and, apparently, cared not one whit for the ideals for which their father had been willing to brave the rack and the stake. It was a new generation, America was a new world.

Except for the land and its challenges, much here was on a small scale. In the villages, the towns, and even the cities—none of them huge—neighborly friendships, intimacies, and courtesies were common if not inevitable. An American portrait painter, Cosmo Alexander, who had been one of Gilbert Stuart's teachers, struck up a friendship with Bernard Gratz. This Jewish merchant, one of Alexander's creditors, went out of his way to help the artist free himself from a debtor's prison and secured for him a letter of license that would permit him to straighten out his affairs. One of Gratz's kinswomen married a Christian, a Schuyler of New York. In the free American society of that day, marriages between Jews and Gentiles could not be prevented. Trying to head off intermarriage was probably one of the motivations that induced the wealthy New York Frankses to ship two of their sons to London; two of their remaining three children did marry Christians: David married Margaret Evans; when, in later years Margaret gave birth to Rebecca, she opened the family Bible and dutifully recorded Becky's birth "on Good Friday & Purim." Thus, the Anglican wife of a Jewish merchant built her own little bridge between Judaism and Christianity.¹⁹

In larger towns, the rate of intermarriage was not inconsequential, but in the villages and hamlets the Jewish shopkeeper nearly always took a Christian wife and frequently ended up by joining the church. Levi Solomon, who peddled in and around Freehold, New Jersey, married three times, always out of the faith. He survived his wives and then saw to it that he was buried between two of them with a third at his feet; it is evident that he meant to make ample provision for himself in the Resurrection. Conversions to Judaism were rare, for the Jews fought off would-be proselytes. This fear was a hangover from the Old World past, for ever since early medieval days Jews who induced Christians or Muslims to adopt Judaism were subject to the death penalty. It is true that practically all of the Jews in America were committed to acculturation, but they were even more determined to avoid intermarriage and conversion. Outwardly the Jewish businessman was completely integrated into the life of the larger community; inwardly he was resolute in his loyalty to his religion and its values; he clung to his folkways and linguistic reminiscences, his group distinctiveness, and his moral ideals.²⁰

SUMMARY

American Jewry began with a motley collection of twenty-three men, women, and children, Sephardim and Ashkenazim, all refugees, all poor. By 1775 may have been as many as 2,500 souls in the colonies in seven towns and a number of villages. With an apologetic bow to Crèvecoeur, the question may be posed: "What then is an American Jew?" He was an Anglicized Central European immigrant, rough and ready, a venturesome individualist. He was not uprooted, not a crisis émigré like his late nineteenth-century East European spiritual descendant. There was no necessity for him to resign himself to extreme departures from his European norms, religiously or economically. He left an agricultural economy behind him and he came to an agricultural economy. There was no industrialism in the colonies to shatter his wonted religious habits. If he had been a peddler in Europe, he became a shopkeeper in America. Here he upgraded himself economically, politically, socially, and culturally. The smart or fortunate shopkeeper became a merchant importing from and exporting to England and the Caribbean, shipping supplies westward across the mountains, grandiosely reaching out for transallegheeny colonies and wealth which were always to elude him. No one can deny that he was enterprising. "The Quakers and Jews are the men now a days," complained Gerard G. Beekman enviously.²¹

There was one area in which they were unquestionably successful. They transplanted the Jewish community and kept it alive, adapting an Old World culture to the Atlantic frontier. The new freedom was their greatest challenge, and they handled it well. While welcoming the new cultural opportunities, they shied away from radical change and continued to hold onto the past. They experienced little difficulty in maintaining a comfortable balance between European religious traditionalism and an American way of life, but it was a balance that varied with the whims of each individual. What is truly significant is their—implicit—conviction that here they were not in Galut, not in Exile. There was no wall of separation in their minds; America was home. These are the people who laid the foundations of America's present-day Jewry of over five million. Their Jewish accomplishments can be summed up in a short sentence: They survived as Jews. It was quite an achievement.

An important question: What did their children build on the foundations these immigrants laid? After the Declaration of Independence, what happened to Jews and Judaism in the new United States of America?



CHAPTER TWO

THE EARLY REPUBLIC 1776-1840

THE JEW AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, 1775-1783

INTRODUCTION

When the Declaration of Independence was adopted on July 4, 1776, there were at most some 2,500 Jews in this country out of a total population of about 2,500,000. One in every thousand inhabitants was a Jew; not even 1 percent of World Jewry then lived in North America. Most of the Jews in the new United States lived in Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Georgia. Certainly there were Jews in the other original thirteen states, but only a handful. On June 12, 1776, a few weeks before the Declaration of Independence, an immigrant Polish Jew left New York City to peddle his wares among the American troops stationed near the Canadian border. He carried with him a recommendation that he was “warmly attached to America.” Indeed the peddler—Haym Salomon—was a patriot. He had no way of knowing that the rebellious colony of Virginia would adopt a bill of rights which was to influence individuals and states everywhere for generations yet to come: “All men are by nature equally free and independent and have certain inherent rights . . . enjoyment of life and liberty . . . happiness and safety.” This one Jew, Salomon, was “warmly attached to the revolutionary cause,” but what was the attitude of other Jews? There is reason to believe that virtually all the Jews in this country were at one in their love of the land, though they were not all necessarily willing to identify themselves as Whigs, or Continentals. Even the foreigners among them—and a very substantial number had been born abroad—seem to have thought of themselves as Americans.¹

CAUSES OF THE REVOLUTION

Most of the younger generation, practically all native-born, were strongly American in sympathy; they had grown up in the decade of the 1760's,

years of protest against the mother country. Like their fellow colonials, they too resented the tightening of imperial controls and could not reconcile themselves to the prospect that the days of "salutary neglect" were coming to a close. They had no inclination to support a British army and civil servants or to help pay Great Britain's war debts despite the fact that the debt had been in large part incurred defending America against the French. Imposition of assessments was taxation without representation; the provincial assemblies—miniature parliaments, if you will—had not authorized them. Apparently most American Jews, like the non-Jews about them, wanted to be part of a loosely federated empire in which colonial autonomy would not be impaired and British control would be minimal. Now the Americans could afford to be truculent: the French had been expelled in the 1760's, and British protection was no longer imperative. The Americans of the 1770's chafed under the yoke of colonialism, of mercantilism, of the old navigation laws, and when the colonies bared their fangs, the Jews here joined most other colonials in the anti-imperial nonimportation, nonexportation, nonconsumption boycotts. But rebellion? Like their neighbors, they hesitated to take that final step. On July 20, 1775, at the request of the Continental Congress, the Jews, too, met in their congregations and fasted and prayed to be spared the agony of war. Out on the Pennsylvania frontier, in Northumberland, Mrs. Aaron Levy and a nephew joined with the Presbyterians as they appealed to God for peace. Like hundreds of thousands of Americans the Jews were reluctant rebels. The war was not popular; it was not supported by the American masses. That is why it dragged on for nearly nine years. When again on May 17, 1776, Congress called on Americans to raise their voices in prayer and supplication, the Jews gathered in their synagogues: "Open to us the gates of mercy . . . And they shall beat their swords into plow-shares." This was the entreaty of the anxious worshippers in New York's Shearith Israel Congregation. The war was now a year old.²

JEW: NEUTRAL? LOYALIST? WHIG?

The Neutrals

It is not easy to draw a line between Whigs and Loyalists; it was not easy to be neutral. In all probability, many Jews, like the non-Jewish population, tried to avoid identifying themselves with the Loyalists and the Whigs. The distinctions between the three groups were not always clear and sharp. Most businessmen—Whigs, too—cheated on the nonimportation laws, and Loyalists made their peace with Whigs. Some Jewish patriots kept their shops open in the tidewater towns even when they fell under British occupation. It was not a day when total war was waged; anti-imperial patriots traveled to the mother country and were not de-

tained by the British cruisers blockading the American ports. In 1777, in the middle of war, Isaiah Isaacs, one of Richmond's most prominent businessmen, advertised that he would be taking a short trip to England and invited his customers to settle their accounts. Jewish merchants were not eager to be involved in the hostilities; they had to make a living; they dreaded what was after all a civil war. Jewish families were split apart by the conflict; there were Pintos, Hayses, Gomezes, and Frankses on both sides. Exile was a fearful alternative; it was not unusual for individuals to swing from one side to the other.³

Declaring in 1776 that Manuel Josephson was a "disaffected person" because he refused to join the anti-English boycotters, New York's radical Whigs made him surrender four guns, a cutlass, and a bayonet in his possession. In 1790 the same man called on General Washington and on behalf of American Jewry congratulated him on his elevation to the presidency. After the British took New York in 1776, David Hays, of Westchester County, drove into town and signed an address of loyalty to the English. The following year he swore allegiance to the new United States; two years later the English and the Loyalists raided and destroyed his home; his wife and children were compelled to take refuge in the woods. Philip Moses—assuming that only one man bore that name—was a Newport Whig who served in the South Carolina militia; when Charlestown was captured by the British, he, like many of his Christian and Jewish neighbors, "took protection"—he swore allegiance to the British. It was that or go into exile. Perhaps he thought that the war was over. Later he changed his mind and did go to Whiggish Philadelphia; either he was fed up with the British or thought he could do better in the Continental capital. Levi Sheftall, a Georgia commissary officer, had fought valiantly with the troops and had been locked up by the British for seventy-three days as a "demed rebel." In 1779 he was one of the two men, both Jews, who guided the Americans and their French allies as they set out to recapture Savannah. Levi lost a substantial fortune in the war, yet in the 1780's he was condemned as a Tory, suffering amercement and loss of rights. Only years later was he exonerated.⁴

Jews as Loyalists

A substantial minority of America's Jews remained loyal to the mother country when the final decision had to be made. Some were natives of England; they loved that country, "home" as they called it even here in America. It is not hard to understand why: after the return of the Jews to England in Cromwell's time, they had been well received. Though Jews were treated as second-class citizens, England was still the freest country in Europe for them. As British subjects they could trade anywhere in the

empire, from India west to the Mississippi. Individual Jews acquired great wealth; many were highly respected and moved in the best social circles in London and her suburbs. Here in the colonies the economic privileges of the Jews had been reinforced by the imperial naturalization act of 1740. On the whole, the political status of Jews in some of the colonies was not bad; there was even a prospect, in the 1770's, that the home government would ultimately grant them the right to hold public offices hitherto denied them. The main difference between Jewish Whigs and Jewish Loyalists was this: the Whigs wanted equality now; the Loyalists were gradualists, they were willing to wait. It is not without its irony that none of the Whig provinces which adopted constitutions during the millennial year 1776 moved to "emancipate" Jews: only New York would do so—implicitly—in the spring of 1777.

A wealthy businessman like David Franks, scion of a distinguished Anglo-American family, resented the new British taxes as much as any radical Whig. He had no hesitation in signing a nonimportation agreement, which was a courageous act since, for a long generation, he had profited from British army supply contracts. Yet outright rebellion against the mother country was unthinkable to him. His fellow Loyalists felt safer in a mercantilist monarchy which upheld privilege than they did in an egalitarian state where bourgeois rivals could threaten their monopolies. Even poor Jews might be Loyalists; many could not allow themselves the luxury of exile; these petty shopkeepers and artisans had no choice but to take a loyalty oath if they wanted to remain and do business. When the Whigs came to power, the Loyalists were punished. David Franks was a notable victim. In 1775 he had been appointed by the Continental Congress and George Washington to provide for British and Loyalist prisoners. Washington approved of Franks; the two had done business together during the French and Indian War twenty years earlier. Franks was a member of a London purveyor syndicate headed by his brother Moses. Many years earlier Moses had returned "home"—to England—where ultimately he became the moving force in this politically powerful international business group. Despite the fact that he had been commissioned by the Continental Congress, David Franks's position soon became untenable. Wealthy, cultured, he was identified with the prerevolutionary aristocracy. The radical Whigs harassed him as a Loyalist and finally expelled him in 1780; he took refuge in English-held New York. Whenever the Whigs were in the ascendancy, Loyalists were threatened; their lands were confiscated, individuals were beaten and murdered. Isaac Hart, of Newport, a pro-English merchant of distinction, fled to Long Island where, in a patriot attack on a Tory-held fort, he was bayoneted and clubbed to death. A number of Jewish "Tories" sought safety in Canada; some, like Franks, went back to England. One of the Rhode Island Harts,

though a Loyalist, made his way to pro-Whig Dutch St. Eustatius, but when the British seized the island they stripped him too of his possessions. It was a sad fate these exiled friends of England suffered.⁵

Jews as Whigs

When Jews could no longer put off deciding where they stood, most opted for the new republic. Later, when the Revolution proved successful, they bragged of their services—and their boasts can be substantiated. They were conservative Whigs, not radicals, and actually they had a great deal to gain from espousing the Whig cause. Nevertheless, the decision to throw in their lot with the rebels was not an easy one to make. They had property, warehouses, established businesses. Moses Seixas of Newport did not leave town when the English moved in. He remained, probably did business with them, and later, even when they no longer occupied Newport, he and some of his Jewish friends wrote a note secretly protesting their loyalty to the king. They were making every effort to salvage their holdings wherever the British were in power. The French occupied Newport when the English left; the French treasurer general was quartered in Seixas's home. Apparently Seixas was working both sides of the street; Aaron Lopez, too. Lopez was Newport's most eminent trader, one of the country's outstanding merchant-shippers. He had a great deal to lose. In 1775 he did his best to maintain good relations with the British elite; he was determined to see his ships exempted from the British blockade. For a while he maneuvered successfully; for the English favored him and restored his ships when they were seized. He had Loyalist partners who helped him. Like many other Rhode Islanders, he paid scant attention to the Continental boycotts. It was rumored that he was selling supplies to the hated British. One of his ships sailed into Savannah harbor loaded with proscribed goods; Mordecai Sheftall's Parochial Committee would not permit the vessel to discharge its cargo in September, 1775. The same ship with the same master, attempting to run a Lopez cargo from Jamaica, failed to escape the British blockade and was seized as a prize. A few months later, Lopez and a Gentile Loyalist partner leased a ship to the Continental Congress, which sent it on a secret mission to Europe. For merchant-shippers, economic survival—not political loyalty—was what preoccupied them during the Revolution. They reached out everywhere to make a profit and hold collapse at bay.⁶

Why was it so many Jews threw in their lot with the Whigs? The Whigs, never a majority party during the long years of the Revolution, were eager to recruit Jews. Minuscule in numbers though they were, the Children of Israel could not be dismissed as unimportant; they tended to be intelligent, literate, middle-class urban businessmen—an elite group in

a way. Some had means, and nearly all were engaged in a highly strategic occupation, the distribution of consumer goods. Native-born American Jews were often fierce Continental partisans. The British “were a cursed proud nation,” wrote a young Jewish Whig activist. Benjamin Levy, scion of an old well-established American family, signed paper money for the government and served as a member of the prestigious Whig Continental Committee in Baltimore. Levy had spent years in Philadelphia where he became a friend of Robert Morris, and when Morris thought of fleeing the city in 1776 because of the approaching British, Levy offered him the hospitality of his home in Baltimore. Most of the Jewish householders were not natives but immigrants. They were not of English stock and owed no ancestral loyalty to the British. Immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe, they had suffered disabilities in their homelands. Here in the English colonies the liberties they already enjoyed served only to whet their appetites. They were still second-class citizens under the crown; they had much to gain politically, economically, religiously, and even socially by joining the continentals. Many of them were influenced by the new doctrines of egalitarianism. Like the Catholics and the Protestant Dissenters, they hoped that a free and independent America would accord them all rights and immunities. Certainly they were influenced by the promise inherent in the Declaration of Independence. The equality offered them by the Whigs found its fulfillment in the new federal constitution of 1787, but—apart from New York in 1777—not in the organic statutes of the several states.⁷

When the English occupied New York City a number of Jews remained behind. Some were Loyalists; a few had been born in England; even some Whigs may have stayed on. Most of those who remained were probably neutrals, men determined to survive and to hold on to their shops no matter what happened. The wartime New York Jewish community, an amalgam of Hessian supply personnel, Whigs, Neutrals, and Loyalists from the city and the neighboring states, kept the synagogue open, hired “rabbis,” and conducted services during the eight years of British occupation. Their common Judaism cemented the members of this motley group. The English authorities did not commandeer the shul, as they sometimes did Protestant churches, and when some British soldiers went on a rampage and vandalized the synagogue their commanding officer punished them brutally. The greater part of the community left when the British occupation was imminent. They carried away with them some of the Scrolls of the Law and together with their rabbi moved to nearby Connecticut, staying as close to home as possible. Poor exiles! They found no peace in Connecticut, for the English forces raided the towns on Long Island Sound, plundering and burning. The heavy losses suffered by the Jews were somewhat ameliorated by gifts from the compassionate Aaron Lopez. These unfortunates were to remain in exile for almost a decade.⁸

Savannah, Charlestown, Philadelphia, New York, and Newport were all occupied by the English forces for shorter or longer periods. Individuals in each of these towns—sometimes most of the community—fled. These people, Whigs, made great sacrifices. Many of them, severely injured economically, had to rebuild their fortunes after the Revolution. The coming of the British to Newport meant that Lopez had to decide where his loyalties lay: leaving his little commercial empire behind, he moved out with his family, retainers, and slaves; there were twenty-seven men, women, and children in his entourage. Rather curiously, the Newport Whigs had avoided harassing Lopez; but they did not spare Moses Michael Hays (1739-1805). Suspected of Loyalism, Hays was called in and catechized by the town's patriots. He was indignant, for he had already sworn loyalty to the new republican order and was convinced that the war against the English was a just one. He was angry because the new test was not general but was imposed only upon suspects. He would not sign again, pointing out that the new regime locally and nationally had as yet done nothing for Jews. It was a government which ruled without the consent of the governed; he seemed to imply that it was as bad as the British. Among those who sat on the Rhode Island Committee of Enquiry was the speaker of the state's House of Representatives, Metcalf Bowler. Before the year was up this distinguished Rhode Island politician became a secret paid agent of the British. After his manly defense, Hays's Whig loyalty was never again questioned, and when the British seized the town, he, like Lopez, went into exile. In postwar days he was to become one of Boston's notable businessmen.⁹

Hays was a patriot, but Mordecai Sheftall was a leader. In 1774 when many Georgians evinced little interest in the Revolution, Sheftall became the head of the Parochial Committee of Christ Church parish, the first de facto "American" government in the province. The Georgians were slow to rebel; they sent no delegates to the first Continental Congress in 1774. The Sheftalls were Georgia pioneers; Mordecai's father had landed in the province in 1733 only a few weeks after Oglethorpe came ashore on the site of present-day Savannah. Knowing the part he had played in the revolt, the British imprisoned him when they captured Savannah in December, 1778. He and a son were to remain prisoners for about a year before they were finally released. Sir James Wright, the British governor who ruled the state till the war was over, knew full well that Sheftall was one of those reprehensible "liberty people." Reporting back home to his superiors in London, the governor suggested that no Jew ever be allowed to settle in Georgia, "for these people, my lord, were found to a man to have been violent rebels and persecutors of the King's loyal subjects."¹⁰

The first Jewish pioneers to land in Savannah in July, 1733, had been financed, in part, by a London tycoon, Francis Salvador. In 1773 his

namesake landed in Charlestown. This second Francis Salvador was to become one of the most prominent Jews of the Revolutionary period. After Joseph Salvador, Francis's London uncle and father-in-law, had lost a fortune, he ceded some of his vast estates in South Carolina to young Francis to whom he was indebted. The tracts owned by Joseph Salvador were known as "the Jews' land." Pressed by the need to recoup his fortunes, Francis carved out a plantation for himself in the western hinterland of South Carolina, in Ninety-Six District, where he soon emerged as a Whig leader. It is not difficult to surmise what motivated him. Twenty years earlier his uncle Joseph, then one of the great financiers of the British Empire, had helped sponsor a naturalization act that would benefit Jews. The act became law—but it was only a matter of months before Parliament scuttled it after a wave of anti-Jewish hostility and scurrility. Uncle Joseph was hooted out of a London theatre. Who can doubt that the patrician Francis Salvador would never forget that back in London he was only a second-class citizen. His Gentile fellow Whigs were fighting for more power; he, a Jew, was fighting for elementary political rights. The rebel caucus sent him to North Carolina on a propaganda mission, apparently not a successful one, for the Loyalists were strong there. Accompanying him on this tour was his Christian steward, but the latter, like Salvador, was damned as a "Jew"—guilt by association, so often a useful political stratagem.¹¹

Even so, to suffer obloquy as a Jew was not Salvador's daily experience: because of his background as a member of the English gentry, Salvador was accepted almost immediately, so it would seem, in the best Carolina society. It was not long before he was invited to sit in the two rebel provincial congresses and in the first general assembly of the new State of South Carolina. By 1776 this attractive young man had become a member of important committees and thus a political figure of some significance. Salvador was the first unconverted Jew to serve in an American legislature, possibly the first anywhere in the world to sit in a non-Jewish legislative body. In 1776 the British mounted an attack on two fronts against South Carolina. The army and the fleet moved in from the east; the Indians and the Tories moved in from the west and began killing the settlers on the frontier. Salvador rode twenty-eight miles to rouse the militia. On the night of July 31-August 1, a punitive expedition which he had joined was ambushed; Salvador fell, shot and scalped by the Indians. He may well have been the first Jew to die in defense of the new United States. Today in Charleston's City Hall Park there is a plaque dedicated to his memory:

Born an aristocrat, he became a democrat,
 An Englishman, he cast his lot with America;
 True to his ancient faith, he gave his life
 For new hopes of human liberty and understanding.¹²

JEWISH SOLDIERS IN COLONIAL AND REVOLUTIONARY DAYS

Salvador was not an enlisted soldier or a commissioned officer; he was a gentleman volunteer. No matter how carefully scholars check the service records, the muster rolls, and pension papers, they will never be able to determine how many Jews served in the militia or the Continental line. True, combing the lists of veterans would bring to light the names of Cohens, Levys, Moseses, and Solomons—but most of them would turn out to be Gentile, even if ancestrally Jewish. It is not easy to determine who are Jews; names are no positive criteria. Jews had been soldiers in the trainbands in Dutch New Amsterdam since the 1650's; under the British there was never a time that they were not enlisted in the militia. This type of provincial service was compulsory, though not onerous in times of peace; a tour of duty was often brief. The obligation to serve could be evaded easily; purchasing substitutes was always tolerated. It is estimated that at most about 100 Jews were enlisted in the armed forces of the Continentals and the Loyalists. They served as infantrymen, army couriers, and quartermasters. Some of them, city-stationed militiamen, were never in a skirmish; other conscripts saw hard fighting. When one realizes that there were only about 500 Jewish adult males of military age in the country, the 100 or so who served constitute a respectable percentage when compared with the Gentiles in the army. It must be borne in mind constantly that the number of Americans fighting in the armed forces formed a pitifully small percentage of the population. Among the Jews who bore arms were a handful of French volunteers; one of them was a flamboyant native of Bordeaux, Benjamin Nones, a member of Count Casimir Pulaski's Foreign Legion. One of the battles in which Nones saw action was the storming of the British redoubts before Savannah. With him in this futile assault on the English lines were several Charlestonians who boasted in later years that they had been a part of the Forlorn Hope.¹³

Jacob Pinto, of New Haven, could have taken pride in the fact that three of his sons had fought the British. Two were wounded repulsing the English and Loyalist invading forces; one was taken prisoner. All three had studied at Yale. William, the youngest, was a schoolteacher at Groton. His ability to write a fair hand led the president of Yale and the governor of the state to ask that he transcribe the Declaration of Independence. The Pintos were not "good" Jews; all three were the sons of a Christian mother, and they too reared Gentile families. Report has it that they had no religion; they were probably Deists or atheists. Abraham Solomon, another New England Jew who saw action, had an interesting career. This immigrant, who had lived in Marblehead and Boston, married a Christian in a ceremony performed by a Christian minister. There were

no synagogues or Jewish worship services in Massachusetts until the fifth decade of the next century; whether Solomon lived as a Jew or as a Christian is unknown. His Gentile contemporaries, in any case, identified him as "Solomon, a Jew." He was a soldier in the Continental Army in June, 1775, and appears to have taken part in the Battle of Bunker Hill. When he signed the payroll, he employed Hebrew script. After being mustered out of the army in the late 1770's, Solomon farmed for a time, speculated in currency, and flirted with anti-Whig elements. On one occasion he was picked up by the police and questioned. James Warren, of Boston, once said that "fellows who would have cleaned my shoes five years ago have amassed fortunes and are riding in chariots." Abraham Solomon, however, rode in no chariot. Judging from his record, Solomon could hardly have been an exemplary Jew.¹⁴

Joseph Smith merits more respect on this score. After enlisting in the Third Maryland Regiment at the age of twenty-three, Smith saw service in Pennsylvania, the Jerseys, and in the South. Wounded at Camden, South Carolina, he fell into British hands and remained a prisoner until he returned to Baltimore. In signing the company payroll, he made his mark. After the war, when he applied for a pension, it developed that Smith's real name was Elias Pollock. He could write, but only Hebrew script. Why had he concealed his name? He may well have been a runaway debtor seeking to hide; he may have been an indentured servant or a Maryland "transport," a criminal serving out his term in the colonies. Or, the simple answer may be that, fearing prejudice, he adopted the innocuous Anglo-Saxon "Smith" to conceal his Jewish origin. Elias Pollock still has Jewish progeny, but among his descendants are also a Catholic nun, a Baptist minister, a Mennonite, and several Mormons. Barrack Hays was a Loyalist belonging to a family which numbered many Whigs. The Hayses were Dutch old-timers, for they had come to New York no later than the 1720's, and the clan is still flourishing today. Barrack (Barukh, the "Blessed One") began his career in the New York militia as a Whig officer; then switched his loyalties and became an "officer of guides"—a chief of scouts?—for the British. After the war he fled to the safety of Canada. His New York-born son John Jacob Hays, who had accompanied his father to Canada, moved south of the border to the Illinois country where, as a United States civil servant, he carved out a career of some distinction in the first quarter of the next century.¹⁵

The historian Barnett A. Elzas has documented the presence in South Carolina of at least thirty-four Jewish Revolutionary War veterans, among them a few Georgia refugees. Most of these men served under Captain Richard Lushington whose outfit was known—erroneously, to be sure—as the "Jew Company." One of the soldiers was dubbed the "bridegroom," for he was called up to serve two days before he was to

have been married. The Jews in Lushington's company formed no majority, but since most of them were King Street shopkeepers, all bunched together, they had been conscripted as a group. They saw action and gave a good account of themselves. Lushington certified after the battle of Beaufort in 1779 that one of the men, Jacob I. Cohen, had "in every respect conducted himself as a good soldier and a man of courage." Five years later, as a member of the Richmond, Virginia, firm of Cohen & Isaacs, Cohen hired a frontiersman to survey the firm's extensive holdings on the Licking River in distant Kentucky. That man was Daniel Boone. The Whig branch of the Gomez family bragged of its devotion and patriotism. An old family tradition has it that one of the elderly Gomezes wanted to organize a company to fight the British. When told he was too old, he replied that he could stop a bullet as well as a younger man. Like most self-glorifying family stories, this one, too, will not bear scrutiny—although it is true that Daniel Gomez, over eighty at the time, exiled himself from the New York home where he had spent most of his life.

Most significant in the study of Jews serving in the Continental armed forces is not the heroism of individuals, which can be documented, but their rise to commissioned ranks. Under the British, no Jew could become an officer unless he took an oath as a Christian. Under the Americans three men attained high office in the Continental Army: Mordecai Sheftall, a quartermaster for the Georgia line and militia, enjoyed the simulated grade of colonel; David S. Franks and Solomon Bush, staff officers, were lieutenant colonels. Colonel Bush became kin to Mordecai Sheftall when the latter's son married Bush's sister Nelly. Bush joined the army in the early days because he wanted to "revenge the rongs of my injured country." Appointed a deputy adjutant general in the state militia at the age of twenty-five, he was ultimately commissioned a lieutenant colonel. Severely wounded in a battle near Philadelphia, he was carried to his father's home in Chestnut Hill, but was betrayed to the British by a "villain" in 1777. The English paroled him and, while receiving medical treatment from them, he discovered that a spy had infiltrated Washington's headquarters. Bush lost little time in alerting his Whig comrades. In the post-war years, still a relatively young man, he studied medicine, served his country voluntarily in a diplomatic capacity, and became an eminent Mason, grand master of the order in Pennsylvania. Bush married out of the faith and drifted away from Judaism, to the chagrin of his Jewish contemporaries. Upon his death he was buried in a Quaker cemetery, yet in 1782 he had made a better than average contribution when Philadelphia Jewry started to build its own Mikveh Israel synagog. Apparently his army life, his Masonry, and his enhanced social position among Gentiles tended in later years to alienate him from his people, but in 1782 his father Mathias was still alive and active in the Jewish community. Was papa watching

him? And if papa was such a good Jew why did he contribute nothing to the new building?¹⁶

Like Bush, Lt. Col. David S. Franks was also a native Pennsylvanian; unlike Bush, however, Franks joined with the Continentals in Canada where he had lived for years. A number of Canadian Jews were Whigs, sympathizing with the striving for autonomy more general south of the St. Lawrence Valley. As early as 1764, the Jews of Quebec Province had worked closely with the Protestant minority in its effort to secure some form of representative government. Unlike the older British colonies, the newly conquered province was permitted no legislative assembly. When resistance to the new imperial policy asserted itself in the south, a number of Canadian Jews leaned toward the boycotting provinces, even though, economically, it would have been more advantageous for them to collaborate with the English who marketed their furs in exchange for consumers' goods. By living and working with the habitants in Quebec and Montreal, Franks had become fluent in French, which would stand him in good stead during the Revolution. Like a number of Canadian Jews, he could not have been unaware that the Quebec Act of 1774 reintroducing French civil law was a potential threat to the Jews: the French in pre-conquest days, had not even tolerated Jews in New France. The Canadian Jews were one with the Protestants in believing that they would fare better under English law. In May, 1775, just a few weeks after Lexington and Concord, Franks, then in Montreal, manifested his devotion to the American cause. Some Protestant radical had vandalized a bust of George III and hung a placard on it: "Behold the Pope of Canada and the English fool." A French Canadian declared that the scoundrel who had done this ought to be hanged. Franks hearing the remark answered: "In England men are not hanged for such small offenses." A fight ensued in which Franks rashly struck the remonstrant, which cost him a week's incarceration.¹⁷

When the Americans briefly took Montreal that year from the English, Franks advanced money to the occupying forces and sold them supplies. Because the British looked upon him as a leader of sedition he was compelled to flee southward with the retreating troops and found himself with the Americans at Saratoga when Burgoyne surrendered to them. Later, in 1778, he served as a liaison officer on the staff of the Comte d'Estaing, the head of the French naval contingent, and in 1779 was in Charlestown, South Carolina, as an aide-de-camp to General Benjamin Lincoln. On his return to the north, Franks became a member of General Benedict Arnold's military family at West Point, though he was not involved in the general's defection. There are other facets to Franks's eleven-year career in the service of his country: he was also a high level courier in the diplomatic service, a vice-consul abroad, and finally an assis-

tant cashier in the Bank of the United States. He perished in the yellow fever epidemic of 1793.¹⁸

Franks—debonair, honest, affectionate, very eager to make a career in the public service—lived on the fringes of the conservative Whig establishment in Philadelphia, the dominant clique viewed with hostility by the radicals of that day. His friends were often in the highest circles, Jefferson, Franklin, John Adams. They liked and accepted him, although some thought him unstable and at times indiscreet. Certainly Franks was not a man of marked ability. His historical significance lies in the fact that, like Solomon Bush, he exemplified the social rise of politically disabled British subjects to a position of respect in the new, more egalitarian American state. For him, as for all Jews, the war had not been fought in vain. On occasion, Franks would call on Jefferson socially, and it was during one of these visits in 1793 that he sat down at the table with William Branch Giles, the Virginia congressman, John Trumbull, the artist of the Revolution, Jefferson, and a number of others. As dinner progressed, the conversation, which had already taken on an anti-religious tone, increased in acerbity. Giles poked fun at Trumbull's New England Puritanism and, in true Deistic fashion, even ventured, with the tacit approval of the free-thinking Jefferson and the other guests, to criticize the character, conduct, and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Colonel Franks was the only one who put in a good word for Trumbull during this heated discussion. In an effort to put an end to a conversation which was both annoying and embarrassing, the distinguished artist turned to Secretary Jefferson and said: "Sir, this is a strange situation in which I find myself. In a country professing Christianity, and at a table with Christians, as I supposed, I find my religion and myself attacked with severe and almost irresistible wit and raillery, and not a person to aid in my defense but my friend Mr. Franks, who is himself a Jew."¹⁹

Still another Franks was a patriot, a Moses Franks who is not to be confused with the London purveyor, David's brother. (Actually there were several Moses Frankeses and all of them may have been related.) This Moses Franks was in a position to be of service to the new Continental Army. In 1776 as Washington was preparing in Boston to move against New York, he requested Congress to send him \$250,000 in hard currency to reoutfit the troops and pay off the clamoring militia whose time of service had already expired. The problem facing Washington and the Congress was not to raise the money—they had already done so—but to get it past the English and the hostile Loyalists. Shipping the specie by sea and slipping through the British blockade was too hazardous. It was at this juncture that John Hancock called upon "three gentlemen of character"—among them, the Whig Moses Franks, of Philadelphia—to cart the money secretly to Washington's headquarters. It took them some

two weeks to reach Boston, unfortunately too late to meet the needs of the militia, but the cash was used to satisfy the regulars. The total expense incurred in this trek north amounted to \$238.²⁰

ARMY SUPPLY

When the Canadian Franks, David S., first joined the invading Americans in Montreal in November, 1775, he served them as an army purveyor and advanced very substantial sums to the occupying forces. The government repaid him later—in depreciated paper. Army supply had been a traditional business for Jews in Europe ever since the seventeenth century. Solomon de Medina fed Marlborough's troops on the continent to the Duke's complete (financial!) satisfaction. A popular couplet of that day is eloquent evidence that Marlborough did not lose by the transaction:

A Jew and a general both joined a trade.
The Jew was a baker, the general sold bread.

Since the quartermaster department of the American Revolutionary armed forces was, to say the least, primitive and inadequate, the government turned to civilian purveyors for badly needed supplies. The importance of civilian army suppliers cannot be overemphasized in a country at war with all its ports blockaded. Many, if not most, contemporary Jewish merchants were purveyors on a small scale, offering the government provisions, clothing, gunpowder, and lead. Harassed by lack of funds, the authorities took their time settling accounts. Whether they were supplying the Whigs or the English, the problem confronting Jewish as well as other purveyors was not only to secure goods and provisions but to be repaid by the governments with whom they dealt. Some trusting Whig suppliers were never paid at all or in all but worthless Continental currency. When the chief contractor went unpaid, the agent and subagents suffered. They, too, had pledged their credit. These civilian army suppliers contended with a host of problems: the English were patrolling the oceanic shipping lanes; goods did not get through; privateers and guerrillas preyed on all transport; no adequate medium of exchange existed; people had to resort to barter; and, to make a difficult situation even more complicated, some commonwealths set up barriers against the export of goods and supplies to neighboring states. One merchant who was never reimbursed for his advances was the Canadian Levy Solomons, a brother-in-law of the ebullient David Salisbury Franks. Solomons, a Whig, served the American troops in Canada in 1775 and 1776, helping them establish hospitals and lending them money. When the Americans were forced to retreat, this zealous patriot provided the sick and wounded with transportation on their way to the frontier. The British, knowing where his loyal-

ties lay, seized his goods and furniture on July 4, 1776, and threw them into the street; his neighbors shunned him and refused him shelter.²¹

One of the most important suppliers to the armed forces was Mordecai Sheftall, of Savannah. Colonel Sheftall's status was somewhat obscure, midway between that of a staff officer and a civilian purveyor. His was a big job, feeding the state and federal troops in Georgia. Inasmuch as the authorities did not unfailingly provide the necessary funds or goods, it was incumbent upon him to buy provisions, pay for them himself, and then try to collect later. Vouchers were frequently lost—after all, there was a war in progress! An indignant Sheftall, aware that he had made substantial sacrifices, appealed to the president of the Continental Congress: "I want nothing but justice, to be repaid my advances to the publick." It was a voice crying in the wilderness. He did receive a partial payment in Continental paper, which was not very helpful. Twenty years later the family was still petitioning the authorities for full payment. Sheftall as Georgia quartermaster was assisted by his sixteen-year-old son, Sheftall Sheftall, who enjoyed the impressive title of assistant deputy commissary of issues. In 1780, as agent for the Continental Congress, young Sheftall was appointed flagmaster of a flag-of-truce ship, the *Carolina Packett*, which successfully carried out its mission of bringing supplies to General Moultrie and his men imprisoned in British-held Charlestown.²²

Mention has been made of purveyors who served the British. Let it be kept in mind: at one time or another the British occupied every coastal town where Jewish communities had been established. Local businessmen inevitably sought the patronage of the occupying forces. Numbered too among the purveyors and quartermasters servicing the British armed forces were Jewish sutlers and supplymen who had accompanied the so-called Hessians, German mercenaries. Some of them remained in the United States after the war and became American citizens. Most notable in this group were the Marc (Mark, Marcus) brothers, Jacob and Philip, commissaries for the Third English-Waldeck Regiment. After the peace was signed, they settled in New York where they were admired as dry goods importers, merchants of distinction. We have already spoken of David Franks, of Philadelphia, who was the American agent of a powerful British consortium caring for English and Loyalist prisoners in American hands, unfortunates in need of food, clothing, and spending money. Taking care of these men and women was a challenging and, frequently, a thankless job. When, in December, 1778, the British authorities refused to pay the bills submitted, the suppliers found themselves faced with uncollectable unpaid expenditures for 500,000 rations. The actual subpurveyors, to whom contracts had been farmed out, were Whigs, some of them Jews, men Franks had known for years. One of his subcontractors was Joseph Simon of Lancaster, a former partner of William Henry in the firm

of Simon & Henry, rifle manufacturers. During the war, Simon, on his own account, supplied arms to the new government. Out on the western frontier, in Pittsburgh, one of his companies furnished goods to the commissioner for Indian affairs whose job it was to pacify the natives. Simon's son-in-law Michael Gratz and Michael's brother Barnard provided the New Yorkers with Indian goods in the hope of keeping the Iroquois happy.²³

All along the western frontier from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, the Indians had to be bought off; the new United States could not risk warring with the English on the east coast and with the turbulent Indians on the western frontier. During the Revolution, the Gratz brothers served as purchasing agents and purveyors for Virginia, the largest of the states. One of their tasks was to help George Rogers Clark defend Virginia in a wild backcountry extending from the Blue Ridge Mountains to the Mississippi. It was Clark's mission to safeguard Kentucky, to watch the Indians, to drive the British out of the West and to threaten Canada. The Gratzes shipped goods to Clark; they were among his prime suppliers. Other Jews, too, saw possibilities in government supply: Levy Marks, né Lippman Schneider, the tailor, asked Congress to let him supervise the manufacture of clothing for the army, but Congress turned a deaf ear to him. New York's well-known fur entrepreneur and merchant, Hayman Levy, manufactured garments, breeches and shirts, for his state. The actual work was done in the Philadelphia poorhouse.²⁴

In the Carolinas and in Georgia, Jewish merchants were equally active in supplying the troops. The Continental forces everywhere were desperately eager for food and clothing. General Francis Marion, who did business with Mordecai Myers of Georgetown, South Carolina, paid off in indigo, a staple much sought after for dyeing cloth. Still farther south, in Georgia, the quartermaster work of the Sheftall brothers was supplemented by the Minises among others. Head of the Minis clan was the aged matriarch Abigail; her son Philip, reputedly the first white child born and reared in the colony, was also an army purveyor carrying on his business, it is probable, independently of mama. In 1779 when the allied French and American expeditionary force attempted to retake Savannah from the English and the Loyalists, Abigail came to the aid of the Whig invaders. She was a competent businesswoman. At that time nearly eighty, she ruled, one suspects, with an iron hand over five unmarried daughters and her son. Abigail's Whig sympathies made it difficult for her to remain in Georgia after the Americans and French were defeated. She had no choice but exile in Charlestown. Fortunately for her the British liked her; she had friends in Loyalist circles, and her property escaped confiscation.²⁵

COMMERCE

INTRODUCTION: PRIVATEERS

Army supply during the War was only one facet of commercial life. For most Jewish merchants, sales to the government were minor; in short, they were primarily shopkeepers and merchants trying to sell the army some needed items. If a merchant was reluctant to deal with the Congress or the state or the troops, it was because of the likelihood of payment in a declining medium; the hardpressed government was simply not the most desirable of customers. To be sure, districts and regions controlled by Whigs constituted a sellers' market; goods were scarce. In the towns occupied by the British, however, goods were plentiful; merchants could not be indifferent to the stability of the English pound. Jewish shopkeepers who had not gone into exile, Whigs or Loyalists, had no trouble carrying on trade; a number of them probably made money. Some goods were brought into Whig ports when privateers captured prizes. Privateers, armed merchant ships sailing under letters of marque and reprisal were licensed to prey on enemy shipping. It has been estimated that hundreds of such marauders set sail from Whig harbors scouring the seas looking for prizes; the cargoes lost by the British ran into the millions of pound sterling. Some of these American privateers were merchant-shippers engaged in exporting and importing goods; they were armed primarily for the purpose of protecting themselves from enemy seizure. Most privateers set out deliberately to seize vessels flying the British flag; they were heavily armed and carried large boarding crews; in a way they were licensed pirates.²⁶

Privateering was a form of speculation; ships were bought or chartered, shares were sold; and then, loaded with men and munitions, the vessels went on the hunt for British ships and cargoes. Jews, like others, speculated in privateers and were owners and bonders, since the government, observing the amenities of eighteenth-century civilization, demanded that these roving entrepreneurs supply a bond requiring them to behave with decency. The privateers included a number of French Jews; some were shipowners; one was master of a vessel; the French agent in Charleston was a Jew. These anti-British allies combined business and patriotism. On occasion, however, like other Americans, Jewish merchant-shippers suffered as much from their own privateers as from the enemy. The Lopez family referred to such American adventurers as "voracious pirates." During the War, Aaron Lopez attempted to salvage some of his assets in British Jamaica by running a valuable cargo of goods through the British blockade to a safe port in New England. American privateers seized his schooner, *Hope*, and brought it into a Connecticut harbor where the Court of Admiralty for the state—in connivance with the pri-

vateers, it would seem, deprived Lopez of his ship and cargo. Lopez appealed to the Continental Congress, which decided in his favor, but the costly war-protracted litigation continued for five years before he won a satisfactory judgment. Even then, it is not certain that Lopez was ever able to collect the judgment awarded him.²⁷

Every privateer nursed the hope that he would make his fortune overnight. Indeed, one American crew in a small one-mast vessel captured prizes worth over \$600,000. Impoverished Mordecai Sheftall decided to try his luck. He had just been released from British captivity and his capital was almost gone. He determined on a bold stroke to recoup his losses. Somehow managing to secure a twenty-ton sloop, the *Hetty*, he sold shares in her to put together some working capital, loaded her with thirty men, including a Negro slave, and armed her with eight guns, tomahawks, blunderbusses, and boarding pikes. Then the *Hetty* set sail on what was to be a most inglorious adventure. The English captured and scuttled her, but the persistent Sheftall had the vessel raised and reoutfitted. He tried his luck once more but never struck it rich, indeed it is questionable whether any of the Jewish merchants of that day made any "big money" lying in wait for British merchantmen. After a fashion, privateering was a form of blockade-running. Many American merchant ships—not privateers—got through the English naval barrier, for the enemy could not guard every cove and inlet of the long coast. Goods brought in were sold at huge profits, but even after the cargoes were landed there was still another hazard: Congress might seize the supplies landed and pay off in Continental dollars of very dubious value.²⁸

One of the country's large-scale blockade-runners was the firm of Isaac Moses & Company. Moses was the senior partner; his two associates were Samuel Myers and Moses Myers, who were not related. Moses and his partners, individually or as a company, were frequently involved in privateering and bonding. One of Moses' partners in such ventures was Robert Morris; the Revolutionary notable, a notorious speculator, worked with other Jews, too, in risk transactions of this type. Isaac Moses and his partners were essentially merchant-shippers. Of necessity, therefore, they became blockade-runners during the War, daring ones. The firm maintained an Amsterdam purchasing office which shipped its goods to Dutch St. Eustatius in the Caribbean. From there the company's ships made the run to an American port, trusting to fate that they could slip past the cordon set up by the English cruisers. Isaac Moses and his associates were devoted Whigs. Shortly after the War broke out in 1775, when the Americans set out to conquer Canada, the three partners voluntarily offered the Congress \$20,000 hard currency in exchange for Continental paper which, as they might have foreseen, ultimately proved virtually worthless. If it was any consolation, they received the grateful thanks of John Hancock for their generous gift.²⁹

Isaac Moses & Company operated on a large scale; Jonas Phillips, of Philadelphia, was a small-scale but enterprising merchant who sold almost anything from a needle to goloshoes and umbrelloes. One of his blockade-running letters, written in July, 1776, has been preserved. It was dispatched via Dutch St. Eustatius to an Amsterdam kinsman, a prominent Jewish merchant in that city. Enclosed in the letter was a broadside copy of the Declaration of Independence which had just been published. The Declaration may well have impressed Phillips. Congress had already decided on independence by July 2nd; Phillips closed his store and celebrated from the 3rd through the 7th. In his letter to Amsterdam, the Philadelphian did not discuss the revolt in any detail, merely remarking laconically that the Americans had 100,000 soldiers, the British 25,000 and a fleet. What was going to happen? Only God knew, but before the war was over England would be bankrupt! In an appendix to the letter, Phillips got down to business, asking for dry goods, clothing, notions, and medicines. The letter was written in Yiddish or Juedisch-Deutsch, no doubt with the expectation that, even if the British intercepted it, they would let it pass through because they could not make out its Hebrew script. That was a vain hope on Phillips' part, for the ship which sailed from St. Eustatius was taken and the letter was impounded; the English censor held it upside down and decided it was a coded message. It remains today in the Public Record Office in Chancery Lane.³⁰

SHOPKEEPERS: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SHOPKEEPER

It was imperative that the Americans carry on foreign trade because they needed consumers' goods. Blockade-runners brought in rum, gin, sugar, tea, coffee, spices, cloth of various types and descriptions, blankets, drugs, medicines, notions. Obviously the goods that managed to get through sold at a large advance over sterling cost. In payment for goods received, the Americans shipped out foodstuffs, naval stores, and tobacco. Domestic, interstate commerce was by coastal shipping or by wagon transport. British cruisers and privateers always made the coastal traffic risky. There was considerable intercolonial trading in yard goods, clothing, tobacco, snuff, candles, salt, flour, flaxseed, hemp, hides, skins, and furs. Hauling goods over the unpaved country roads was difficult, especially in the winter when the mire made them almost impassable. Carters might often enough prove thievish; guerrillas abounded; enemy raids were frequent and brutal. Petty retailers had problems securing long-term credits; customers were slow in settling their debts; the perennial inflation was devastating. Philip Minis, acting in 1779 as a commission agent for former Governor William Houstoun of Georgia, sold five slaves, which brought over £416,666; \$20,000 was the price asked for a pair of horses. Connect-

icut shopkeeper Michael Judah of Norwalk, who had worked hard all his life, accumulated some savings only to see them practically wiped out by the galloping inflation. Another victim of the inflation was Eleazar Levy, a successful Canadian fur entrepreneur; on retirement he made his home in New York City; the English in Canada had treated him harshly. Levy invested his capital in a mortgage on West Point, the present-day military academy, but during the war the government took over his lands and deforested them in large part. He was never able to collect from the mortgagor who, apparently, would have been willing to settle his debt with almost worthless paper bills. Impoverished, Levy was compelled to turn to Shearith Israel; the congregation carried him on a pension for the rest of his life.³¹

People could not do without goods. Jewish shopkeepers, present in most states of the new republic, attempted to answer the emphatic demand for necessities. The shopkeepers in the villages and towns, petty retailers, turned to regional suppliers, large-scale merchants in the distribution centers of Newport, New York, Philadelphia, Lancaster, Richmond, Charlestown, Georgetown, and Savannah. Somehow these retailers and the merchant-shippers, who were also wholesalers and manufacturers, managed to ferret out and procure goods even in the darkest of days. The equally important task of distributing the wares was undertaken by shopkeepers in the towns and in the backcountry. The commercial activities of small and large storekeepers were crucial in an agrarian economy where industry and manufacturing were minimal and the ports were closed by the British blockade. Farmers and townspeople had to have yard goods and tea; soldiers had to be supplied with uniforms, blankets, and shoes. This relatively successful job of helping to keep commodities flowing was the Jewish contribution to the war effort, modest though it was.³²

FINANCE

JEWES AND THE FINANCING OF THE REVOLUTION

Petitioning the constituent convention in September, 1787, at Philadelphia, Jonas Phillips said that "Jews have been true and faithful Whigs"; they had assisted the newly independent states with "their lives and fortunes." There is much truth in what Phillips wrote. It may have been modestly, but Jewish merchants had helped support the new republic; they did business with the states and the Congress, both of them constantly in the market for wares. They sold goods to the army on credit, advanced funds, often at crucial moments; they bought loan office certificates (bonds of a sort), signed bills of credit, accepted certificates of indebtedness issued by quartermasters, commissary and purchasing agents,

and served as quartermasters. Though a tiny minority in the population, these urban traders played a role by no means unimportant during the long decade when American finances were chaotic. The Jews were suppliers, bill brokers, moneylenders, shopkeepers, blockade-runners, and even “manufacturers” on a small scale. They were involved in such economic, financial undertakings, not because they were more ardent than other Whigs but because business was their *métier*. At times large sums were at stake. Simon Nathan, an English Jew who had come to the states by way of Jamaica and Havana, was at odds with Virginia for many years because, so he maintained, the state was evading its financial obligations to him. Nathan had presented drafts on Virginia drawn by George Rogers Clark; the funds had been used to pacify the West and expel the English. The bills in question amounted to over \$50,000. It is clear in a personal memo that he prepared that Nathan’s financial and supply dealings with Virginia were extensive. Nathan insisted that he had bought the bills in Havana and New Orleans at par—not in devalued currency. This the governor and the Council of Virginia ultimately denied, insisting that the bills had been purchased at discount. Negotiations for payment dragged on for years, and at one stage Nathan’s attorney felt impelled to ask the Virginia Executive Council not to be prejudiced against his client because he was a Jew.³³

HAYM SALOMON

In 1781, Jacob Hart contributed to a loan to help equip Lafayette’s troops, preparing then to advance on the British in Yorktown. It was a crucial campaign. When in 1780, a year of defeat, mutiny, and treason, a special fund was established to provision the troops, Isaac Moses pledged his credit for £3,000. Moses was the richest Jewish merchant among the exiles who had found a haven in Philadelphia. Haym Salomon, at the time a storekeeper in the town, was one of Philadelphia’s more obscure Jews, though—to his surprise no doubt—in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries he would be acclaimed as “the financier of the Revolution.” Who was Haym Salomon? Salomon or Solomon—there are a variety of spellings—was born to a poor family in Lissa, Poland, about the year 1740. There is every reason to believe that his education, both in Jewish and in secular subjects, was woefully inadequate. At an early age, so it appears, he left home and became a wanderer. He must have lived in many lands for he had a working knowledge of several European languages, among them French. Salomon learned a great deal about business and finance and the mysteries of bills of exchange. When he landed on these shores, probably no earlier than 1775, he brought very little money with him. There were at this time several other men who bore the name Haym Salomon, or another of its variants; it is not always possible to be sure that the historical data at hand refer to the Lissa-born “financier.”³⁴

One thing is sure: this man became an ardent Whig. In 1776 he was working as a sutler with the troops on the Canadian frontier, and when he returned to New York, then occupied by the British, he was arrested and imprisoned. Obviously he was on a proscription list. Tradition has it that he was a member of the radical vigilante-type Sons of Liberty—which is not farfetched. There is another tradition—this one quite without basis—that he was commissioned by Washington to burn down the king's fleet and the town's warehouses. Salomon might well have perished in jail had he not been rescued by Hessian mercenaries in great need of competent personnel who spoke English and were conversant with American methods of procuring supplies. Most probably it was Jewish purveyors among the Hessians who secured his release; the English commonly enough found it advantageous to enlist prisoners. Salomon went to work for the Hessians, primarily as a commissionaire for the officers. He also did business on his own account as a merchant, as a ship's chandler, as a distiller, and as an interpreter. He was an enterprising man and here in New York he had an opportunity to exploit his talents. He made a small fortune. In 1777 while in New York working for the English mercenaries, Salomon married into a branch of the Franks family—the poor branch. He was then thirty-seven; his bride Rachel was fifteen. She had an older brother Isaac who was also a patriot. Apparently the two men had very little else in common, although there are intimations that as brothers-in-law they were not unfriendly despite their later business rivalry.⁸⁵

Brother Isaac (1759-1822) had enlisted at the age of seventeen, equipping himself at his own expense when in 1776 he joined Colonel John Lasher's regiment of volunteers. It was then that Franks heard read, for the first time, the Declaration of Independence, and, as he later wrote, "we *all*, as with one voice, declared that we would support and defend the same with our lives and fortunes." After fighting in the Battle of Long Island, Franks retreated, only to be captured and imprisoned in New York by the British. Months later, he escaped to the safety of the Jersey shore, crossing the Hudson in a leaky skiff with one paddle. For the next four years he served in the quartermaster's department and was finally commissioned as an ensign in the Seventh Massachusetts Regiment. All in all he had served his country as a soldier for seven years when he was finally separated from the service in 1782. He was now twenty-three, a seasoned veteran. Shortly after his resignation, he became a merchant and bill broker in Philadelphia and managed to save enough money to buy the Deshler home in Germantown. It had once been British headquarters. It was this same house that Washington rented at the time of the Philadelphia yellow fever epidemic in 1793. In submitting his bill to the president, Franks did not hesitate to charge him for missing and broken kitchen

utensils and for cleaning the place after the presidential entourage had vacated the premises. In later years, Franks, now a militia lieutenant colonel, found it necessary to petition for a pension and to augment his income by serving as chief clerk of the state supreme court. Unlike his brother-in-law Salomon, Isaac Franks seems to have had no interest in Jews or Judaism. He married out of the faith in 1782 and reared a family whom he admonished to be good Christians. Like his two fellow colonels, David S. Franks and Solomon Bush, he was what later generations would call an assimilationist. Living in the open society of the new American republic, the three colonels saw no need to survive as loyal Jews.³⁶

What the English did not know was that Isaac Franks's brother-in-law, Haym Salomon, was an unofficial underground agent for the Whigs. He induced Hessians to desert and helped imprisoned French and American officers to escape. When someone betrayed Salomon, he fled, on August 11, 1778, leaving behind him his wife, an infant child, and the estate he had amassed. In Philadelphia where he now established himself, he struggled for some two years as a shopkeeper and bill broker before again achieving a degree of financial security. Like the many other bill brokers in town, several of them Jews, he bought and sold bills of exchange drawn on Americans and Europeans. He also handled all types of government paper and currencies, both Continental and state, lent money, and discounted notes. Here is where the real profit lay, for by late 1782 some moneylenders were demanding no less than 5 percent interest per month; others were charging even more. No later than 1781—possibly earlier—he was doing a great deal of business with the French. His linguistic skills were invaluable to him and may have been one of the chief sources of his relatively sudden affluence. Among his French clients were the resident French diplomat and the French army paymasters. Spain, like France, welcomed the colonial revolt against British imperialism, and the Spanish agent here in the United States was also his client.³⁷

By June, 1781, Salomon had become the broker for Robert Morris who had just assumed office as Superintendent of the Office of Finance. Salomon was already recognized as a skilled and reputable dealer. It is a tribute to him that he was selected by Morris out of a crowd of more than twenty brokers in the city. In his diary, where Salomon is mentioned more than 100 times, Morris always refers to him as Mr. Salomon. There is one exception: shortly after he begins employing him, he speaks of him as "the Jew broker." This possibly pejorative adjective never occurs again in the diary when Salomon is mentioned. Morris had him sell bills of the French, Spanish, and Dutch and undertake a variety of other financial and fiscal tasks. Large amounts were involved. The proceeds of the sales were deposited in the Bank of North America and were then drawn on by Morris to meet governmental expenditures. In all probability the reason

Morris picked Salomon to work for him was the imperative need to raise cash to outfit the troops who were to corner the English at Yorktown. Salomon was one of the first to hear of the victory over Cornwallis and to retail it in one of the taverns which served as his bourse. A Loyalist physician hearing Salomon's report retorted sarcastically that if the British commander was in distress, Salomon was in even worse trouble, for as an unbeliever in Jesus Christ he was surely going to Hell. The crowd laughed at the Jew's humiliation. The French volunteer who reported this incident, Pierre Etienne Du Ponceau, remarked: "The Jews were yet a hated and despised race"—but, as General Cornwallis would have been the first to agree, the last laugh was Salomon's.³⁸

Salomon was even more useful to Morris after the capture of the British army at Yorktown than before. The financial condition of the government became increasingly desperate; as Morris's diary indicates, Salomon was constantly called in to help resolve recurring crises. Like Morris, he too worked heroically to maintain the credit of the nation. The entry in Morris's diary for August 29, 1782, is especially eloquent: "I sent for Mr. Haym Salomon several times this day to assist me in raising money." By July, 1782, at Salomon's request, Morris permitted him to advertise that he was the country's official broker. In his frequent advertisements from then on, Salomon informed his clients that he was the "Broker to the Office of Finance, to the Consul General of France, and to the Treasurer of the French Army."³⁹

Since Salomon's reputation as a responsible bill broker was well-established as early as 1782, both here and abroad, notables in trouble, in need of cash, turned to him. Among them were members of the Continental Congress. By March, 1780, Continental currency in relation to silver had fallen forty to one; it is clear that necessitous delegates like James Madison and Edmund Randolph had to turn to moneylenders if they were to remain in Congress. Madison borrowed from Michael Gratz, of Philadelphia, and Jacob I. Cohen, of Cohen & Isaacs in Richmond. The Richmond firm carried Randolph, and he in turn permitted Madison to use his credit with Cohen & Isaacs. In the summer of 1782 Madison turned to Salomon and not in vain. Writing to Randolph, Madison said: "I have for some time past been a pensioner on the favor of Haym Salomon, a Jew broker." That was in August; in September, Madison wrote again to Randolph about his connection with Salomon: "The kindness of our little friend in Front Street (Salomon) near the coffee-house is a fund which will preserve me from extremities, but I never resort to it without great mortification as he obstinately rejects all recompense." Is it worth noting that Madison in his August letter refers to Salomon as a "Jew broker," but in the next letter, a month later, Salomon has become "our little friend." Randolph refers to his generous financial supplier, Cohen, of

Cohen & Isaacs as a “little Levite.” (Randolph obviously knew that, according to Deuteronomy 10, the Cohens as a priestly elite belonged to the tribe of Levi.) If we were to draw anthropological conclusions from the letters of Madison and Randolph we might assume that the Jews of the Revolutionary period were all small in stature, all “little” men. At all events quite apart from his consciousness of the courtesy and generosity of individual Jewish businessmen, Madison, one of the chief architects of the Constitution, was committed—and had always been committed—to equality before the law of all white men. For him, this was as mandatory in Virginia as in the federal polity.⁴⁰

Toward the end of December, 1783, the Jews of Philadelphia protested against the anti-Jewish disabilities spelled out in the Pennsylvania constitution of 1776. As Jews they could not in good conscience take the requisite Christian test oath and thus could not hold public office. Haym Salomon was a member of the committee of Jews who expressed its vigorous dissent to the state Council of Censors. He could never forget that he had risked his life in the years 1776–1778 to help American prisoners and to further the cause of his country. He had no wish to remain a second-class citizen in Pennsylvania. The protest in which he joined was to no immediate avail; the test oath was not removed till 1790 when a new constitution was written. By that time Salomon was dead. The attempt to deny Jews political equality in Pennsylvania was in large part due to a vigorous campaign carried on by Christian bigots, among them the distinguished Lutheran minister, Henry Melchior Muehlenberg. This anti-Jewish prejudice cropped up again in 1784 when an attack was made on Jewish moneylenders. The leader in this Judeophobic sortie was Miers Fisher, a Quaker lawyer and former Tory exile. By attacking the Jews, Fisher may have thought to divert attention from his Loyalism during the late war. Fisher and his confederates pleaded with the Pennsylvania state legislature to charter a new bank which would reduce the current rate of interest and protect borrowers from the exactions of Jewish brokers. Salomon, it would seem, answered Fisher in Philadelphia's *Independent Gazetteer* for March 13, 1784, signing himself. “A Jew Broker.” (The actual author of the reply was probably the editor of the paper, Colonel Eleazar Oswald). Salomon, not averse to fighting fire with fire, pointed out that Fisher was a typical Quaker, one of those sectarians notable for financial exploitation and treasonable conduct during the Revolution. Actually, Fisher and his friends were not primarily interested in attacking Jews or reducing the rate of interest or helping impecunious borrowers. They wanted to open a new bank so that they too could reap the lush profits enjoyed by the Bank of North America. Robert Morris and his associates, frightened at Fisher's attack on their financial citadel and dreading the thought of a rival, made stock available in their closely held corporation. Nothing further was heard about a charter for a new bank.⁴¹

During the period of his residence in Philadelphia, something less than seven years, Salomon served the community and himself as a merchant. It was not at all unusual for merchants of calibre to buy and sell bills of exchange on the United States and Europe. With one exception, there were no banks in the country, and businessmen employed these bills to pay their creditors and to collect from their debtors. Salomon never made large sums selling bills at a modest commission for the canny Morris. As a "banker," he did better buying and selling the different government obligations and discounting notes. It was certainly lucrative to discount the bills of Cornwallis's captured officers, interned in nearby Lancaster. He seems to have had no difficulty in selling English prisoners' bills in British-held New York and even in London, and this at a time when there was no formal treaty of peace. He was a merchant in the traditional sense; he had a shop and a storage room where he stocked, stored, and sold dry goods; some wares were handled only on commission. The commodities he listed in his advertisements included dry goods, liquor, groceries, tobacco, hemp, indigo, and real estate.

The extent of his commercial reach was certainly not comparable to an Aaron Lopez's, yet Salomon too was a merchant-shipper: he did business not only locally but in England, France, Holland, and Sweden. His goods were sent as freight on vessels owned by others, although at one time he had a share in the *Sally* which traded with Spain. It is not improbable that his ship was named for a daughter born at Philadelphia in 1779. Probably no broker or merchant in the country could match the volume of his advertising. He placed more than a thousand ads in American newspapers between the years 1781 and 1785; they appeared in English, French, German, and Dutch. He emphasized the goods he had on hand and the services he was prepared to offer. In 1784, he decided to move back to New York, his first American home and soon to become the national capital; Jewish exiles of substance, men like Isaac Moses and Hayman Levy, were also returning to New York where they had their roots. Salomon knew or suspected that there would be a brighter future for him as a broker, as a merchant—and as a Jew—in the city on the Hudson. He bought a house on Wall Street, announced that he would carry on a brokerage and auction business, and chose as his partner a young native-born American, Jacob Mordecai, a man of education and culture; Salomon was well aware of his own inability to write a good English letter in a fair hand. The Wall Street store was opened but his final illness prevented him from leaving Philadelphia and taking charge.⁴²

Salomon, an observant, devoted Jew, conducted no business on the Sabbath and Holy Days. Respectful of traditional rabbinic talmudic learning, he urged an uncle, a scholarly man, not to come here—there was no real "Jewishness" in this country, nothing analogous here to the fervent

piety and learning of Poland. If Salomon was not active in congregational life and politics, it was probably because he was deemed a newcomer and, even more probably, because he was unwilling to be saddled with congregational office. He was eager to build his estate during the war years, to provide for his young wife and their constantly growing family. When on one occasion he was elected to a minor office in the synagog, he paid the requisite fine and refused to serve. Yet in 1783 he accepted election to the synagogal board, possibly because he wanted to play a part in urging the Pennsylvania state authorities to modify their constitution which imposed a political disability on Jewish citizens. The following year, when the declining Jewish community in Philadelphia was torn by dissension, he intervened to bring the warring parties together. He was known as a generous man and was highly respected for his concern for others. This may explain why he did agree to serve as treasurer of the short-lived Travellers Aid Society (*Ezrat Orchim*), the first Jewish charity organization in the United States of which there is a record; it was an integral part of the philanthropic arm of Philadelphia's *Mikveh Israel*. By 1782, already affluent, Salomon became the largest contributor to *Mikveh Israel*'s building fund. He promised to pay one-quarter of the total cost and he did; his was probably American Jewry's first matching grant. Salomon was hardly the richest Jew in town; the wealthy Isaac Moses was the second biggest giver; his gift was about a third as large as Salomon's. As the most liberal donor, Salomon was accorded the honor of opening the doors of the sanctuary in the formal dedication ceremony. After his death, to commemorate his generosity, the congregation annually invoked God's blessing upon him on *Yom Kippur*, the most sacred day of the Jewish year. Today, more than two hundred years later, that blessing is still intoned in the Philadelphia congregation.⁴³

Once Salomon had means, he set out in 1782 to help his impoverished family. An importunate uncle who began making demands was sent a substantial gift. His mother received a valuable gold chain with the understanding that it was never to be sold; it was to be treasured as a prestige piece. A burial lot was bought for the family in Poland, and to make sure that his father would not be compelled to move on, the dutiful son purchased denization rights in the town where the family was then settled. But Salomon was concerned with more than material things. He believed in education if only because he had suffered its lack. He could not write a polished Yiddish letter. True, he could read the Hebrew prayers, but there is no reason to believe that he knew what the words meant. He wrote home that he was willing to subsidize any member of the family who showed an aptitude for rabbinic studies. Above all, he said that he wanted the younger generation back home given a good general education—which meant for him knowledge of the “Christian languages.” He

was a simple, genial man as his personal letters make clear. Trying to serve as an amateur matchmaker, he kept pushing his unmarried friends to marry. During the last few years of his brief life stories of his generosity even reached Europe. Such reports are always exaggerated. A European worthy chose him to settle an American estate. People abroad venerated him as a *nadiv*, a noble benefactor.⁴⁴

The evidence available indicates that our little friend on Front Street was a good citizen. When the Charlestown exiles, banished by the British, reached Philadelphia, their city of refuge, Salomon was one of those who contributed to their relief. Like many of his friends in Mikveh Israel, he too joined the Masons. It certainly must have meant something to him to belong to a fraternity preaching the gospel of humanity, equality, and the dignity of the individual. Surely he could never forget that he had come from Poland, a country where Jews were despised and frequently attacked. His parents and dear ones still lived there. Salomon was one of the chief supporters of a fund designed to finance a balloon ascension, looked upon as a civic obligation. In 1783, he was among the 800 Philadelphians who appealed to Congress to return from Princeton whither it had fled to escape the unpaid mutinous troops marching on the city. Signers, prominent citizens, promised financial help. Eight Jews of substance signed this petition, 1 percent of the total. These numbers may well serve to put American Jewry in perspective; the Jewish elite was still in the city awaiting the signing of the definitive peace treaty.⁴⁵

Haym Salomon—Moses Hayyim, the son of Solomon—died on January 6, 1785, about forty-five years of age; he left behind him a twenty-three year old widow with three young children and a fourth on the way. One of the New York newspapers reported that he left a large estate. It did seem substantial, but much of it was in Continental currency and depreciated securities. The letters of administration show that in fact Salomon died insolvent. Some of his creditors were also his executors and made sure that their debts were satisfied. Nothing was left for the family; the widow was permitted to keep her household furnishings. Had he survived another five years when Hamilton's fiscal program was adopted and the domestic debt funded at par, he would have done well. He had lived only ten years in America; the last five were, economically, the fruitful ones.⁴⁶

Some forty years after his death, Salomon's posthumous son, Haym M. Salomon, born in 1785, examined his father's papers and came to the conclusion that the United States government owed huge sums to his father's estate. There is no way to know whether the son actually believed this or only pretended to believe it. As early as 1827 he began collecting evidence to substantiate his claims and sought data from former President James Madison. In 1846 he began appealing to Congress for reimburse-

ment and from then on made numerous attempts to induce the national legislature to acknowledge the debt and to compensate the heirs. Haym, Jr., contended, as did the family later, that the records of the Bank of North America reflected advances made by Haym Salomon to the government. The large sums deposited were not government funds; they were not the proceeds of bills made out to the United States by foreign powers, sold by Salomon, and deposited by him in the bank as the agent for Robert Morris, the Superintendent of Finance. The funds deposited were Salomon's! The demands made by young Salomon and his descendants amounted to well over \$800,000 to say nothing of accumulated interest. Incidentally, if the father had been able to lend the government such staggering sums, he would have been the richest man in the country—by far! Haym Salomon was the *real* financier of the American Revolution; it owes everything to him, not to Robert Morris: so the claim of his enthusiastic latter-day admirers. It was *he* who restored the country's credit when it was on the verge of bankruptcy. It was *he* and, no one else, who negotiated the substantial loans with France and Holland. *Millions!* He was the paymaster of the French army; all monies of the French armed forces were disbursed by him. The French and Spanish agents in this country were dependent on him for support; the help he gave them enabled them to carry on their work. His aid to these foreign dignitaries was matched only by what he did for notable members of the Continental Congress, for James Madison, Edmund Randolph, James Wilson, Arthur Lee, Baron Steuben. Whatever profit he made on his various deals for the government was turned back to it. Louis XVI of France honored him with a title! In a later addition to the story, Louis XVI asked good Ben Franklin who would underwrite the French subsidies? "Haym Salomon," answered Franklin. To which His Majesty responded that was all the assurance he needed.⁴⁷

Most committees on Revolutionary claims did recommend that the debt be honored but no bill was ever passed by Congress acknowledging as just the demands of the son or his descendants, though a later generation in 1893 would have been content with the striking of a gold medal as a tribute. Yet the myth has been accepted by committees of the House and Senate on Revolutionary claims and by a Committee on the Library. Indeed, for well over a century eminent Americans have euphorically rehearsed the achievements of Morris' bill broker: William Seward, Presidents Taft, Wilson, Hoover, and Franklin D. Roosevelt. In an address in 1916, Taft said that Salomon was the Jew who stood by Morris and financed the Revolution. It is not surprising that so many notable American Gentiles believed the myth; the Jews can work magic with money! The Presidents, too, were never unmindful of the Jewish vote. In 1925, the secretary of the Federation of Polish Jews of America published a bro-

chure in which he alleged that Washington had sent Salomon a message with an urgent request for money. The need was desperate. It was the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, when Salomon was in the synagog. Without hesitation he made an appeal for funds; he himself gave \$240,000, and the other worshippers contributed the balance to make a total of \$400,000! A year later Senator K. D. McKellar of Tennessee moved for an appropriation of \$658,007.13 for the Salomon family. Senator McKellar was a well-known conservative in sympathy with the immigration quota laws passed during his term in the Senate. Had a twentieth-century Salomon, an immigrant Polish Jew, attempted to enter the country, he may very well have been denied permission under the quota laws of the 1920's.⁴⁸

Gaining new strength in the twentieth century, the Salomon myth has continued to flourish. The latest version maintains that Washington himself called Salomon in and asked him what reward he sought for his remarkable contribution to the country. Salomon wanted nothing, but when Washington persisted, he answered that he would be content if the arrangement of the thirteen stars on the American seal would be in the form of a six-pointed star, the Jewish Shield of David. This was done as anyone can see who examines the Jewish star on a one-dollar bill, above the eagle and the *e pluribus unum!* When in 1975 a bicentennial commemorative stamp was issued by the postal service to honor Salomon, the fictional element was emphasized in the legend on the back of the stamp:

FINANCIAL HERO

Businessman and broker Haym Salomon was responsible for raising most of the money needed to finance the American Revolution and later to save the new nation from collapse.

In the late twentieth century, the mythic Salomon is accepted as the real Salomon by practically everyone aware of him, even by the *Dictionary of American Biography*. A historian has said that old myths never die; they just become embodied in textbooks.⁴⁹

Despite the fact that Salomon goes without mention in the index to William Graham Sumner's two volume study of Morris, *The Financier and the Finances of the American Revolution* (1891), or in any of the standard American histories, he was a figure of some distinction. It is difficult to evaluate in detail what he did as a patriot and as Morris' broker because some of the records of the Bank of North America were burnt by the British in the War of 1812 and many if not most of Salomon's personal papers have not survived. Most of the claims of the son, Haym M. Salomon, cannot be substantiated or objectively evaluated. Haym Salomon's achievements, in fact, need no myth to embellish them. He was the chief broker for Morris at a very important period in American history, for he

served as Morris's agent in cashing bills from our allies; he disposed of all those which the Dutch and French sent here. Actually most of the money allocated by American allies was spent in Europe for supplies which were then shipped to this country. The Philadelphia broker rendered valuable service, through his sale of bills, in raising cash to help outfit the army in the decisive campaign that won the war. More importantly, he was constantly at Morris's side in the post-Yorktown period when the finances of the country were threatened with collapse. "I sent for Salomon and desired him to try every way he could devise to raise money" (August 27, 1782). At times Salomon's credit was better than that of the new republic's. This man was something of an alchemist; he could turn paper into gold. He lent money to notables to help them carry on their work; in some instances, he sought no interest. There were brokers and businessmen who refused to lend money to needy congressmen; the lenders could employ their funds to better advantage at a time when usurious rates prevailed. As a Jew, Salomon was devoted to his people and to his family. His generosity in building his Philadelphia congregation's first sanctuary has no parallel in American Jewish history until the rise of Harmon Hendricks and Judah Touro in the nineteenth century. He risked his life in New York as an American secret agent; he fought for political liberty and abolition of the discriminatory test oath in the state of his adoption. People have revered his memory to this day, although they have been influenced more by the myth than the reality. Even in his own time he was respected by his Gentile contemporaries. When he passed away a Philadelphia newspaper paid him this tribute: "He was remarkable for his skill and integrity in his profession and for his generous and humane deportment."⁵⁰

After Salomon's burial, no money was left for a headstone; he lies in an unmarked grave in Philadelphia's Spruce Street Cemetery. East European Jews in this country, frowned upon by earlier waves of Jewish immigrants, wanted a monument to enshrine his memory. They were caught up naturally enough in the Salomon myth. A monument to an eighteenth-century Polish Jewish patriot hero would document their early arrival on American shores; not all Polacks came after 1881! Polish Jews, too, are important; they, too, have made a contribution to the history of this country. These twentieth-century Polish Jewish devotees fostered the myth: Salomon was a friend of Kosciuszko and Pulaski! Attempts in the 1920's to set up a memorial to honor him made no headway; some Jews were bitterly opposed to the project; there were old-line families who viewed Salomon's achievements skeptically. How would the Gentiles respond to a monument to a Jew? In 1931 the Jewish historian Max J. Kohler punctured the myth in a brilliant essay, yet at the same time pointed out Salomon's real accomplishments. Finally, in 1941,

Chicago Jews did succeed in erecting an imposing sculptured memorial to Salomon, dedicated on the 150th anniversary of the ratification of America's Bill of Rights. It portrays Washington eleven feet high, flanked by Robert Morris and Haym Salomon. Thus an American Jew, who has no gravestone to mark his resting place, is honored today by an impressive monument in one of the great cities of this country. Salomon merits this recognition for he was a man of ability, integrity, and courage, devoted to the land which gave him shelter and accepted him as one of its own. He was not a great man; he was a very good American; he was a Jew in the best sense of the term.⁵¹

Postscript

A direct descendant of Salomon was the United States ambassador to Russia and France, William Christian Bullitt. The present-day genealogist is almost tempted to venture that a Christian must have the wisdom of a Solomon to know his Jewish ancestors. In the *Collector*, a magazine published by a manuscript dealer, a bill of exchange signed by Haym Salomon was offered for sale; the price asked was \$3,500. If in his Counting-house-on-High Salomon has been privileged to learn of the fabulous value of but one of his signed documents, he is probably very puzzled, but nonetheless, gratified. Or maybe he is shaking his head dolorously at the thought that inflation—a phenomenon with which he was only too familiar—is still rampant in this country.⁵²

Despite the fact that only one state had emancipated its Jews by the time that the provisional peace treaty was ratified by Congress, the Jews were elated. For them the Revolution meant more than separation from Great Britain. For the first time in Diaspora history they could hope to receive real equality in the political and economic spheres. For Jews, one-time British citizens of lesser quality and lesser opportunity, the Revolution was a social one. This explains the letter which Mordecai Sheftall wrote to a son, April, 1783:

Every real wisher to his country must feel him self happy to have lived to see this longe and bloody contest brot to so happy an issue. More especially as we have obtained our independence. . . . An intier new scene will open it self, and we have the world to begin againe.⁵³



CHAPTER THREE

POLITICAL GAINS IN THE EARLY NATIONAL PERIOD

POLITICAL GAINS IN THE STATES

Insufficient evidence is available to determine how the Jews reacted to the Declaration of Independence. Though Jonas Phillips sent a copy to a relative in Holland, he did so without comment. Implicitly the Declaration offered the Jews a great deal, certainly more than they had been granted under the British. Even so, until September, 1777, the Jews received nothing by way of more generous political rights from either the individual states or from the Confederation. All the states which had already adopted constitutions ignored the Jews—except that no one could hold high office who was not a Christian. In September, 1777, New York gave the Jews equality. The Whigs were then in exile from New York City, which was in the hands of the English; the state government could afford to be—somewhat—liberal. Originally the New Yorkers had considered offering rights to all men, not only to Jews, but also to Turks, infidels, and Catholics. They thought better of it: Jews were emancipated; Catholics were not. It was to be a long generation before Catholics achieved equality with others. New York Jews were pleased; a dynamic, urban, commercial group, they felt themselves entitled to recognition and on December 9, 1783, wrote the governor that they looked forward to living under a polity which had granted them “the inestimable blessings” of civil and religious liberty. They knew how much better off they were than Europe’s Jews. That same year Maria Theresa of Austria had declared that her Jewish subjects were a pest and their number would have to be reduced.¹

In her *Dictionary of All Religions and Religious Denominations*, published in 1784, Hannah Adams said that the Jews had been indulged in all the rights of citizens. That was true of New York alone; everywhere else at that time state governments were still controlled by elite middle-class and upper-class electors who represented but a fraction of the total popula-

tion. Most of them in the 1780's had no intention of sharing power with the Jews, their bourgeois rivals. The majority of Americans, whether themselves enfranchised or not, whether radicals or conservatives, could not yet conceive of granting full rights to non-Christians; that would have been too much of a wrench; America was still very much a Christian country. For the Jew, as for millions of others, the Revolution began only after the signing of the peace treaty with the British. A true liberal in matters political, Jefferson in 1779 in his Ordinance of Religious Freedom set out to grant immunities to Jews, Catholics, Moslems, and all infidels. It was a propagandistic, Deistic piece of legislation. Jefferson wanted a complete separation of church and state, a goal which was not shared by his fellow-Virginians Patrick Henry, George Washington, and John Marshall. Jefferson, Madison, and their sympathizers were only too conscious of the fact that the decade of the 1770's had seen Protestant dissenters, non-Anglicans, jailed in Virginia. Hence many evangelicals were as eager as the political radicals to divorce church and state. Jefferson's Act for Establishing Religious Freedom finally passed the state legislature in 1786.²

One may assume that Jefferson's victory in Virginia encouraged the Jews in other states to push for equality. Virginia was the largest and most populous state. Real progress was soon made; in four years, five states recognized their Jewish citizens, bestowing upon them all privileges and immunities: Georgia (1789), South Carolina (1790), Pennsylvania (1790), Delaware (1792), and Vermont (1793). There was probably not one Jewish family in Vermont when the state dismantled religious barriers in 1793; the Vermont lawgivers were thinking only of Christians when they made their sweeping proclamation of equality. Connecticut, too, when she granted rights to all in 1818, had as yet no Jewish community; rights only for Christians were envisaged there, but when in the 1840's Jews established their first community in the state they met with no resistance.³

In other states it was well over three decades before the emancipation push was successful. As the Gentile masses increased their power politically, they were chary of emancipating Jews. Then, too, the excesses of the French Revolution frightened the Americans. Thirty-six years after Pennsylvania and South Carolina gave their Jews equality, Maryland finally permitted her Jewish citizens to hold office. That was in 1826. Twenty-five years earlier, Jefferson had appointed Reuben Etting the United States marshal for Maryland. In all likelihood, the President had made that appointment deliberately to shame the state for its political conservatism and to emphasize its bigotry. Maryland's pro-Jewish emancipator, Thomas Kennedy (d. 1832), wrote:

I blush for Christians that they should forget
The Golden Rule—their great Law-giver set.⁴

Conservative forces more sure of themselves had a chance to rally. The ballot frequently permitted committed Christians to document their prejudices against infidel Jews. Massachusetts accorded Jews complete rights only in 1833, Rhode Island, not until 1843, New Jersey, as late as 1844. Present at the New Jersey constituent convention that year was the Jewish journalist and politician David Naar, one of the authors of the state's bill of rights. Naar, later mayor of Elizabethtown, fought against imprisonment for debt, worked to establish the first normal school in the state, and insisted that his fellow-Masons recognize blacks. Yet, where the Jews were concerned, the battle for political democracy in America was still to be won. Tidewater gentlemen in North Carolina surrendered power reluctantly. That state did not emancipate its Jews till 1868 and then probably only with the help of black freedman legislators during the Reconstruction era. Finally in 1876-1877—a good century after Jefferson's Great Avowal, the Declaration of Independence—New Hampshire emancipated her Jews. There were probably not ten Jewish families in the entire state.⁵

POLITICAL GAINS NATIONALLY

THE CONFEDERATION AND THE CONSTITUTION

In 1777, the very year that New York made provision politically for her Jews, the Continental Congress adopted the Articles of Confederation, though they would not come into force until 1781. Like the Declaration of Independence, the Articles said nothing about religious liberty—a very sensitive subject. In principle, all discriminatory religious legislation was retained. Yet it was the intention of the Congress to strengthen the national character of the new United States. All free inhabitants were to enjoy rights and immunities—a declaration which was not much more than a pious wish, for the Confederation Congress had very little authority over the individual states, still effectively sovereign. Like the British parliament when it enacted the Plantation Act of 1740 giving Jews and others extensive economic privileges, the Confederation was eager to unite the country. Emphasis was laid upon the privileges of trade and commerce. As an urban trading class, Jews would certainly be encouraged. A little less than ten years after the Articles of Confederation were written and adopted, Congress passed the Northwest Ordinance (1787), legislating for the Northwest Territory and for the states that were yet to be organized north of the Ohio and west all the way to the Mississippi. This

law would become exemplary; it would be adapted to provide for all new commonwealths to the south as well as north of the Ohio. In brief, the Ordinance declared that no person was ever to be molested on account of his mode of worship or religious sentiments. This was tantamount to a guarantee of political equality in all new states. Many a new commonwealth would grant political rights to all citizens long before some of the original thirteen states had abolished religious disabilities. Let it be very clear: the new United States could not claim to be a pioneer in granting the Jews freedom of conscience and worship. Jews already enjoyed such freedom under the British and in many European lands. But freedom to worship as one sees fit is not true religious liberty if it serves as a disability to deprive Jews and other nonconformists of the franchise and the right to hold office. As late as 1787, eleven of the thirteen founding states still denied Jews political equality. Infidels and Jews in all those states, and even Catholics in some commonwealths, could not be full citizens because creedal considerations limited their political rights.⁶

The old colonial English concept of a tie between the province and religion still lingered on in the Confederation. The Continental Congress was in effect a Christian body. Its members tended to believe that religion, like morality and knowledge, was necessary to good government. When Massachusetts settlers from Granville settled Granville, Ohio, the log house they built served as a church as well as a city hall and a school. Granville was a Christian community. One may question, even given the Northwest Ordinance, whether Congress really wished to divorce the states from religion. The Confederation and Congress were always conscious of the religious mores of the individual pre-Revolutionary provinces. The unexpressed thought was constantly there: all Christians have a common religion; they must tolerate one another and work together. The notion that the states must actually encourage Christian morality is confirmed by the early blasphemy and Sunday laws of the Northwest Territory. The Christian world must rest on the first day of the week; fines were prescribed for those who in cursing invoked the name of God, Christ Jesus, and the Holy Ghost.⁷

THE CONSTITUTION

The members of the Continental Congress still hankered after the fleshpots of a Christian paradise. This was not true of the men in the Constitutional Convention of 1787. To be sure, they were or had been reared as Christians, but they found it expedient to make a clean break between church and state. The Christian dissenters, the evangelicals, nonconformists who found themselves in rebellion against the established churches, unwittingly saved the day for the tiny Jewish minority. The threat of sectarian rivalries forced the country to adopt a nonsectarian

constitution. The need for separation between church and state was fortified by an old English tradition that went back to the seventeenth century, a tradition that valued toleration and religious freedom, even for Jews. When the delegates to the Constitutional Convention adopted a basic national statute on September 17, 1787, they were agreed—in Article VI—that no religious test was ever to be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States. Later, Article VI was reinforced by the first amendment, accepted by Congress in 1789 and adopted in 1791: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Thus, on the federal level, there was no religious test for Jews who sought office. It was a great advance—though Congress was not ready to establish a non-denominational Federal University and for diverse reasons rejected the proposal.⁸

It was in August, 1787, that the delegates to the convention resolved that there would be no religious test for federal office. Since the constitutional deliberations were held in secrecy, Philadelphia Jewry was not aware of this important decision. The Jews resented the political disability imposed upon them by the Pennsylvania state constitution of 1776. Later, in Congress, Madison sought to amend the new federal constitution to the end that no state be permitted to violate the religious rights of any citizen. The House supported him; the Senate, with the prerogatives and prejudices of the individual states in mind, refused to accept the amendment. Had Madison’s proposal passed, eleven of the original thirteen states would have been compelled to guarantee political equality to Jews, Catholics, Deists, atheists, and other non-Protestants. Still, though this goal had yet to be realized in the new republic, great advances had been made by the federal constitution. For virtually the first time in Diaspora history, Jews were fully free, fully equal in federal rights. The new constitution gave them a chance to develop psychically, affectively, to come closer to their neighbors. This federal constitution, influenced in part by the Virginia Act for Establishing Religious Freedom and possibly by New York’s 1777 organic statute as well, in turn influenced the states in a liberal direction. Just a few years after the constitution’s promulgation, Georgia, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Delaware changed their constitutions, eliminating test oaths and religious disabilities. In 1788, when the federal constitution was adopted, Richmond’s little congregation of Jews held a banquet and offered thirteen toasts. The thirteenth is most interesting: “May the Israelites throughout the world enjoy the same religious rights and political advantages as their American brethren.” American egalitarianism was now in potentia an export commodity.⁹

It may well be that the writers of the new constitutions in the years after 1789 were influenced by the French Revolution, which in turn had

not been untouched by American liberalism. The excesses of the French Revolution, however, were certainly resented by many Americans—which may explain why from 1793 to 1826 not one of the tidewater states moved to eliminate its political-religious disabilities. Political liberalism was in bad odor.¹⁰

By the turn of the century, the Jews of the United States realized that they stood on the threshold of a new world. Opportunity, real opportunity of a political and economic nature, was resident only in the American republic. The French Revolution, it was true, had brought freedom to Jews in France and Holland, but the situation elsewhere in Europe offered little comfort. America was the land of the future. Liberal charters had been offered Jews in some of the South American colonies in the seventeenth century, but those were *privilegia* benevolently handed down from above by calculating mercantilist administrators; here in North America, the privileges that the Jews enjoyed they possessed as of right together with all other citizens—immunities which all citizens had won by their own efforts and on their own authority. The Jew of the late eighteenth century believed that he belonged here; his coreligionists had by this time already been in the country for nearly one hundred and fifty years. If this land was free and independent, it was because they, few as they were, had helped make it so; they were proud of the fact that they had had a part in winning their own freedom. And how did they understand freedom? They were concerned with their dignity as human beings; they would accept no disabilities insofar as it lay in their power to reject them. They wanted all the rights advocated by egalitarians, but they never construed their wishes as reflective of the left. They wanted the *privilegia* of middle-class citizens, of the relatively few electors who exercised the franchise. That spelled opportunity. It was their good fortune that, on the whole, the delegates to the constitutional convention were conservatives. Had they been radicals, with their ears cocked to the prejudices of the masses, they might not have abolished the test oath for office. The masses were not sympathetic to the political aspirations of the Jews. Even in America, it may be said, the Jews were emancipated more from the top down than from the bottom up.¹¹

THE FEDERAL PARADE

As far as can be determined, the Jews were elated by the federal constitution. Benjamin Rush said that the new organic statute made worthy men of every religion equal before the law. The Jews were certainly in favor of a strong national government able to further economic life. The tariff barriers of the different states disconcerted them. Though always small in numbers, the Jews were not unimportant in the larger economy. Their sense of American nationalism was growing; many, if not most of them,

were native-born in that generation. They approved of the constitution for economic as well as political reasons. And when the people of Philadelphia, the country's largest city, determined to celebrate the adoption of the constitution by a majority of the states, the Jews prepared to rejoice with them. The occasion was the Federal Parade of July 4, 1788, the greatest spectacle the country had yet seen. It was worth watching, for the gaping, delighted citizenry saw a sight probably never before witnessed on any continent:

The Rabbi of the Jews, locked in the arms of two ministers of the gospel, was a most delightful sight.

Surely the Messiah was just around the corner! After the parade was over, the Jews met together at a kosher table of their own with pickled salmon, bread, crackers, almonds, and raisins—but no hard liquor. Strangely enough Naphtali Phillips, who saw the show at age fifteen and described it eighty years later, did not think it worth mentioning that Jewish and Christian clergy had paraded together. Did he think it was perfectly natural for Jewish and Christian ministers to fraternize? Phillips described the parade in 1868; the preceding year Max Lilienthal had preached from the pulpit of a Unitarian church in Cincinnati. It was said to be the first time in the United States that a rabbi spoke in a church.¹²

OFFICEHOLDING

MUNICIPAL OFFICEHOLDING IN THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH

As soon as the military phase of the Revolution erupted and the Continental Congress broke with the British, Jews began to seek appointment or election to office. It was not altogether unusual for them to be accorded rights, appointments, and offices even before the laws or constitutions of their respective states granted them equality. On occasion, popular toleration anticipated legal sanction. In emergency situations, Jews became leaders by popular acquiescence. In 1768, a mob protesting against an unpopular Maryland clergyman had been led by a Jew. It was assumed that, when the new regime was stabilized, Jews would be given equality by statute or by constitutional provision. Literate, urban businessmen, they were acceptable as officeholders. No one could question their capacity in an age of widespread illiteracy. This was certainly true in the South, in Georgia and in South Carolina, where Mordecai Sheftall and Francis Salvador exercised authority more than a decade before Jews were legally permitted to hold office in these states. It was not uncommon for individual "Israelites" to be sworn on the "Holy Evangelists." The Gentiles knew that they were Jews, but deemed their oaths valid. Judah Hays served as

fire warden in Boston as early as 1805. Over thirty years before the state constitution permitted a Jew to hold office, Moses M. Hays ran for the Massachusetts state senate. He was egregiously defeated; his successful opponent received 1,574 votes; Hays, one vote. The cynic is tempted to say that such unpopularity must have been deserved, yet a contemporary Christian memoirist praised him to the skies. Had he been elected, he could not of course in good conscience have taken the test oath. When in 1788 cousin Michael Hays, of Mount Pleasant, Westchester County, New York, took the oath as assessor, he had no problem since no disabilities were imposed on Jews in that state. Another Westchester Hays, Jacob, was to serve as High Constable in New York City for years. A Portuguese naturalist on a visit to Philadelphia in 1799 was rather startled to learn that a Jew could sit on a jury. Back home in Portugal, he knew, Jews were not openly tolerated; an auto-da-fé had taken place as recently as 1791. By the turn of the century Jews were not only serving as jurymen in some northern states, but were also practicing law as officers of the court in Pennsylvania (1799) and in New York (1802). In 1822 the ebullient Mordecai M. Noah was serving as sheriff in New York; before 1840, members of the New York Jewish community were to be found on the school board and on the board of health.¹³

More Jews may have held office in the South than in the North. Was this because of the large number of enslaved blacks? About the year 1820, when Charleston Jewry, the country's greatest Jewish community, was still at its height, there were more blacks than whites in the state. Were competent literate whites at a premium, especially in the smaller communities of the South? A number of these Jewish officeseekers were Revolutionary War veterans. Baltimore's Jewish aristocrats, the Ettings and the Cohens, were eager to serve in office, though not as placemen. Ben Etting was a member of the Baltimore school board; Uncle Solomon Etting was elected to the First Branch of the city council and became its president (1826-1827). It was just about then that Jacob I. Cohen, Jr., also became a member of the council. Years later Cohen, too, was elected president of the First Branch. One of Baltimore's most respected citizens, he distinguished himself as a founder of the city's public school system and as a commissioner of finance. Let it not be forgotten that not until 1826 were Jews exempt from the state's Christian test oath. These two Jews were immediately elected to office. The patriarch of the Baltimore Cohen clan was a Virginian, Jacob I. Cohen (senior), of Richmond, appointed as early as 1795 to a committee to quarantine refugees fleeing from the yellow fever in Norfolk. His business partner, Isaiah Isaacs, another Virginia Jewish pioneer, was more active in politics. In 1780 when the religious test oath laws were still in force, he had run unsuccessfully for city council, but he was appointed clerk of the market. After the passage of Jefferson's

Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom, Isaacs became a tax assessor and a member of Richmond's town council. It is interesting that both men were more at home with the Hebrew than with the Latin script. After the turn of the century, the cultured Solomon Jacobs became an alderman and even acting mayor of the city. On occasion, he conducted services in the synagog serving as hazzan.¹⁴

After 1790, when a new South Carolina constitution wiping away the Christian test was adopted, Jews in the state assumed a variety of offices. Individuals served in the office of postmaster and as tax collector, as commissioner of schools, of streets, of markets, as attorneys, as clerks of the court, as prothonotary, as deputy sheriff, as coroner, constable, and magistrate, as commissioners of the hospital, the orphan asylum, roads, pilotage, workhouses, and police, as aldermen, as wardens, and as intendant (mayor). The Charleston-born Solomon Heydenfeldt went west to Alabama in 1837 where at the age of twenty-four he was elected a judge in Talapoosa County. A few years later at the time of the Gold Rush, he moved on to California and there became one of the most distinguished jurists on the Pacific Coast. Another Charlestonian, Abraham Seixas, a veteran of the Revolutionary War, was very eager for office. This New York transplant was a brother of Gershon, the "rabbi" of the New York congregation and for many years a trustee of Columbia College. Abraham was a magistrate and a warden of the workhouse in Charleston. Campaigning for office in the 1790's, he resorted to verse. His sister Grace wrote poetry; he wrote doggerel as he pleaded with the electors to commit themselves:

The man I love, who will avow
He is my friend or foe;
But he who comes with double face,
I do despise as being base.

In this particular election the good Charlestonians did commit themselves—Seixas ended up at the bottom of the list. In Georgia, the Jewish involvement in local politics is reflected in the activities of the Sheftall clan. By 1791 Col. Mordecai Sheftall had served in Savannah as tobacco inspector, warden, lumber measurer, and justice of the peace. His son, Sheftall Sheftall, was also to become a justice of the peace; Dr. Moses Sheftall, another of the colonel's sons, was a port warden, an overseer of the poor, and a judge of the Inferior Court of Chatham County (1828). This family was in no sense atypical; quite a number of Jews held office in Savannah prior to 1840.¹⁵

STATE OFFICEHOLDING

In 1796, Dr. Levi Myers, of Georgetown, South Carolina, was elected to the state legislature. Actually he was not the first Jew to sit in that body, for Salvador had earlier been named to the first General Assembly by a rebel junta. From all indications Myers was no avid politician; he was interested in medicine and general culture; he was a Latinist and a student of literature. He had apprenticed as a medical aspirant in the office of Dr. David Ramsay, who in his day was a notable historian. Myers crossed the ocean to study medicine at Edinburgh (1785-1786), but took his degree in Glasgow (1787), probably because that school, unlike Edinburgh, did not require publication of a thesis. Years later, back home, he received an appointment as Apothecary General of the state. In 1822 he and his family were swept away in a gale that devastated the coast. Subsequently, several Jews were elected to both houses of the state legislature. In 1808 Jacob Henry represented Carteret County in the North Carolina lower house—illegally, for all North Carolina legislators at the time and for the next sixty years were expected to take a Christian oath. In Georgia, to the South, Dr. Moses Sheftall, served in the state legislature. Family tradition has it that David Emanuel, governor of Georgia in 1801, was a Jew, though there is no substantial evidence to confirm this. Up North, in New York City, Mordecai Myers, an 1812 war veteran with a fine record, began in 1828 serving several terms in the state assembly. Much later, in the 1850's, he became mayor of the city of Schenectady.¹⁶

Myers had once been very active in Congregation Shearith Israel, where he knew Samuel Judah, a pro-American Canadian, and his son, "Dr." Bernard Samuel Judah, a "surgeon" and druggist. Dr. Judah had married a daughter of Aaron Hart, of Three Rivers, one of the great Quebecois Jewish entrepreneurs, a man who built a feudal estate and established a family still respected today throughout Canada. In 1798, Bernard S. Judah had a son who was named after the child's paternal grandfather. Young Samuel (1798/1799-1869), a native of New York, after graduating from Rutgers in New Jersey in 1816, picked up stakes and moved west to Indiana, where he turned to law and by 1819 was already practicing in old Vincennes. Were the Brandons of that town, whose daughter he married in 1825, related to one of the numerous Jewish Brandons? Had they brought him out to Indiana? Or was he just another one of the many young men of his day who believed that his chances for a career were far better on the western frontier than in New Jersey? He was a brilliant young fellow; he knew the law and had a fine background in Latin, Greek, and the sciences; and his little two-story frame house not only sheltered his wife and their half-dozen or more children, but also a good sound library. When not yet thirty, Judah was already a successful lawyer enjoying a fine practice and pointing with pride to the best garden in

town on his two and one-half acre lot. Of course he had sheep, cows, horses, and beehives, but he also had what few others had—asparagus and celery!

In politics he was a Jacksonian, one of the faction's leaders indeed, for in 1824 this twenty-six-year-old lawyer had written the state Democratic platform. Three years later he was in the state legislature, and after Jackson's landslide, in 1829, he became the United States District Attorney. Old Hickory took care of his friends. But Samuel wanted to be United States senator, and when the incumbent James Noble died, Judah campaigned vigorously for the office against a half-dozen rivals, including the shrewd, hard-hitting, hard-drinking Indian fighter, General John Tipton. Judah led on the first two ballots with thirty-six and thirty-nine votes; Tipton had only four, but on the seventh ballot the General came through with a majority. Inasmuch as the election for the six-year term was just one year off, Samuel once more took up the burden of a bitter campaign. This time, he was sure, he was going to win; the General's friends were equally determined to head him off. One of them, a Doctor Woolverton, had the brilliant idea the following spring of making Judah the governor of the new Wisconsin Territory or of having him appointed judge. Nothing came of that. Judah wanted to be senator; he was convinced that he had earned the job; some of his friends even believed that Tipton had promised not to run against him. In any event Judah made his intentions quite clear in a letter to Tipton on May 30, 1832:

I have determined to be a candidate . . . I owe some thing to myself . . . some thing too is due to my own feelings, and some thing to the sacrifices I have made for the party.

It was during the second week of December, 1832, that the election for the full six-year term in the United States Senate took place in Indianapolis, but Judah was not among the candidates. What had happened? A letter sent under a fictitious name to the federal authorities claimed that the accounts of Dr. Woolverton—receiver of public moneys at the Vincennes Land Office—were not in order. Somehow or other this letter fell into the hands of the Doctor and his friends, and they believed the writer to be none other than the United States District Attorney himself, Samuel Judah. The report that Judah was the author of this letter may have been true—he was anything but a political lily—and Woolverton may have been guilty of misappropriating public funds; it may all have been a “frame-up” to crush Judah by smearing him with the epithet of an “informer,” but it worked; for the nonce Judah was dead politically and did not even offer himself as a candidate. Tipton was again elected, this time on the nineteenth ballot.

Did the fact that Judah was a Jew bring about his defeat in the senatorial elections and campaigns of 1831 and 1832? Did Judah admit being a Jew? This last we may take for granted, for in 1827 his father came out to see him, and Bernard S. Judah was a loyal member of Shearith Israel and closely tied to his Jewish kin. Before crossing New York State by stage and canal on his way westward, he called on his cousins the Solomons and Harts in Albany; in Cincinnati he paid his respects to the Jonases and also visited a young Jewish couple who had just married; he even agreed to carry back a packet of wedding cake to be delivered to the Peixottos in Philadelphia for distribution there to the hopeful young females. In spite of his somewhat Deistic leanings, the father was certainly a Jew and close to his son.

Were the Indiana legislators conscious of Judah's Jewishness? Definitely. After Judah's first election defeat in December, 1831, General Washington Johnston, of Vincennes, had written to Tipton:

A number of our citizens in this part of the country are highly gratified that you have succeeded over the Jew; in you they confide, but not in him. He now says he did not care about the two years [as senator, 1831-1832] but the next six, which he intends being a candidate! May the Lord in his goodness prevent this.

Almost a year later, Thomas Fitzgerald, a Michigan politician who was one day to become a United States senator himself, wrote to encourage his friend Tipton before the election of December, 1832;

Situated as I am, I can form no satisfactory opinion with regard to politicks and am quite ignorant of what is going on in Indiana, except that *you* are to have several *rivals* for your office, and among the rest, *Sam'l the Jew*. Wonder if he will cry again if he is not elected, though I must say he bore his defeat very well last winter. But it wont do, "Sammy" cant be elected; he cant get so many votes as he had last winter.

In none of his letters—even during the most trying moments of this bitterly fought frontier election when chicanery and bribery were rife—did Tipton himself ever attack his opponent as a "Jew," although he believed that Judah would stop at nothing to defeat him. The whole public campaign was, moreover, singularly free of anti-Jewish prejudice. The references to Samuel as a Jew need not be regarded as sinister; they may very well have been more adjectival and descriptive than calumnious. Jews were still novelties in Midwestern political life, but Judah always had a large following. A few years later, when he broke with Jackson on the question of internal improvements and joined the Whigs, he became one of the party's leaders and enjoyed statewide support. In 1840—now back in the State Assembly—he was elected president of the Indiana Whig convention which helped nominate Harrison and carried the state for

him. If there was anti-Jewish prejudice on the Indiana frontier, it seems not materially to have been responsible for Judah's defeats; it certainly did not prevent him from becoming one of the great lawyers of the Middle West and a political power among antebellum Hoosiers.¹⁷

NON-MILITARY FEDERAL OFFICEHOLDERS

In one respect Jews were certainly no different than their Gentile fellow citizens. Ever since the 1780's they, too, had sought federal office. Col. David S. Franks had enjoyed minor federal assignments in Europe after British recognition of American independence. It was particularly true that many wanted to feed at the national trough in the days after the war when the depression of the 1780's made it difficult for thousands to make a living. Increasingly, Jews applied to the national government for appointments. Some Jews occupied minor posts in the customs service; others, like Moses Myers, filled important positions. In 1819, Myers, one of the leading businessmen in Norfolk, if not in all Virginia, was crushed financially in the panic that followed the War of 1812. As early as 1784 he had hoped to become the American consul in Amsterdam. At this time Isaac Moses, the senior partner in their firm of international importers and exporters, had appealed on his behalf pointing out that Myers had been grossly abused and robbed by the British when they seized the Dutch Caribbean Island of St. Eustatius in 1781. Myers was stationed there during the Revolution to help run cargoes from Amsterdam past the British cruisers. The desired appointment was not offered Myers, though his partner's request was given a respectful hearing; the government was indebted to Isaac Moses in more ways than one. The classical example of the seeker after office was Lt. Col. Solomon Bush, who hoped, in vain, to become postmaster general in Washington's cabinet. Many called but few were chosen; it was not until 1906 that Oscar Straus was invited to become Secretary of Commerce and Labor in the Theodore Roosevelt administration.¹⁸

But why had Moses Myers been so eager for a consulship? The reason Jews and others sought consular appointments was that the job, then prestigious, required relatively little time and offered many financial advantages to its holder, who was permitted to carry on his own trading activities. There was no question of a conflict of interest. Three of Benjamin Nones' sons received consular appointments. Nones himself was an ardent and active Jeffersonian. One of his boys was consul in Venezuela, another went to Haiti, the third was a consular officer in Portugal. The Noneses were a family of great patriots; Benjamin had served with distinction in the Revolution; one of his sons had volunteered during the War of 1812; two others were in the navy; one of them even commanded a revenue cutter—no small achievement for a Jew. The Noneses knew

Mordecai Noah well; they were all originally Philadelphians, part of the relatively small Mikveh Israel Sephardic community. Noah had been appointed consul to Tunis and served there from 1813 to 1815 when he was recalled by Madison and Monroe. The government questioned the propriety of his expenditures in redeeming certain presumptive American prisoners; moreover as his superiors wrote, they felt that as a Jew he could not function effectively in a Moslem land. When in 1816 Noah published a book denouncing the President and his Secretary of State for bigotry, these two notables, embarrassed, attempted to exculpate themselves. Madison and Monroe appointed a South Carolina Jew, Moses M. Russell, as consul to Riga, but long before the Senate voted approval Russell was entertained in the White House, where the President and the Secretary explained why they recalled Noah. Russell was asked to take up the cudgels in their defense and to tell his Jewish friends the truth. Bigotry? They were happy to offer Russell a consular post because he was a Jew! Russell for his part offered no objection. Writing to Dr. M. Sheftall, he declared Noah guilty of "injudicious and foul conduct."¹⁹

The job of consul, protecting American shippers and serving as an informative arm of the Department of State, was not always a bed of roses—as Nathan Levy found when serving as Commercial Agent and later as consul for his government on St. Thomas (1818-1836). Levy's was one of the oldest and most respected of American Jewish families. His mother, Rachel, wife of the Baltimore patriot Benjamin Levy, had sought to secure an appointment for her son in the 1780's when General Washington, a family friend, first became president. Many years later, in the Danish West Indies, Levy found himself exposed to constant attacks by fellow Americans who tried unsuccessfully to unseat "the Jew." The Americans in the Islands, said one informant, were shocked because Levy was living with a black woman and was frequently seen promenading with her, arm in arm. Morris Goldsmith, of Charleston, never rose higher than a deputy United States marshal yet served notably in that post for almost twenty years during the early 1800's. His record would indicate that he was a gentleman of intellect and courage. Goldsmith, a prominent Mason, was a founder and officer of the Reformed Society of Israelites and the editor of the *Charleston Directory for 1831*. In the 1820's he was known for the intrepidity with which he took on the dangerous work of pursuing smugglers and pirates.²⁰

For some of these civil servants, a government appointment was more than a meal ticket or an augmented source of income. They wanted to do a job; they were conscientious. This was certainly true of John Jacob Hays (1766/1770-1836), a native New Yorker and a cousin of Moses Michael Hays, of Boston; thus he was a member of a widespread clan which by this time had intermarried with the Gratzes, the Ettings, and the Myerses,

scattering its children into numerous states of the growing republic. John had accompanied his Loyalist father Barrack Hays to Canada after the British withdrawal from New York. Flight was the better part of valor for this branch of the family. In Canada, John found Uncle Andrew Hays, one of the first English adventurers to settle there and, apparently, a founder of that country's first synagog. Like many of the merchants and fur traders of that day, young John had canoed west to Mackinac—some time in the late 1780's—and it was during this period that he came near freezing to death close to the headwaters of the Red River of the North. Caught with two companions in a snowstorm out on the prairie, he and the others were buried under drifts for three days with only a few thin blankets and a limited supply of dried meat. Later he moved south again to the United States. By 1790, now a young man of about twenty, Hays had already settled in Cahokia on the Mississippi, not far from St. Louis. This was to be his home till his death in 1836. Living in Canada, he had learned to speak French fluently, which served him well in the old French settlements of Cahokia, Kaskaskia, and Vincennes. For some time he worked as an agent for the firm of Todd and Hay, but finally went into business for himself. He opened a shop in town, farmed extensively in the river bottoms, and annually went on an expedition up the Mississippi to trade with the Indians. He married a Franco-American Vincennes girl of good family and “good sense”—a Gentile—and the couple raised a Christian family of three girls. Like other frontiersmen, he went into politics and for many years was postmaster and sheriff in Cahokia, St. Clair County; by 1814 he was Collector of Internal Revenue for the Illinois Territory, and when business declined at home during the long depression years of 1815-1821, he sought a government appointment. In May 1820, he accepted the position of Indian Agent in the Indiana wilderness at Ft. Wayne, not a job to be sneezed at, for it paid \$1,200 in hard cash, a lot of money in those days.

There is no question that Hays was a good man for the post: he knew the Indians, and—what was equally important—he knew the traders who fed them whiskey. The Miamis were dangerous enough when sober, even more so when drunk. It was his duty, so he believed, to see that the silver dollar annuities which he paid the Indians for their ceded lands did not roll into the hands of the ubiquitous and unconscionable traders. The whiskey-crazed Indians, numbering thousands, could easily wipe out the tiny Ft. Wayne settlement of eighteen or twenty cabins on the Maumee. Hays himself lived in the stockade, sharing it with Isaac McCoy, a Baptist preacher, missionary, and schoolteacher. This was still the wilderness with a vengeance. It took Hays over two weeks to reach Ft. Wayne from Cahokia; it took four weeks to make the trip to Cincinnati and back with the silver coin for the Indian payments. Hays as Indian Agent made every

effort to see that they were treated fairly and fought vigorously to keep down the whiskey-selling traffickers who preyed on them. That was the problem he faced. He made a determined effort to settle the Indians on the soil and was not without success. He saw to it that they built houses, planted corn, and raised cattle, hogs, and chickens. Some even churned butter. Fields were fenced and thousands of rails were cut for sale. His goal was to make them self-sufficient. Three years was all that the aging Hays could stand; he had left his family back in Cahokia; it took weeks to journey home to see his daughters; there was an interval of many months when he could not even return for a visit, and his rheumatism was torturing him. He had enough, and by June, 1823, his resignation was finally accepted and he was on his way back to the family. Surely he could console himself that he had conducted himself honestly and honorably, and had endeavored sincerely to help his charges attempt the transition from a seminomadic to an agricultural type of life.²¹

JEWES IN THE MILITARY

THE MILITIA

Jews, as we have noted, had served in the militia in Dutch New Netherland and in the British colonies. After the United States came into being, Jews were commissioned as officers—a new departure. They now became more active in the militia organizations fighting Indians, putting down insurrections, or, when federalized, augmenting the regular army in the two wars with Great Britain. Reuben Etting served as an officer in a Baltimore outfit when the troops were called out during the Whiskey Insurrection of 1794-1795. Two years later, when war with France seemed imminent, his friends elected him captain of the city's Independent Blues. But a Christian test oath was required of all Maryland officers. Either Etting took it with tongue in cheek or he assumed office without it. His election proved that he was popular, completely acceptable. While still captain of the Blues—an office which was as political and social as it was military—he was appointed United States marshal for the District of Maryland. In 1823 a group of young Baltimoreans came together to form the Marion Corps; the soldiers elected Benjamin I. Cohen their captain, which created a problem since the test oath and the attempt to modify it through the "Jew Bill" had by then become a bitterly contested issue. Capt. Cohen could not or would not take the discriminatory oath. His company refused to elect a commander in his stead. This Jewish captain-elect was a banker, a founder of what was later to become the stock exchange, and also a violinist, a botanist, and a horticulturalist, obviously a man of culture. His home was the first in town to enjoy the luxury of gaslight.²²

Jews in other states, too, flocked to the militia companies. One suspects that the prime motivation was social. The Reverend Isaac Leeser's uncle, Zalma Rehine (pronounced Reinee), was a noncommissioned officer in Richmond's Light Infantry Blues. Chapman Levy, of Camden, South Carolina, and Philip Phillips, another South Carolinian, were colonels. Levy was a planter and a politician whose reach included Alabama and Mississippi. Phillips, later an Alabama congressman, would become one of the country's great lawyers. Third-generation Sheftalls and Minises were officers in the Georgia militia. Lt. Benjamin Sheftall had his hands full in 1788 scouting and preparing for Indian attacks. South Carolina Jews were officers in the militia units called up to fight the Seminoles in Florida (1836). In this decade of the 1830's Texas fought for its independence, and Jews flocked to the colors. Leon Dyer, of Baltimore, was commissioned a major in the army of the Republic of Texas; two other Jews, also Southerners, served as surgeons. One of them, Moses Albert Levy, sported the title, Surgeon in Chief of the Volunteer Army of Texas.

Earlier, the War of 1812 had divided Jews as it had done many other Americans. Some would not serve; Federalists frowning on a new war with England formed peace societies. Others were hawks. All deemed themselves patriots. As businessmen, professionals, and planters, individuals of more than average culture, the pro-war advocates seemed to experience no difficulty in securing commissions. They were soldiers, surgeons, infantry officers, paymasters, and quartermasters. Dour Judah Touro, a staid businessman who had volunteered his services as a munitions carrier, was severely wounded in the Battle of New Orleans. Fortunately, he survived to amass a huge fortune, which was later divided among his friends and a host of Gentile and Jewish institutions. Perforce, he became one of the great philanthropists of antebellum America. During the War of 1812, Hazzan Seixas in New York was restrained in his public statements. Undoubtedly his congregation of traders and brokers was split between pro-war and anti-war advocates. All Jewish congregations frowned on clergymen who took sides publicly on political issues. It was a cleric's job to chant the liturgy—not to criticize the government. Abraham A. Massias, an old militia devotee in New York and Charleston, became a professional soldier during the War of 1812. While in Georgia, with but eighty riflemen to back him up, he impeded the advance of 1,500 British regulars and made an orderly retreat with relatively light losses. He was to make a career in the army as a paymaster and retired with the rank of major, a high one in those days. An active Reform Jew, he specified in his will that his bequests to Congregation Beth Elohim were conditional on its loyalty to the new Reform movement in Judaism.²⁴

Farther north, in Maryland, quite a number of Baltimore Jews were called out to defend the city when the British attacked it in 1814 and

bombarded Fort McHenry (the Star Fort). This was the attack which inspired Francis Scott Key to write the poem adopted as the national anthem. Years later Colonel Mendes I. Cohen recalled his part in defending the Star Fort as a member of Captain Nicholson's Artillery Fencibles, a rather fancy battery. After the British retired, Mr. Key came to the fort and showed the men there the poem he had written. Mendes I. Cohen recalled that the soldiers tried out various tunes to fit the words. Mendes owed his title as colonel to a gubernatorial appointment in the 1830's. The highest rank held by a Jew during the war was borne by Bernard Hart, a division quartermaster in New York. He, too, was a major. Hart, a stockbroker, was the grandfather of the American writer, Bret Harte.²⁵

THE REGULAR ARMY:

CAPTAIN MORDECAI MYERS OF THE 13TH U.S. INFANTRY

Of the several Jews who served with distinction in the War of 1812, Mordecai Myers is one of the most appealing. He was born in 1776, in Newport, Rhode Island, where his family was engaged in commerce. His father, a Hungarian Jew with a gift for languages, was a butcher or shohet; his mother, was an Austrian. Among the tongues which the senior Myers knew was Hebrew, and this no doubt was the tie that bound him to Dr. Ezra Stiles, the well-known Christian Hebraist. When the father died, about six months after Mordecai's birth, the widow Myers remained in Newport until the end of the war and then as a Loyalist migrated to Nova Scotia. For some reason or other in 1787 she returned to the United States, to New York, where young Mordecai was evidently given a Jewish education. Rabbi Seixas, no doubt, was his teacher and taught young Myers the rudiments at least of the Hebrew language. Some experience had made an ardent American patriot of this Newport lad; there was no trace in him of parental British loyalism. It may well be that he was strongly influenced by the teachings of Seixas, the patriot-rabbi of Shearith Israel in New York City. Although Myers lived to be about ninety-five years of age he never forgot the scene as Chancellor Livingston administered the oath of office to General George Washington. When only sixteen years of age, he had become a warm partisan of Jeffersonian democracy. Grimly he would recall in later days that when still a child he had once seen an unfortunate man, under the "mild and humane British laws," standing in the pillory, cropped and branded for stealing a loaf of bread from a baker's window. Adams's four years in the presidency he referred to as a "despotic reign." Myers had engaged actively in politics since his seventeenth year, but he had also found plenty of time during those early days to take an interest in the affairs of the Jewish congregation. Military training, however, was his hobby, and he made

it his business to acquire an excellent military education. By the time the War of 1812 threatened he was already a battalion commander in the state militia, and three months before war actually broke out he was commissioned a captain in the United States Army, although he could have secured a higher rank had he permitted his friends to intervene for him. This he refused to do. There were three kinds of soldiers in 1812, he once wrote: those who joined “from motives of pride and love of military show and splendor,” those who were interested only in “employment and pay” and, finally, those who joined “from higher minded notions of national honor or patriotism.” His heroic and self-sacrificing career proved that he belonged to this last category.

During the winter and spring of 1812-1813 Myers was stationed with his troops at Williamsville near Buffalo. By this time he had become a seasoned veteran; he had fathomed the good and the bad in his men and his fellow officers; he had developed an infallible method for sobering up drunks; he had found to his dismay that some of his military associates naively believed that liquor was common property, and he had stood by more than once tracing the route of his men in the bitter lake-swept snows by the bloody marks they left as they plodded ahead, barefoot, with bleeding feet. Together with Major Zachary Taylor—later to become President—he had seconded his friend Major John Stonard as he was shot and fatally wounded by Dr. James C. Bronaugh. Some wrongs—or fancied wrongs—he knew could be wiped out only in blood; most duels, he declared, were stupid and silly, and he had no hesitation in helping pack the bullets with blood instead of lead when two of his acquaintances challenged each other for some petty reason. When one of the duelists fell, all covered with blood, his friends found it very difficult to convince him that he was not mortally wounded. One cold winter night O’Bryan, one of his bravest men, on duty near a graveyard, was reported to have seen the Devil. For fear that others might lose heart, Captain Myers spent two hours with O’Bryan at his post, to prove that the Devil—in this case at least—existed only in the soldier’s imagination. While at the Williamsville cantonment, where he was the commanding officer, he wrote in 1813 to his friend Naphtali Phillips, editor of the “kasher” *National Advocate*: “Sum must spill there blud and others *there ink*. . . . It is a fine thing to abandon the persute of welth. I never ware hapy in persute of riches and now that I have abandoned it, I am much more contented.”²⁶

Several months later, towards the end of October, two schooners loaded down with sick and disabled fighters went aground on a reef in Lake Ontario during a terrible gale. Myers, knowing that the storm was battering the boats to pieces, volunteered to General John Parker Boyd to go to the rescue of the men. The General thought that the situation was almost hopeless because of the storm, but permitted Myers to make the at-

tempt. With thirty men to help him he made his way through the raging gale, boarded the doomed vessels, and carried off the dead and the living, making thirteen trips in all. It was a desperate venture, for the living had gotten at the liquor in the hospital stores and all of them were drunk. About two hundred persons were on board the boats; all were brought ashore, but nearly fifty had already died. The following month, on November 11, 1813, Myers was severely wounded during the sanguinary battle of Chrysler's Field; twenty-three of his eighty-six men were killed. He was hospitalized for a time at the home of a Dr. Mann, and there he met the physician's niece, Charlotte Bailey, of Plattsburgh, whom he married four months later, in March, 1814. After his separation from the service in the late summer of 1815, he returned to New York and went into the auction business. His marriage to Charlotte Bailey changed his life, in one respect at least. Prior to this time he had been active in the Jewish community; now he was less ardent though he never ceased to identify with his people. His *Reminiscences*, written at Schenectady in 1853, have been substantially "edited." The editors were careful to see to it that nothing was written or printed that would betray Myers's Jewish origin. By the time he had written these *Reminiscences* he had already served for five years in the New York State Assembly, had been twice elected Mayor of Schenectady, and had been honored with the office of Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Masons of the State of New York. About the year 1860, when he was in his mid-eighties, he was an unsuccessful candidate for Congress. In spite of his advanced years his patriotic ardor had not abated one whit, and in the decade before the Civil War this staunch defender of his country wrote: "Distraction to the brain that would conceive the idea of a separation of the Union, and palsied the hand that could break one link of this Heaven-wrought chain."²⁷

MAJOR ALFRED MORDECAI

The two great wars in which the United States had engaged, the Revolution of 1775 and the War of 1812, had seen Jews play active parts. Patriotism in the modern state is typical of most citizens, especially in periods of crisis, and Jews proved no exception to this rule. But what was the attitude of the American Jew during peace time toward the military establishment? Very few Jews opted for long term service in the army, but there were a few like Massias. What motivated him and other coreligionists to take up soldiering as a career? Did any come into the army by way of West Point? These questions are not easily answered, but some light may be thrown on them by our study of a few men who entered the army as a profession.²⁸

As we know, Jews had been stationed at West Point ever since the Revolution, a generation before it became the national Military Academy.

During the Revolution, Isaac Franks served in the quartermaster corps there, and his cousin, David Salisbury Franks, was one of Benedict Arnold's aides when the General assumed command of this vital post in 1780. In his valuable *Memoirs*, General Joseph Gardner Swift, our first native American military engineer, described an interesting event in connection with Arnold's flight from West Point. Swift had ample opportunity to learn the traditions of the Point for he was a graduate of the first class, the class of 1802, and was Inspector and Superintendent of the Academy from 1815 to 1818. He informs us that when Arnold fled from the fort to the shelter of the British *Vulture*, the coxswain of the barge that carried him to safety was a Corporal Levy. This noncommissioned officer had no inkling of what Arnold proposed to do until they reached the British ship and the Corporal was offered the position of sergeant major in the English army if he threw in his lot with the fugitive. Levy, according to our source, curtly told the General "that one coat was enough to wear." The reply, we are told, made Arnold look like a dog with his tail between his legs. The English commander of the *Vulture* praised the Corporal for his loyalty to his country, fed the barge crew well, and permitted the men to return to the safety of their own lines. There is no evidence, beside the name, to prove that Levy was a Jew.²⁹

West Point had of course not yet been established as a military academy, although Congress, even during the war, thought of using the retired veterans at the Point to teach in a proposed officers' training camp. In a very desultory and unsatisfactory fashion, the training of officers was first undertaken at various posts about the year 1794, and it was not until 1802 that the Military Academy was formally created at the Point as the Corps of Engineers. The two were identical; the Academy was a military body, not an "institution." The first class constituted under this new arrangement was composed of exactly two men, the above mentioned Joseph G. Swift and Simeon Magruder Levy (1774-1807). Levy was the son of Levi Andrew Levy, a well-known fur trader and land speculator. Cadet Levy—not to be identified with Corporal Levy—was a Jew despite his Scottish middle name, for his classmate Swift described him as a member of a "responsible Jew family of Baltimore and formerly a sergeant in Captain [Benjamin] Lockwood's Company of Infantry and thence promoted to cadet for his merit and mathematics attainments." His "merit," apart from his knowledge of mathematics, lay in the service he had rendered as an Orderly Sergeant under Mad Anthony Wayne at the battle of Fallen Timbers on August 20, 1794. Lockwood, who had also participated in the battle, knew of Levy's fine record and recommended him for a cadetship when the opportune moment arose. He was appointed from the ranks where he had been serving since age sixteen. He already had nine years of experience; here was a professional soldier, a man who liked

his job. Exactly a month after the first class at West Point graduated—all two of them—the men at the Academy met and organized a society for promoting military science. The whole faculty—three, all told—joined the new organization together with seven other officers and cadets, including the recently commissioned Lt. Levy who was about to report for duty at Ft. Jackson, Georgia. Five years later he was dead, a victim of the yellow fever possibly.³⁰

Two years before Levy died the Military Academy admitted as cadet into the First Regiment of Artillery, Samuel Noah, said to be a cousin of “Major” Mordecai M. Noah. Samuel had an even more adventurous career than his cousin, the distinguished newspaper man and consul to Tunis. After acting as judge advocate at West Point while still a student there, he was commissioned in 1807 and sent to Mississippi Territory where he spent his time studying Napoleon’s campaigns and chasing smugglers on the Florida frontier. Disgusted with slow promotion and eager for adventure, he resigned his commission in 1811 and joined a filibustering expedition of Americans and Mexicans fighting to free Texas and other parts of Mexico from the grip of Spanish despotism. Back of the mind of Noah and his American associates was no doubt the hope of ultimate union between Texas and the United States. After participating in the hazardous and romantic campaign of 1813, which resulted in the defeat of the royalist forces, Noah made a hurried trip to Washington to offer his services to the government then fighting the British. Refused a commission by President Madison—because he had been born in England?—Noah at once proceeded to New York where he earned golden opinions for himself in the task of training recruits and preparing the city for the expected siege by the British. This was the last episode of his military career, though he lived to be over ninety, passing away in poverty and obscurity in an Illinois village.³¹

The Military Academy in the days of Simeon M. Levy and Samuel Noah left much to be desired. It was a second-rate institution at best until the appointment in 1817 of a schoolmate of Noah’s as the new superintendent. This man was Brevet-Major Sylvanus Thayer, frequently referred to as the “Father of the Military Academy,” and it was to him that Alfred Mordecai (1804-1887) a handsome, auburn-haired, blue-eyed boy of fifteen, reported for duty in June, 1819. Alfred was one of the brilliant Mordecai boys and girls of Warrenton, the little North Carolina village where Mordecai *père* presided over a successful “female academy.”

Jacob Mordecai was a better teacher than a businessman. One of his descendants said mockingly that due to the fact that Jacob’s mother was of Christian stock—she was a convert to Judaism—“his native business instinct would appear to have been dulled through having a mother of Gentile blood.” Mordecai had read much and was highly respected for his

learning; his children were nearly all exceptional. When they were but six or seven years of age he urged them to read, gave them books, and wrote them encouraging notes: "The advantages attendant on education will no doubt all conspire to impel you with ardor steadily to pursue this pleasant avocation." The only real success of which the father could boast was the nonsectarian school he had established in Warrenton, North Carolina, a small town county seat. He ran it for ten years, sold it at a good price, moved North to a farm near Richmond, and then proceeded again to lose his money in bad ventures. His Warrenton school was deemed one of the best in the South. Mordecai taught; his children taught, and as the young ones grew up they were put to work; it was a cooperative family enterprise. It was primarily a boarding school although there were a few day students. The pedagogical approach in the school was modern. When it was opened in 1803 Mordecai announced that the instruction would be "adapted to the various dispositions and genius" of the pupils. "My object, not merely to impart words and exhibit things, but chiefly to inform the mind to the labor of thinking upon and understanding what is taught." The curriculum was broad, for it included art, music, rhetoric, grammar, and English literature. The girls read the novels of Scott and Maria Edgeworth, the *Arabian Nights*, Virgil in Latin. History was taught: English, Grecian, and South American. Where there were no adequate textbooks, the teachers compiled compendia on geography and mythology. The public exams were a success; the students did well.³²

Most of the Mordecai children were achievers. Moses and George were lawyers. The latter was one day to become the president of a bank, of a railroad, and of a paper mill. Four of the sisters taught in different towns; one of them wrote a history of Warrenton but it was never published. She called it "The History of Hastings." Brother Solomon at the age of eleven was reading the Greek and Latin classics and the best in current English literature. His letters are those of a cultivated person. When sixteen Solomon was co-opted to teach in the family school; later he became a physician and practiced in Mobile. Samuel, another son, spent most of his life in Petersburg and Richmond; he was the purchasing agent for the school. Business was his vocation, but he always manifested literary interests. He collected a library, wrote well, and in 1856 published anonymously, *Richmond in By-Gone Days*; a second edition appeared in 1860 with his name on the title page. These are delightful reminiscences of early Richmond and include a number of stories about Jews, although they are never identified as such. One wonders why. Samuel Mordecai remained a Jew, unlike most of his siblings, but he was buried in an Episcopalian religious ceremony. This was probably at the suggestion of a Christian member of the family. Rachel, the oldest daughter, was probably the most brilliant of the lot. For a generation she carried on a corre-

spondence with Maria Edgeworth writing about politics, botany, horticulture, and a host of other subjects. In English literature, Rachel was interested in Byron, Bulwer-Lytton, and the Americans, Irving and Cooper.³³

Taught by his half-sister Rachel and his half-brother Solomon, Alfred Mordecai knew how to read by the age of four and grew up a very studious, learned youngster. Rising often before daylight, the lad of tender years would read and study by the light of the fire with which old Jenny was baking her bread at the large oven in the yard. He learned Latin, Greek, and French and was following the campaigns of Napoleon and the Battle of Waterloo before he was twelve—not that he was enthusiastic about war or soldiering as such. He interested himself in many fields of human knowledge and, though anything but a “sissy,” was by inclination and training a scholarly person; he much preferred *Ivanhoe* to a game of hopscotch. By 1819 his father had sold the Warrenton school, moved to a farm near Richmond, and suggested to his son that he go to West Point. No special reason is known as to why Jacob Mordecai should have wished Alfred to become an army officer. Outside of his own youthful experience, when as a member of a boys’ troop he had excitedly accompanied the delegates of the First Continental Congress into Philadelphia, the elder Mordecai had manifested no interest in matters military. But the army was an honorable career and as such, no doubt, appealed to the father, who recommended it to his son, a third generation American. United States Senator Nathaniel Macon secured the appointment, and the young Carolinian finished his first two years, second in his class; his last two, at the very top. By the end of the second year, though still a cadet, he was appointed acting Assistant Professor of Mathematics, a common procedure with brilliant students in those days since other teaching personnel was unavailable. After the second year the work was easier—his competitor for first place had withdrawn—and young Alfred found time to go visiting on Saturday night, to participate in buckwheat socials, to smoke an occasional “segar,” and to become active in the Cold Water Club, which on occasion tasted a drop of something even stronger. On a trip to Philadelphia during the summer of 1822, he visited brother Solomon, now attending physician at the Alms House, and we may be sure that his brother took him calling on his classmate, Dr. Isaac Hays. It was there at the home of Isaac’s parents, Samuel and Richea Gratz Hays, that Alfred for the first time saw Sarah Ann Hays, the girl he was to marry fourteen years later. When he graduated in 1823 he remained at the Military Academy, first as Assistant Professor of Natural and Experimental Philosophy and later as Assistant Professor of Engineering.

By 1832, still a man in his twenties, he was already a captain, assigned to the Ordnance Corps the very year it was created. He soon be-

came the outstanding ordnance expert in the United States Army. His achievements were recognized; he was put in charge of important arsenals, appointed to the Ordnance Board, and more than once sent to Europe to study armaments and military operations. By 1854, respected for his works on military law, ordnance, and munitions, he had risen to the rank of major. No antebellum Jew, it would seem, had risen higher in the regular army. Then came the Civil War which blighted his career. He was distraught, trapped in the valley of decision. Mordecai had to make a painful choice; he would not fight against the Union nor would he take up arms against the South, he would not wage war against his dear ones, his family in the South. He was himself essentially a Southerner and certainly no abolitionist, but he would not fight to preserve slavery even though slavery was constitutional. For him the only choice was to resign his commission, and he did so. At the age of fifty-seven he had to start life over again. Deprived during the Civil War of the means of a livelihood, he went down into Mexico and made an unsuccessful effort to help build a transcontinental railroad uniting the Gulf and the Pacific. Returning to Philadelphia, he went to work for the Pennsylvania Railroad Company as an executive of the corporation's canal and coal divisions. Notwithstanding his acknowledged eminence in the field of ordnance, Mordecai displayed none of the bravura of the professional soldier. He was a learned cultured Southern gentleman with a love of literature, a student in uniform. A Jew? Not really in sentiment. A Christian, no. He appears to have had no denominational interests. Though not consciously an assimilationist, he was in the process of assimilating. Once, it seems, he fell in love with a Christian girl and would have married her had she accepted him. Other members of his family married out. It was something of an accident that he married a Jewish woman and that she brought him into the Gratz-Hays-Etting clan. His wife, Sarah Ann Hays, was committed to her inherited faith, but evidently could not prevail on her husband to allow the circumcision of their sons. Like some of the European Jewish Reformers, Major Mordecai looked upon this ancient custom, no doubt, as "a bloody barbaric rite." In later years one of the sons, in deference to the wishes of his mother, submitted to circumcision. Even so, all of the sons married out; none of the three Mordecai daughters found husbands; they, at least, seem to have maintained their Jewish identity.³⁴

JEWS IN THE NAVY: ASSORTED NAVAL NOTABLES

Jews in the early national period were rarely tempted to seek a career in the army or navy. Both forces were small; advancement was slow. In past centuries Jews in Europe had normally avoided the armed forces, which nearly always encouraged loyalty to the Christian religion. Officers were

expected to take a Christian oath of loyalty. The army and navy here in the United States held scant charm for the typical ambitious Jew unless he was possessed with a very strong desire for social recognition in the general community. Some Jews may have feared—justly—that they would experience prejudice in the army and naval establishments. One wonders why the Senate on December 10, 1814, refused to confirm Captain Masias's promotion to the grade of major. The prejudice against Jews in the navy was to persist well into the twentieth century. Nevertheless, there were always venturesome Jewish boys, all teenagers, eager to join the navy. Most of them who took the oath never advanced beyond the rank of midshipman even after many years of sea and shore duty. A heroic midshipman, Joseph Israel, was blown to bits in Tripoli's harbor on September 4, 1804, when the attempt was made to burn the enemy fleet. Again, as in the case of Corporal Levy of West Point, there is no evidence that Israel was a Jew or of Jewish ancestry. Of Benjamin Nones's numerous sons, Joseph B. Nones (1797-1887) sailed on the flag-of-truce *John Adams* when it carried America's peace commissioners on their way to negotiate an end to the War of 1812 (1814). The following year Joseph served under Decatur in the war with the Barbary powers; he was twice wounded in the service of his country and fought two duels. Finally, in 1821, he resigned from the service still a midshipman. What is known of him suggests that he went out of his way to maintain low visibility as a Jew. Maybe that was his only recourse if he hoped to survive.³⁵

A few Jews entered the navy and remained. They were pursers, surgeons, and officers who had set out—come hell or high water—to make careers for themselves. The lives of these few make interesting reading. One of these men who went down to the sea in ships was the South Carolinian Levy Myers Harby (1793-1870), a younger brother of Isaac, the journalist and religious reformer. Levy Harby's tombstone in the Galveston Jewish cemetery carries this inscription:

And with my last breath
On the threshold of death
I proclaim my faith in Israel's God.

Tradition would have it that he died with the Shema ("Hear O Israel") on his lips. There is no question that he was a professing Jew though probably not a devout one, for there is no record that he was a member of the local congregation. Young Harby served as a privateer during the War of 1812 and by 1815 had entered the navy as a midshipman. His was an adventurous life; he was captured by the British, fought under Andrew Jackson against the Florida Indians, and sailed with a squadron sent in 1823 to suppress piracy in the West Indies. When he resigned in 1827 after twelve years in the navy, he had still not been advanced in rank. But

that was not the end of the line for him. Years later he was an officer in the revenue cutter service, which had never been an integral part of the navy. As commander of a cutter, he put down a mutiny. He fought in the Texas War of Independence, and when his adopted state joined the Confederacy in 1861 he became an officer in the new navy of the South. It was then, a man of sixty-eight, that he took command of a fleet of gunboats that patrolled the mouth of the Sabine River.³⁶

Toward the end of the War of 1812 or shortly thereafter, Solomon Etting of Baltimore was chairman of a local committee to build a steam warship. He was in touch with Robert Fulton; costs and details were discussed but not much was done. The city would have had to find \$225,000 to build the vessel; that was too much for a town of about 50,000 souls, many of them slaves. Solomon's nephew, Henry Etting (1799-1876), hewed out a career for himself in the United States Navy. His appointment as a midshipman came in 1818 but it was not long before he became a purser. There are Jews who do have a penchant for paper work. He finally retired in the early 1860's with the rank of commander. Called back into service during the Civil War, he finally retired for the second time in 1871 with the relative rank of commodore. In a way here was a Jewish officer who had "made it." It was not easy: in 1832, in August and September, Etting had been court-martialed in Boston for using improper language toward a fellow officer and for assaulting him; in a quarrel between the two, Etting's opponent had threatened to cut off his head, beaten him with a rattan, knocked him down, and called him a "damned Jewish son-of-a-bitch." Etting defended himself and wounded his assailant with a dirk. The court found Etting guilty and sentenced him to be reprimanded publicly by the Secretary of the Navy. In his plea before the court, Purser Etting found it necessary to defend himself as a Jew, for his opponent had drawn attention to the fact that Etting was a follower of the Jewish faith.

The becoming allusion of this gentleman to the religion which I profess, made with a view to operate on the minds of the members of this Court will, I feel assured, fail in its object, for I doubt not that with you gentlemen, as with every good Christian, it is esteemed as the sacred right of all men to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own conscience; nor in the exercise of my religious duties or by an adherence to the faith of my fathers have I ever before been assailed.

Etting persisted; he remained in the service and, it is obvious, rose high in the ranks. In view of his defense of himself as a Jew, it is interesting to note that his funeral service, both at home and at the cemetery, was conducted by a naval chaplain, a Christian.³⁷

In a communication to Willis G. Clark, editor of the *Philadelphia Gazette* (1840), Isaac Leeser wrote: "As citizens with equal rights, not as tolerated aliens, we demand of our fellow citizens to abate the causeless prejudice which so many entertain for us." A man who would at that time have subscribed to this sentiment with a heartfelt and pious "Amen" was a native Philadelphian, then a commander in the United States Navy, holding the highest rank yet held in the navy by a Jewish seagoing officer. He was a man who had experienced more than his share of prejudice. Though despised and rejected by some of his fellow officers, he never failed to open his mouth and was certainly no sheep dumb before his shearers. By 1840 he had already been court-martialed five times and had appeared before a Court of Inquiry. Before he died in 1862 he was to be court-martialed and cashiered again, yet he would end his life as "Commodore" Uriah P. Levy, late commanding officer of the Mediterranean Squadron of the United States Navy.³⁸

Levy, the son of a Philadelphia merchant, ran away from home in 1802 when he was ten and took a job as a cabin boy on a vessel engaged in the coastal trade. Two years later he returned to his parents, determined more than ever to be a sailor. Wisely they realized that he was not to be turned from his decision and apprenticed him at the age of fourteen to a well-known Philadelphia merchant and shipowner. His indentures required that he serve four years and by the time the period was up he had become an experienced practical seaman, having worked already as a mate on one of his employer's ships. While the Jeffersonian embargo on trade with foreign countries was in force, Levy's employer sent the lad for nine months to an excellent naval school where he learned the elements of navigation, and before he was even twenty years of age he had run the gamut in the merchant marine from cabin boy to captain. In 1811—at the age of nineteen—he became captain and one-third owner of the schooner *George Washington*. Through successful mercantile ventures and by saving his wages, he had accumulated enough money to enter upon this partnership. While on one of his trips, at Tortola in the Virgin Islands, his crew mutinied and ran away with his schooner, carrying off a cargo of fine Teneriffe wine and a chest full of Spanish dollars. This was only the beginning of his troubles in the fateful year 1812; he was seized by a British press-gang and served for about a month before his identity as a native American was established and he was released by Vice-Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane of the British Navy. The captain of the British sloop of war on which he had served was so impressed by the ability and intelligence of this young American that he offered him the rank of midshipman if he would enter the Crown's service. Young Levy had no intention of serving anywhere save under his own flag, but at that moment he was doggedly set on finding and punishing the crew who had scuttled his

schooner and fled with his cargo. The young captain was successful in his search for the men and brought them to justice in an American court. One of them was executed; another was saved from the noose only by the intervention of President Madison.

All this had occurred during the year the war began. About six months later Levy volunteered for service with the navy and in 1813 was given a post as assistant sailing master on the brig *Argus*. To this crew was given the perilous task of carrying William H. Crawford through the British blockade to his post as minister in France, and after it had accomplished this mission it began its devastating raids on enemy shipping in the English and Irish Channels. Before the *Argus* was shattered by the accurate fire of the British *Pelican*, it had destroyed twenty-one enemy ships, inflicted damage amounting to about \$5,000,000, and raised the insurance rate for English ships in the Channel from two and a half to twenty-five percent. Levy, who had been appointed an Acting Lieutenant by Captain William Henry Allen and had participated in the historic raid, was in charge of a prize vessel the day the American brig was captured, but he, too, fell into enemy hands and languished in Dartmoor prison for sixteen months before returning home. His experiences apparently only whetted his desire to carve out a career for himself in the United States Navy; in February, 1816, he received an appointment as sailing master on the U.S. ship *Franklin*.

It was during this tour of duty, lasting for about two years, that the prejudice manifested itself which would plague him almost to the very end of his naval service. The trouble started at the Patriot's Ball in Philadelphia in 1816 when a Mr. (Lieutenant?) Potter, resenting the fact that Levy—only a warrant officer—was dancing with a girl in whom Potter was interested, jostled him several times, and when the latter remonstrated, Potter called him “a damned Jew.” Levy challenged the officer and the two met in a field on the outskirts of the city. Refusing to answer Potter's fire, Levy directed his shots into the air several times and was quite willing to accept the suggestion of the seconds that the affair be considered closed. This was unacceptable to Potter, who was determined to kill the challenger, and when the seconds requested Levy to return the fire, he did so, mortally wounding his opponent. The court acquitted Levy, but the incident exacerbated the prejudice of a number of the commissioned officers, not only because he had killed one of their corps, but also because he had let it be known that he aspired to officer's rank. Before the year was out he quarreled with an officer on board ship; both were court-martialed and sentenced to be reprimanded.

In 1817, Sailing Master Levy received a commission as Lieutenant in the United States Navy. This only added fuel to the flame of resentment that was already burning, and when he reported for duty on the *United*

States, Captain Crane, the commander, refused to receive him and accepted him finally only at the stern request of Commodore Stewart. No fool, Levy at once sensed the tension and turned to the sympathetic Lieutenant, later Commodore, Thomas A. C. Jones, who gave him this advice: "Do your duty as an officer and a gentleman; be civil to all, however reserved you may be to any, and the first man to observe a different course towards you, call him to a strict and prompt account." Apparently the new Lieutenant took this word of caution seriously. A quarrel on board ship in 1818 led to a second court-martial in which his fellow officers found him guilty, but Commodore Stewart refused to promulgate the findings of the court. The following year he was again court-martialed for denouncing an officer as a "coward," "scoundrel," and "poltroon," because he had refused to meet the Jew on the field of honor. This time he was to be cashiered, dismissed in disgrace, and he actually remained suspended from duty for two years before President Monroe, refusing to accept the decision of the court, restored him to active duty in January, 1821. During the period of suspension, 1819-1820, the Lieutenant spent some time in Paris engaged in business, laying the foundation for a very substantial fortune, which made it possible for him later not only to publish his writings and to carry on his agitation against flogging in the navy, but also to employ eminent counsel to defend himself against the hostile clique determined to drive him out of the service. During the two years that he was absent from the navy Levy worked feverishly to counter the influence of those opposed to him; he was encouraged by the powerful Myers clan in Norfolk, by his cousin Major Noah, and by the sympathetic Mr. Homans, an important official in the Navy Department at Washington.

Less than nine months after his restoration to duty by Monroe, Levy was again court-martialed for denouncing a fellow officer who had refused to give him satisfaction. He varied the formula this time by calling his opponent a "damned rascal" and "no gentleman." Though Levy was sentenced to be reprimanded, Commodore Bainbridge, obviously sympathetic to him, made the reprimand almost a ceremony of commendation and returned the unrepentant officer to his post on the *Spark*. It was at this trial that Levy made a poignant and moving remark: "to be a Jew as the world now stands is an act of faith that no Christian martyrdom can exceed." Was Levy himself culpable? Might it not be assumed that a man who had been court-martialed four times in five years had no place in the navy? There is no question that he was proud and sensitive. Possibly he was unduly conscious of his want of formal education—for he had been serving before the mast ever since age ten. It is true he was no boor. He spoke French, some Spanish, wrote and published books and numerous articles in the press, and moved in the best Christian and Jewish social cir-

cles in Philadelphia, New York, and Virginia. But he was very much a self-made man. His enemies said that he was quarrelsome and turbulent; these men, fellow officers, were determined to compel him to resign. There were other reasons why they opposed him: he was a Jew; he was tough; he was an interloper who had come up from the forecabin; he was a Democrat in an age when his fellow officers were Whigs and whatnots; he had made a fortune in business between voyages; and he was belligerently opposed to flogging in a day when that form of punishment was deemed essential to discipline.

The course of his long career saw him spared few epithets and accusations. Those who hated him called him a coward, a liar, a forger, and, by implication, a thief. His friends in the service, and they were more numerous than his detractors, denied the charges, and never throughout his entire career was he found guilty of any act of immorality, dishonor, or moral turpitude. His offenses were of a technical nature or due to immoderate speech. Some of his friends would have admitted that he was vain—and he was—or that he was unduly sensitive, but they would have insisted also that he was humane, courageous, a man of strong character. In 1822, he risked his life to save a family during a devastating gale that visited the Carolina coast. Even his enemies never impugned his patriotism. U. P. Levy was not a man to be canonized, but his grit elicits admiration. Because he was proud and independent and refused to compromise he made enemies. As Commodore Jones said in later years: “A brave and independent man like Captain Levy who will neither feign, fawn, or flatter [was bound to] encounter trials and tribulations in the service.” He was resented because, as one who had risen from the ranks, he took away a promotion which might have gone to a midshipman. But worst of all he was a Jew, an alien. Not that Levy felt any sense of inferiority on that score. On his mother’s side he was a Nunez, a descendant of the Dr. Nunez who had come to Georgia in 1733, a few months after Oglethorpe himself; he was a fifth generation American, grandson of Jonas Phillips and a cousin of Major M. M. Noah. The ancestors of Lieutenant Levy probably landed in the colonies long before the parents of some of the very men who affected to despise him.

That the highest authorities in Washington realized that the accusations made against him were petty, that he was exposed constantly to provocation, and that he was a man of energy and ability is documented by the fact that in 1822 he was placed in command of gunboat 158, *The Revenge*, and was assigned to the job with others in his squadron of routing out piracy and slave-running in the Gulf of Mexico. This was one of his more eventful voyages. In December, 1822, while cruising on the Spanish Main, he was attacked by a Spanish warship, the *Voluntario*, but remained cool during the crisis and prevented what otherwise might have

been a serious international incident. At the turn of the year 1823, he was poking through the islands and keys of the Gulf and the West Indies looking for the Lafitte brothers, the notorious smugglers, outlaws, and pirates. During this trip, in February, an unfortunate or incompetent pilot ran *The Revenge* onto a reef near Belize, British Honduras, and wrecked it. A Court of Inquiry held in June of that year exonerated Levy; no action was taken against him.

By June, 1823, he had already been court-martialed four times and in addition was facing a Court of Inquiry. It was this hounding of a man who happened to be a Jew that prompted a writer over a century later, in *The American Mercury* (1943), to refer to Levy as "The American Dreyfus." But Levy's was no Dreyfus Affair, though the two cases did have in common a bitter anti-Jewish prejudice. Almost every year seems to have brought a new problem to plague this officer who had long begun to believe "that man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7). In December, 1824, while going out to rejoin the *Cyane* in the Mediterranean, he took passage on the *North Carolina* and ran into a situation very reminiscent of the one that had confronted him on the *United States* in 1818. The officers in the wardroom did not want to mess with him. Led by two marine officers, Carter and Randolph, they expressed their vigorous objection to the "damned Jew," but were finally induced by Lieutenant, later Commodore, Isaac Mayo, to accept the transient. In 1825, he was serving on the *Cyane* at Rio when the news was brought that a Brazilian press-gang was making off with an American seaman and that an American naval officer, attempting to save the sailor, was under attack. Levy, among others, rushed to the scene of the scuffle and helped drive off the assailants, but was injured slightly in the attempt. Shortly after this fracas, the Brazilian Emperor, Dom Pedro I, visited the American squadron, complimented Levy on his zeal and bravery in rescuing a brother officer and a fellow seaman, a common man, and offered him command of a new sixty-gun frigate now being built for the Emperor in the United States. Don Pedro's was an authentic offer and, as Levy pointed out, tempting to a junior Lieutenant who, surrounded by enemies, was being pursued in the service of his own country by narrow-minded prejudice. In later years, as he fought to save himself from being stricken off the rolls, he asked in bitterness of soul how many of his enemies would have rejected the Emperor's invitation. The answer he gave the Brazilians in 1827 was that "he loved his own [American] service so well he had rather serve as a cabin boy in his own service than as a captain in any other service in the world"—brave words which he must have thought of with a rueful grimace as he faced his fifth court-martial that year in November. Two of his fellow officers had insulted him and he had challenged them to a duel. In the court-martial which followed, both of his opponents

were chided for their provocative behavior; one of them was suspended for a year and Levy himself was again reprimanded.

In the 1830's, already a man of wealth, he had ample opportunity to look after his business affairs during the long periods when he was without an assignment or a command. Because he so fervently admired Jefferson, he ordered a colossal bronze statue of the great statesman to be made by Pierre Jean David, of Angers, and then gave it to the United States (1834). Levy's admiration for Jefferson lay in the Lieutenant's profound respect for the Declaration of Independence. As one who had suffered bigotry and prejudice, he thought the Declaration of Independence particularly precious. Throughout the service he was known as an unflinching Democrat and in later years was said to have been one of the only officers of his grade who proudly boasted of his Democratic political affiliations. It was all the more regrettable, wrote Secretary of the Navy George Bancroft, a Democrat, that no ship could be found for this "gallant officer" without marring the "harmonious cooperation which is essential to the highest effectiveness." Though the liberal Bancroft vigorously denied that religion was a factor in refusing Levy a ship, he did not believe that a rejected Jew would make an acceptable ship's captain. While the House was debating what to do with Levy's gift of the statue by David, he was on the high seas bound for Paris. There, like other good Americans, on the Fourth of July he joined General Lafayette and other distinguished guests to celebrate the anniversary of American independence, and when a toast to President Andrew Jackson was offered, Levy rose and proposed nine cheers. To his intense chagrin, the proposal was greeted with groans and hisses by the assembled Americans, although they gladly drank to "The King of the French." Levy, scandalized by this insult to his country and its chief magistrate, promptly invited one of the offenders to meet him the next morning on the Champs Elysées. The anti-Jacksonian American, a glove merchant, refused to pick up the gauntlet thrown down by the naval officer, and a challenge to another of the demonstrators elicited a prompt apology in writing. Two years later Levy bought the house and grounds of Monticello, Jefferson's old home; in his will, written in 1858, he offered it to the United States or to the State of Virginia on condition that it be used as an agricultural training farm for the orphaned children of warrant officers. Evidently he never forgot that he had come up from the crews' quarters.

In 1837 Levy was commissioned a commander in the United States Navy. By this time he was something of an international celebrity in Jewish life. When in 1831 Francis Henry Goldsmid wrote *The Arguments Advanced Against the Enfranchisement of the Jews [of England]*, *Considered in a Series of Letters*, he was careful to point out to the stubborn English, who still imposed a number of civil disabilities on the Jews of the realm, that

Levy, in the free United States, had succeeded in becoming an officer and commander of a naval vessel. How ironic it is to note, that two decades later Levy, fighting to remain in the service, held up the example of English emancipatory efforts as a rebuke to the Judeophobes who he believed were responsible for his removal from the naval rolls. The solid citizens of New York certainly did not share the prejudices of the navy elite. Fond of the wealthy seaman, whom they now recognized as one of their most prominent citizens, they accorded him the freedom of the city in February, 1834, "as a testimonial to his character, patriotism, and public spirit."³⁹

Four years later Levy was given his first important job when he was assigned to the command of the U.S. corvette *Vandalia*. He was soon to learn that with larger responsibilities came larger troubles. The ship was nothing to brag about; it was vermin-ridden; the hull was in disrepair, and the men and officers, many of them dissipated and insubordinate, were apparently the bad boys of the Gulf squadron. He forced one of his officers to take the pledge; another fell overboard drunk and was lost; a third went crazy from drink. Yet Levy kept the boat spic and span, and for a time it was the flagship of the squadron. A problem on any ship in any navy was discipline. Grog was a standard issue of the ration; drunkenness was common; violence was frequent, and the men were often kept under control only by the dread swish of the cat-o'-nine-tails: on a single day at this time the men on the U.S. ship *Delaware* received 2,500 lashes. Levy, very much concerned about the welfare of his men, about their morals and their health, personally supervised the care of sailors who were sick; on occasion, he would even send them delicacies from his own table. He was strongly opposed to the lash as a corrective measure, and while he did not dispense with it altogether, he used it most sparingly. He wrote and agitated in the press against this abuse and in his own crew substituted forms of punishment which he believed psychologically more effective. He perfected his own method of handling drunkards: when they were intoxicated, he tied them into their hammocks and then put them to work after they sobered up. He fortified their repentance by putting them on a ration of watered grog which they detested. A habitual drunkard would be punished by being compelled to wear a black bottle around his neck on which was painted: "Punished for drunkenness." Men who were constantly fighting he compelled to drink a pot of salt water. A circular issued by an earlier Secretary of the Navy to the effect that badges of disgrace should be substituted for the lash met with his full approval, and when one of his cabin boys mimicked a midshipman, the Commander did not order the usual twelve lashes, but tied the lad to a gun, had his pants pulled down, and daubed his buttocks with a spot of pitch and a few parrot feathers to betoken his mocking tendencies.

This last, as the commander was to find out to his sorrow, proved a grievous error on his part. The “law” did not specifically prescribe such a punishment. It would have been perfectly proper to lacerate the boy’s back with twelve strokes of the “cats”—but the bizarre new punishment devised was deemed “scandalous and cruel conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman.” Aside from its other grievances, a certain clique among the officers resented Levy’s agitation against flogging and his exotic substitutes. He was trampling on the navy’s time-honored rules and regulations, substituting his own arbitrary will for the established provisions of the law. Yet he persisted in his reforms and believed—mistakenly—that he more than any other individual was responsible for the law which finally forbade flogging in the navy. His will specified that a full length statue of iron or bronze be erected over his grave and that it be inscribed: “Father of the law for the abolition of the barbarous practice of corporal punishment in the Navy of the United States.”

Levy was constantly under observation by men who were opposed to him or whose enmity he had incurred. They carefully treasured up every petty violation of the law and waited for the day of judgment. Always mindful that he was a Jew, they watched him closely to see what provision he would make for the religious care of his men, all of whom were at least nominal Christians. Since there was no chaplain on board the *Vandalia*, Levy himself undertook to provide for the religious edification of his men. All hands were required to be present at religious services every Sunday when he read a chapter both from the Old and New Testaments. Never, he asserted in later years, did he ever wound the Christian religious sensibilities of his officers and men—freedom of conscience was a right that he claimed and exercised for himself, and he insisted that this same freedom be accorded to others. “Remembering, always,” he said:

that the great mass of my fellow citizens were Christians, profoundly grateful to the Christian founders of our Republic for their justice and liberality to my long persecuted race; I have earnestly endeavored in all places and circumstances to act up to the wise and tolerant spirit of our political institutions. I have, therefore, been careful to treat every Christian, and especially every Christian under my command, with exemplary justice and ungrudging liberality.

Among those who watched every move that Levy made in 1839 on the *Vandalia* was a lieutenant whom he had been compelled to discipline. Three years later this officer preferred charges against him and raked up, among other incidents, the affair of the befeathered and bedaubed cabin boy. All this seems incredibly petty and silly today. It was no laughing matter in 1842, for the court-martial that tried the commander cashiered him from the service, and although President Tyler, the ultimate reviewing authority, returned the case to the court, asking for reconsideration

because of the excessive severity of the sentence, the officers refused to reverse their judgment. They were determined once and for all to get rid of Levy, but this time, too, they failed when the President modified the sentence to suspension for a period of twelve months. Two years later Levy was made captain, reaching the highest grade possible in the United States Navy of the antebellum period.⁴⁰

But in 1839, still in command of his corvette, the apprehensive Levy probably had no inkling of the determined effort that would be made in a sixth and final court-martial to get rid of him. He was busy doing his job from day to day. On one occasion off the coast of Vera Cruz, it was his misfortune to scrape a French sloop-of-war and to inflict minor damage on one of its projecting spars. The French commanding officer poured out his abuse on the offending American. After Levy made his apologies for the damage done by his ship, he later returned and, in the presence of two of his midshipmen who spoke French, grimly demanded—and got—an apology from the French officer. If it had not been forthcoming, he would have challenged the offender to mortal combat. Years later the commander's widow explained why her husband had made his demand of the vituperative Frenchman. Receiving Levy's apology for the damage done his ship, that officer had sarcastically remarked: "What else would you expect of a vessel commanded by a Jew?" In 1847, Capt. Levy volunteered to take a vessel with grain to the starving Irish and informed the authorities that he would contribute his pay to the relief fund. The offer was rejected. It was during these years, as war was being waged with Mexico, that he pleaded in vain for an assignment. The next decade brought joy and despair: there was joy in 1853 when he married his niece Virginia Lopez, a native of Jamaica—at the time of the marriage, the captain was sixty, his bride of eighteen would survive him by sixty-three years. The despair came in 1855 when, together with many others, he was unceremoniously dropped by a Board of Fifteen. Levy was convinced that religious prejudice was the prime reason for his being stricken from the rolls, and his counsel stressed this charge in arguments before the Court of Inquiry in 1858. Whether the Board of Fifteen dropped him because he was a Jew is moot, though it is true that some of its members disliked him. Protesting his dismissal, Levy proceeded to hire two of the most eminent lawyers in the United States—he could afford the best—and won reinstatement. Was it helpful that he was a Democrat during a Democratic administration? That very year of 1858, after being given a ship of his own, he joined the Mediterranean squadron; in 1860 he served as the flag officer of the fleet, if only for a few months before his retirement. Horatio Alger, Jr., a Unitarian, moved in the best Jewish social circles in New York City as did Levy. It is not improbable that they knew each other. The Captain was certainly a candidate for the Luck and Pluck

series for he had come up from genteel poverty to very substantial riches. His was a distinguished career. Luck? He made his own luck.

During World War II, some eighty years after his death, a destroyer escort, the U.S.S. *Levy*, was launched. Foreknowledge of what was yet to come would surely have pleased him no end. At the time of the *Levy's* naming, there were over 5,000,000 Jews in the United States; the ship was a tribute not only to him but to the numerous, influential American Jewry of the 1940's. By that time, too, there was a relatively large number of Jewish generals and admirals in the armed forces; it was a far cry from the America of 1860. Although, as far as we know, no synagogue-goer, Levy identified himself with his religious group in a dignified, self-respecting manner; he belonged to Shearith Israel of New York. His loyalty to the faith in which he had been bred did not prevent him from adorning his walls with an oil portrait of the infant Jesus and the Virgin Mother. In later years, on his last Mediterranean cruise, he brought home a wagonload of Palestinian soil for the pious Jews of New York; contingent on circumstances, his executors were instructed to set up an agricultural training school for Jewish and Christian orphans. In this instance, it would appear, he was influenced by the proposed "Institute" of M. E. Levy, no relative of his. Uriah Levy also left a modest bequest for the New York Jewish hospital. On the whole, he was not particularly generous to the Jewish community.

Levy was keenly conscious of the significance of the anti-Jewish prejudice which he encountered. Though certain that it was not characteristic of the American spirit, he was equally convinced that its existence should have been faced frankly by the Secretary of the Navy, denounced and treated with the contempt it deserved. Had Judeophobia been exposed as the vice of a few, religious intolerance might have been dealt a vital blow. The benefit of such action, he pointed out, would not have been made manifest merely in the protection of one individual American, the Jew Levy; it would have served to add stature to the government and to conserve the rights of all citizens. The problem, he said, was not whether a Jew should be tolerated in the navy; it was his realization that the honor of America as a land of promise, of religious liberty and tolerance, was at stake. If the Jew fell victim to religious intolerance and bigotry, he said, no religious group, Catholic or Protestant, would ever be safe. Levy was conscious that he was fighting an historic struggle in which the issue was larger than himself. That in the hour of decision the President of the United States, Congress, and a majority of the officers in the United States Navy sustained Levy, proves that antebellum America was not akin to the anti-Dreyfus France of 1894. The important fact to bear in mind is that the anti-Jewish snobs in the service were not successful in their intrigues. Levy was consistently, however slowly, advanced despite all

opposition; he ended his stormy career in a blaze of glory as a "Commodore" of the United States Navy.⁴¹

POLITICAL GAINS: A REVIEW

SURVEYING THE GAINS

In 1860, as flag officer of the Mediterranean squadron, Captain Levy, the Jew, embodied in himself fulfillment of the promises inherent in the Declaration of Independence. But 1860 was not 1776. Prior to 1776, despite the 1740 English statute naturalizing foreigners in the colonies, the Jews had still remained second-class citizens. Naturalization conferred no political equality unless one was ready to take an oath "on the true faith of a Christian." Under British rule, the Jews in the thirteen provinces had made no political demands; they were sure that their situation was better than that of any other Jewry in the world—and, in any case, complaints would probably have been of little avail to them. But, as events in the 1770's demonstrated, once the Revolution started it became clear that the Jews had not really accepted their disabilities with equanimity. The Jews were certainly conscious that the new republic was denying them rights accorded others, and some of them were indignant. By 1777 they were fully aware that twelve of the thirteen states were denying them the right to hold high office.⁴²

Moses Michael Hays told the Rhode Islanders bluntly that the Continental Congress and the states were ignoring Jews politically. This was in July, 1776, after the Declaration of Independence had been adopted. When, that same month, Jonas Phillips sent a copy of the printed Declaration to a relative in Holland, he made no comment about the future of the Jews in the newly independent country, but eleven years later this Revolutionary War militiaman communicated to the Constitutional Convention his indignation that Jews had bravely fought and bled for a liberty which was not granted them. Writing to George Washington in 1790, Charleston Jews emphasized their gratitude that the new privileges and immunities which by then they were enjoying had raised them from a state of political degradation. An obvious question is this: why had Jews in the last quarter of the century not united nationally, as an organized body, to fight for rights in all the states? They took no such action because in all likelihood they realized that Jews, pronounced individualists, could not work together as a group to secure political emancipation. A firm national organization of all the Jews in this land was never envisaged. Such unity in American Jewry was not even achieved as late as the turn of the twentieth century. Individual Jews, however, did fight for emancipation in the states of their residence—in Pennsylvania in 1783, in

Maryland in 1797. These men fought because they resented discrimination; they fought because they had been influenced strongly by the libertarian teachings of the eighteenth century. When in 1803 Isaiah Isaacs, of Richmond, prepared to manumit some of his slaves, he wrote that he was “of opinion that all men are by nature equally free,” and the freedom that he had secured in the Virginia of 1786 he was willing to grant to others.⁴³

What had American Jews gained by 1840? Why had they been emancipated? Who helped them? What had they gained in the early national period—freedom of conscience and the right to worship as Jews? No. These rights they had always enjoyed in the English colonies; indeed, these privileges were accorded them in most European lands, even in ruthless Frederician Prussia and in brutal Poland. Thus, are we to conclude that the Jews had “religious freedom” in the North American British colonies and in the United States? No. They could claim no genuine religious freedom because political rights were denied them as Jews. And when at last they were granted equality, what had they gained? On the federal level, the Jews had done well; the Constitution of 1787-1791 gave them formal equality—a great change: the thirteen English colonies were Protestant Christian, and Jews, consequently, had always been second-class citizens. That was no longer the case. Grateful, the Jews thanked George Washington in 1790; he had become the symbol of the new American egalitarianism though it may well be questioned whether the framers of the Constitution had deliberately set out to grant political equality to all whites regardless of their wealth and social status. But the Constitution was important; even Catholics were coming into their own. There was a Catholic general in the Revolution, a Catholic naval captain; two members of the Church signed the Constitution; priests were now permitted to celebrate the mass in public. For the first time in Diaspora history—at least since Emperor Caracalla’s edict of 212 C.E.—Jews were deemed part of the citizenry and accorded political equality. They were no longer to be a separate enclave, a corporate out-group with a specific charter or implied rights of its own. For the Jews the new Constitution was socially revolutionary giving them not only political and economic rights and opportunities, but also a new inner affective freedom.⁴⁴

And the gains on the sub-federal, state level? On that level there was resistance to the granting of rights to the Chosen People; strong efforts were made to maintain the pre-Revolutionary status quo. America was a Protestant country, certainly a Christian one! Whether churched or not, most Americans believed in a trinitarian God; they wanted Christian chaplains and a national Thanksgiving celebration. They were determined to enforce Sunday laws, to accord tax exemption to churches, to further a nondenominational Christianity in public and in private schools. They believed in the Old and in the New Testament, in using tax-sup-

ported school buildings for Christian religious purposes. They punished people for anti-Christian blasphemy. Actually, the law recognized Christianity as the religion of the land. What political gains, then, had the Jews made on the state level by 1840? One must constantly bear in mind that not until 1937 were states forbidden by judicial construction to tamper with First Amendment rights. When Jefferson became president in 1801, only six of the original thirteen states had emancipated their Jews; by 1840, four of the original thirteen—Rhode Island, New Jersey, North Carolina, and New Hampshire—still refused to abolish statutes withholding from Jews the right to hold important state office. It was not until 1790, fourteen years after the Declaration of Independence, that Jews were accepted as full citizens in Pennsylvania, Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia—all of them sheltering Jewish communities. The original constitutions in these commonwealths had to be rewritten or modified by statute. And when Jews were completely enfranchised, what had they gained? From that time on, they began to receive local, county, and state offices, but not always on the highest level despite the fact that there were potential Jewish nominees of competence. Jews were not elected to Congress till the 1840's, and those elected were invariably men without any interest in the religion of their ancestors. By the 1850's most Jews going to Congress had some ties to Judaism. Holding office was important for the Children of Israel. Their dignity, their status, their emotional well-being were at stake. Office and its emoluments spelled an opportunity for a career; in the lower echelons, an opportunity for a livelihood. Like other citizens, Jews too were eager to feed at the public trough.⁴⁵

Jewish emancipation—never a public preoccupation as in Europe—underwent its own complexities. Why were Jews emancipated? What prompted the Christian masses and their elected leaders to accept Jews politically? Actually the lawmakers had little choice. Deists and evangelical sectarians alike realized that there could be no political peace as long as there were established churches. Separation of church and state was imperative; the different religious sects all had to be tolerated. It was not liberalism—it was fear of confessional strife—that impelled the writers of the new national constitution, for the first time on this continent, to bar any church establishment, to set up a wall, officially at least, between church and state. After a fashion, therefore, the political emancipation of the Jews as such was fortuitous, accidental. The delegates to the Constitutional Convention were hardly concerned with the political rights of a few thousand exotic infidels but those states with Jewish communities were ultimately compelled to face the challenge of their Jewish neighbors and to acknowledge them as political peers. Acceptance of Jews was hastened because, though a small minority, they were not an unimportant urban commercial congeries; some were merchants, members of the busi-

ness elite. They were a literate group at a time when thousands among the farming masses were illiterate. Prior to 1801 and the ascendancy of Jefferson, many Jews, it may be assumed, favored the ruling clique, the Federalists. Jews wanted a strong central government able to protect their commercial interests; the national constitution upheld by the Federalists tolerated no disabilities, whereas the state constitutions were often discriminatory. There is also ample evidence that, by 1800, some Jews were Jeffersonians, politically and philosophically committed to egalitarianism. They, too, were mindful that the majority of the states had not yet emancipated them. Jefferson's Virginia did not do away with religious disabilities till the promulgation of a new constitution in 1830. Even then, of the 41,618 who voted, 15,563 cast their ballots against this new organic statute.⁴⁶

Who were the allies of the Jews? Who helped them gain rights and immunities? Certainly the typical observant churchgoer was not a conscious ally. He enjoyed his prejudices, which were reinforced weekly from the pulpits of most congregations. The separation of church and state for which most of the evangelicals opted was but a counsel of desperation; they were faced with the choice of mutual toleration or of constant civil strife. The Jews gained their liberties by stealing a ride on the coattails of the Christian dissenters. Intrinsicly, many of the Protestants would never accept Jews as equals; today, two centuries later, they are still not completely reconciled. But most Protestants finally did accept the concept of the separation between church and state. The man in the street was flattered when Americans were praised abroad for their liberalism; he gloried when this country's political contributions were magnified by patriotic orators. For many, toleration became a respectable tradition because it was part of the American ethos sanctioned by the Constitution itself, the most hallowed instrument in America's holy of holies. But more than a decade before the Constitution was written, as early as 1776, the tradition of religious freedom was already so respectable, so strong, that even those states which retained the older disabilities paid lip service to it. Consistency was no virtue; hypocrisy no vice. The attitude towards Jews was determined by two disparate traditions, tolerance and antipathy. The anti-Jewish one was rooted in the gospel drama of the Jew as a villain; the post-Revolutionary tradition of tolerance—not too widespread to be sure—goes back to the Protestant England of Leonard Busher, Roger Williams, and Cromwell. Williams, a great liberal, preached both in England and America that religious practice was no concern of the state. Many years later, in 1714, the Deist John Toland had published his *Reasons for Naturalizing the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland on the Same Foot with All Other Nations, Containing Also a Defence of the Jews Against All Vulgar Prejudice in All Countries*. On the title page of his pamphlet, Toland printed a

verse from Malachi (2:10): "Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously everyone with his neighbour?"⁴⁷

The golden thread of tolerance was to continue resplendently visible in the fabric of eighteenth-century Anglo-Saxon thought. Fortified by Deism, natural law, mercantilism, and the new colonial imperialism with its emphasis on commercial and industrial revolution, a new criterion for good citizenship made its appearance—taxability. Assuredly, Christian piety still remained a mark of good citizenship, but the merchant, the importer and exporter, the substantial ratepayer, assumed an increasing importance. Speculation in terrestrial wares engrossed men more than celestial salvation. Jews were now valued; they were imaginative entrepreneurs; they paid taxes. For these reasons they were encouraged to settle in the British colonies of the Caribbean and North America. This new tolerance, rationalized and ethically plated by the Enlightenment, had made itself felt in South Carolina by 1775. The rebel province was ready that year to accept a Jew as a delegate to a rump provincial assembly. The liberal political tradition now began to accelerate rapidly. The following year witnessed the adoption of the Virginia Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence. Ten years later Jefferson's statute for religious freedom was passed; a year later the Constitution was written; in 1789 the French Revolution, already much influenced by North American events, sent its own spirit westward across the Atlantic to deepen and strengthen the social content of liberalism. In 1796, in a treaty with Tripoli, the Senate declared that "the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion," a radical statement which offers strong evidence that America was prepared to accept Jews politically.⁴⁸

In one generation, liberalism in this country had been catapulted forward. In such an atmosphere, anti-Jewish disabilities were destined to disappear. Gentile liberals in every American state now aided the Jews in their fight for political rights. One Congressman, Richard M. Johnson, in his reports on the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads insisted in 1829-1830 that the mail must go through on Sunday, that the church had no right to control the state. Two years later, David Moulton, a Gentile, and Mordecai Myers, a Jew, presented a report in the New York State Assembly opposing the support of chaplains from the public purse. If America's anti-Jewish political disabilities were abolished in the century between 1777 and 1877, thanks are due primarily to Gentile Americans.⁴⁹

EARLY PRESIDENTS AND THE JEWS

The tradition of tolerance—not evangelical in character—was to dominate the republic's leadership for almost two generations. The goals of ac-

ceptance and equality were reflected in the thinking and actions of the early presidents. Notable Americans of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were dedicated to the concepts of equality, liberty, and justice—in principle at least, though on occasion they rejected individual Jews and showed no understanding of Judaism as a faith. They were not philo-Semites. To a considerable degree, the attitudes of the political leaders toward Jews were reflected in Washington's correspondence. The constitutional recognition of the Jew as an equal before the law, he wrote, is a policy worthy of imitation among the enlightened nations of the earth. Here in America, he gladly acknowledged, Jews and Christians alike possess liberty of conscience and the immunities of citizenship; here we no longer speak of toleration; all citizens are equal. The President gloried in the mutual liberality of sentiment which, he wanted to believe, marked every political and religious denomination in the republic; this stands unparalleled in the history of nations! He and his secretaries were carried away by a passionate rhetoric, but their good will was real enough. Washington's views on religious liberty and political equality were shared by Alexander Hamilton, the President's aide-de-camp and later Secretary of the Treasury. It was Hamilton who drafted the charter of Columbia College in the 1780's and saw to it that all clergymen were on its board, including Seixas, the local rabbi. On the anniversary of Washington's birthday, the Venetian Jew, Lorenzo Da Ponte, one of Mozart's librettists and then living in New York, eulogized the country's first president:

Liberty, the best of heaven, then first dawned upon your skies,
And tyranny was crushed never to rise again.⁵⁰

THE ADAMSES AND OTHER PRESIDENTS

John Adams, addressing himself more directly to the Jews in personal letters to Noah, expressed the hope in 1818 that the United States would annul every narrow idea in religion and government and that Jews would be admitted to privileges in every country of the world. A little more than a decade later, his son, John Quincy, reiterated his father's wish that the European states would give full equality to the Jews of Europe. Jefferson, even more than John Adams, was concerned with absolute religious liberty and never lost sight of the need to emancipate politically not only an infidel like the Jew but the Moslem and the skeptic, too. This had been in his mind as early as 1776 when he set out to do away with religious tests in Virginia, at the time the most important state in the new republic. As president, Jefferson considered appointing a Jew to his cabinet, and years later, when he set out to establish a university in his native state, he made it clear that he would tolerate no compulsory readings in theology. Long before this, Hamilton had hoped that Columbia College would not com-

pel its students to study religious works to which they could not conscientiously subscribe. Religious freedom, wrote Jefferson to a Jewish correspondent in 1818, is the answer to religious dissension, and it is the glory of America that it was the first to proclaim this truth. Madison shared fully the views of his friend Jefferson. Writing to Jews in 1818 and 1820, Madison repeated what he had frequently preached, that every sect in this country was entitled to religious freedom. Here in the United States, he said, Jews have shown the world that the rights granted them have eventuated in good citizenship. Let this be an example, he intimated, to those European states who distrust and oppress their Jewish subjects. In 1840, Secretary of State John Forsyth, speaking for President Martin Van Buren, instructed the American minister at Constantinople to help the persecuted Jews of Damascus. It was an exceptionally strong statement, probably the most vigorous that any American administration ever issued on behalf of an oppressed Jewish group:

The President is of opinion that from no one can such generous endeavors proceed with so much propriety and effect as from the Representative of a friendly power whose institutions, political and civil, place upon the same footing the worshippers of God of every faith and form, acknowledging no distinction between the Mahomedan, the Jews, and the Christian.⁵¹

THE INFLUENCE OF AMERICAN LIBERAL TRADITIONS ON THE STATUS OF EUROPEAN JEWRIES

FRANCE AND ITS JEWS

Europeans were very much interested in the new American republic, its liberties and opportunities. Many of them became acquainted with it through Jefferson's Act for Establishing Religious Freedom, which was translated into Italian and French and reprinted in the monumental *Encyclopédie*. In July, 1789, shortly after the storming of the Bastille, an American in Europe wrote George Washington a brief but enthusiastic note implying that the fall of this symbol of autocracy was due to the influence of the American Revolution. European intellectual and political leaders were fully aware that the American Revolution was a cataclysmic event—that, for the first time in Christian history, men were accorded the right to hold office without regard to their religious beliefs. Certainly the American Revolution with its promises of liberty and happiness to all men attracted the attention of Europe's Jews, everywhere second-class citizens, often segregated, and almost always denied political and social recognition.

The Revolution of 1775-1776 on these shores would have a profound impact on the French. They, too, revolted against the ancien

régime and in a relatively short time emancipated their Jewish fellow citizens. Where Jews were concerned, indeed, the French moved with greater dispatch than their American exemplars. For most Americans the uprising against the English was primarily a political one, a reaching out for self-rule. The new North American republic still tolerated slavery, limited the suffrage, and more often than not blithely ignored disabilities imposed on Catholics, Jews, and nonbelievers. The adoption of the federal Constitution in 1788 was not the end but the beginning of a struggle for the political, spiritual, and emotional enfranchisement of all minorities in the United States. Nevertheless the Constitution had a profound influence on the French, for in the space of months they, too, rose up and followed the Americans in separating church and state. The Bills of Rights adopted by several states were exemplary for the French in 1789, and when the Jews demanded freedom in France, they cited America's new national constitution. Because the French took these protestations of equality seriously, they had no choice but to emancipate their Jews in 1791. Unlike the American federal government which lacked the power to give Jews all rights in the individual states, the French National Assembly freed its Jews with one stroke. French Jewry was given full political equality before its American counterpart. Unlike the Revolution in America, the one in France was social in goal and content; it set out to emancipate the individual—the Jew, too—in every sense of the word. And, in turn, giving Jews all rights in France was to speed the unshackling of American Jewry. France, one of the world's great empires, had a host of admirers in the United States after the Revolution of 1789. The French experience suggested to many an American that work remained to be done in this country; America's emancipatory task was not yet finished. In 1791, only five of the original thirteen states had given their Jews full rights.⁵²

GERMANY AND ITS JEWS

France was not the only land influenced by the American Revolution. Like all other Europeans, the Germans, too, were aware of the momentous changes which had taken place on the North American continent. They followed the progress of the Revolutionary War with keen interest; after all, thousands of fellow Germans, mercenaries, were fighting for the English crown. Yet the Revolution as such would leave the German people in their numerous principalities relatively untouched. Perhaps the Jews were more impressed because, much more than their Gentile fellow citizens, they knew themselves to be an oppressed lot. For many of them, literate and intelligent, the disabilities they experienced were intolerable. It may not have been mere happenstance that, in 1783, Moses Mendelssohn published his *Jerusalem* advocating the separation of church and state.

New York's constitution of 1777 had already moved to divorce the two; Jefferson's Ordinance of Religious Freedom had been introduced in the Virginia legislature in 1779. The promise of America was obvious to German Jewry. In the very same year that Mendelssohn wrote his eloquent plea for freedom in all matters religious, an anonymous German Jew wrote a letter to the president of the Continental Congress asking for permission to establish a Jewish colony in the American hinterland. The letter was probably never dispatched; it was certainly a ploy to emphasize the deplorable status of the Jews in the German lands, but it does evidence a knowledge of better conditions here—and this as early as 1783. Several years later, in 1807, a member of the new Berlin banking family of Bleichroeder wrote to his parents from New York telling them that the Jews in this country filled important posts in the army and in the civil service. Young Bleichroeder noted this at a time when Prussian Jews would have to wait at least sixty years to be given all political rights.⁵³

It was at the turn of the century and during the following decade that Napoleon, the testamentary legate of the American and French Revolutions, effected emancipation of the Jews in most of Western and Central Europe. If only for a brief few years, Jews in Switzerland, western Germany, and northern Italy enjoyed political freedom. By 1812, the Prussians and other Germans, trying to rebuild their shattered states after the defeats by Napoleon, were ready to admit Jews into their armies. As justification for this radical act, they cited Jewish heroism on the field of battle in the United States. That same decade, in 1818, Noah reminded his auditors that American liberties had helped free Jews abroad. In 1821, David Ottensosser (d.1858), a Bavarian scholar, published a *History of the Jews* in which he stressed the many opportunities open to them in the United States. Ottensosser leaned heavily on Hannah Adams's *History*. Though he wrote his book in German, the script he employed was the Hebrew, not the Roman one. Thus German and East European Jews who knew only the Hebrew alphabet could read and learn about the United States. The book was bound to have an influence.⁵⁴

Even in distant North Africa, Jews learned of the freedom that their people had achieved in the United States. Around the year 1800, many American sailors were seized by Barbary pirates and ruthlessly sold into slavery or held for ransom. The situation became critical for American merchantmen in the summer of 1801 when the piratical Regency of Tripoli declared war on the United States. In discussing this subject years later, Mordecai Manuel Noah said that the Americans had to fight back to save their ships, to abolish tribute, to free American captives, and, above all, to make the flag respected everywhere. These were the motivations, so Noah believed, that prompted Jefferson to send a small fleet into the Mediterranean to wage war on Tripoli. While engaged in this activity the

armed schooner *Enterprize*, commanded by Lieutenant Andrew Sterett, seized the *Paulina*, a three-masted vessel, just after she had left Valetta in Malta with a cargo of goods. Commodore Richard V. Morris and his officers had no hesitation in ordering the capture of this ship for she was headed for Tripoli, a country at war with the United States; the captain of the *Paulina* was well aware that the Libyan port had been blockaded, if only by a paper blockade, and the cargo—so the Americans were reliably informed by a British consul—was owned for the most part by a Tripolitan subject. For these reasons the *Enterprize* seized the *Paulina* on January 17, 1803. The “enemy” Tripolitan merchant who owned the larger part of the cargo of raisins, figs, cheese, silk, etc., was a Jewish merchant in his twenties by the name of David Valenzin. Young David was held as a prisoner, his clothes and personal belongings were seized, his cargo was speedily confiscated and sold at auction. It was in all likelihood a forced sale, and the goods which he valued at seven to eight thousand dollars brought a net of something over two thousand dollars. The purchaser seems to have been a friend of the American consul at Malta, and one may well believe that the consul—who was no doubt in business himself—saw to it that the cargo was sold very cheaply.

Commodore Morris, who had ordered the seizure of this ship as a prize and the arrest of Valenzin, the captain, and some others on board soon discovered that neither the Maltese nor the Gibraltarian authorities would act as an admiralty court in this case. The *Paulina* was a Hapsburg vessel; its captain, a citizen of the German Empire. By June, the Commodore, using a face-saving device, had restored the ship to its owner, and because no English court of admiralty would try the case he had, perforce, to ship Valenzin, impoverished, depressed, destitute, still a prisoner and still untried, to the United States to stand trial. Some four months after his capture, Valenzin was brought to this country, but again there was no court to try him. The Commodore had bungled this matter as he had his whole expedition, and because of his general ineptitude and his Mediterranean failure, he was relieved of his command in June. That very month, the Secretary of the Navy freed Valenzin and offered to return him to the Mediterranean on a government vessel. No court was competent to hear the case because there was no boat, no cargo, no “corpus delicti,” to be presented in evidence. The Commodore and his eager men had arbitrarily taken action without submitting their prize to the decision of a properly constituted court. They could not legally justify the procedure to which they had had recourse. Valenzin, as it turned out, was what he had always said he was, a subject of the German Emperor, though he also carried Tripolitan papers. The family was originally Venetian, and therefore Austrian, but on the death of Valenzin’s mother, his father had moved to Tripoli and the sons had gone with him to live in that country as friendly

aliens under German protection. When the boys reached their majority, they moved to Egypt, to Alexandria and Rosetta, but had kept in touch with their father commercially; this last cargo had undoubtedly been destined for Tripoli. Morris and the American consular officers should have tried Valenzin before a competent court before seizing and selling his goods. They should have determined his citizenship before imprisoning him. They had no right to rob him of all his personal possessions and to keep him destitute for a period of over four months before taking him to the distant United States. It is very questionable if they were even justified in taking him as a prisoner to this country. The American authorities here realized that it was all "irregular" and "illegal" and were willing to compound the case by freeing the young man and sending him back home—without restoration of his property, to be sure. He was now given every encouragement to go back to the Mediterranean.

Valenzin planned to go back, but sometime toward the autumn he made up his mind to stay and fight it out. It was a resolution of desperation. It is not improbable that he was given some help by Rebecca Gratz's brother-in-law, Reuben Etting, who was now United States marshal for Maryland. Etting was a man of political influence and may have intervened, for we know that he was in touch with the unfortunate young Venetian. Early in November, Valenzin appealed to the House of Representatives for redress. His petition was read in the House on the 10th, but the congressmen, if they had listened at all, proceeded to forget about the whole affair. At first, the papers which Valenzin depended upon to substantiate his claims could not even be found; as a matter of fact, there is reason to believe that the officers who were cognizant of all the details preferred to stay out of sight. If Valenzin's petition were granted, they would get no prize money! When, finally, the papers were produced, they were found to be in Arabic, in a Barbary-Italian dialect, and who was there who could even read these documents? Some believed that Valenzin's story of German citizenship was false; he was a Tripolitan and got what was coming to him. Strangely enough, the members of the Committee of Claims of the House, usually "hard-boiled," believed this young man and were personally eager to help him, even with funds. All of this sympathy, however, was insufficient to allay the fears of the frightened young man, rejected and alone in a strange country. All that he owned in the world had been invested in that cargo and now it was gone; he had no clothes, no real friends, and . . . he was cold. On January 20, 1804, despairing of a favorable decision, he committed suicide, stabbing himself to death.

Apparently his death made a difference; his petition was now given favorable consideration. A bill was introduced in Congress in March and passed less than two weeks later, indemnifying the people who had fed

him and then buried him, and ordering the residue of his estate—the \$2,000 prize money—turned over to his heirs. We have no doubt that it was finally paid out to his older brother Moses in Alexandria. But how did they ever find Moses? They are unlikely to have advertised for him. Almost a year after the suicide—in December, 1804—General William Eaton, the former consul to Tunis, was at Cairo talking to a Jewish merchant whom he had just met, a fellow by the name of Leon Reubin, when he heard the name Moses Valenzin mentioned. Further inquiry—an official deposition—elicited the whole story of David Valenzin’s life in Europe and North Africa and the existence of a brother in Egypt. Eaton at once sent the deposition and other details to his friend Congressman John C. Smith who had been on the original Committee of Claims in Washington. At first, when Eaton told Reubin of the death of the young Venetian, Reubin wept; later, when the General told him that the United States would surrender what was left of the man’s property to his heirs, the Cairo Jew turned to a Jewish friend who stood nearby, raised his eyes to Heaven, “and laying both hands gravely to his breast he exclaimed in Arabic, ‘Great God! What an astonishing country that must be where the *government* takes so much pain to render justice to a Hebrew! Even at this distance to inform his heirs of cash in deposit which might so easily have been concealed.’” Thus it was that the Jews of Europe and the Mediterranean world were convinced that almost halcyonic conditions prevailed in the United States at a time when their coreligionists were being actively persecuted in Eastern Europe and subjected to severe disabilities in most of Central Europe, Asia, and North Africa. But knowledgeable Europeans could also have retorted in 1804 that less than half of the original thirteen states had emancipated their Jews.⁵⁵

ENGLAND AND ITS JEWS

The secession of the thirteen North American provinces from British rule was in a way the beginning of the process of decolonization; the British Empire had begun to break up. The English intelligentsia was profoundly stirred by the radical political departures in the new United States, yet it moved very slowly and cautiously before making any domestic changes. The Reign of Terror and Napoleon frightened Parliament. Dissenters and Catholics, annoyed by the disabilities imposed on them, finally secured relief in 1828–1829. Members of the British elite, fully cognizant of the value of Jews as citizens, were willing to work toward parity, but reserved the right to set the pace. They had stumbled once before in 1753 when they passed their “Jew Bill,” a naturalization act. At that time the forces of reaction, hysterical in vehemence, had compelled Parliament to repeal the law only a few months after its passage. Americans in London kept telling the English that it was no mistake to emancipate their Jews; as

early as 1792 an American clergyman, preaching in the English capital, had reassured them. In 1829, the year the Roman Catholic Relief Act was passed, the Jews began to push for the right to hold office, to abolish the test oath. The Jews and their Gentile allies did not fail to cite American precedents, pointing out that the Israelites of the United States enjoyed equality in all matters political; they were not subject to discriminatory oaths. This was the argument they used, though in fact it was only partially true. In order to influence English public opinion, at least four pamphlets were published during the years 1829-1838 listing the various offices held by American Jews. Beginning with the year 1830 the fight to eliminate the anti-Jewish disabilities began in earnest. Thomas Babington Macaulay's essay in defense of Jewish rights was published in the *Edinburgh Review* for January, 1831; in 1833, speaking in Parliament on behalf of Jews, he referred briefly to America's grant of equal rights. The 1831 essay was later reprinted in French, Dutch, Rumanian, and Spanish versions in order to speed up the emancipation of Continental Jewry. A year later, in 1832, Canada opened all its offices to its Jewish citizens; the English campaign for freedom certainly helped. The rights accorded Jews in the United States undoubtedly influenced the English and the Canadians to grant immunities to their own Jews, but it was not until the early twentieth century that most disabilities were removed in Britain itself. One restriction remains in force: no Jew—and no Catholic—can ever hope to become sovereign of the United Kingdom.⁵⁶



CHAPTER FOUR

THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE AMERICAN JEW:

THE TRADITIONAL ECONOMY 1776-1840

INTRODUCTION

From our account of the political gains by Jews in the United States it is evident that after thirteen years the Children of Israel—together with many others—were accorded all rights on the federal level as soon as the Constitution went into force in 1789. By 1790, Jews had been granted political equality in the five states where established communities maintained themselves; Jewish communities existed in New York, Philadelphia, Richmond, Charleston, and Savannah. Newport? By 1800 the Jewish community there had vanished, the town itself began to decline during the Revolution. The important Jewish merchants whether Whigs or Loyalists, were dead or in exile. The long British occupation had been harmful; the wharves and docks neglected; the population in decline; the local industries, rum, molasses, and candles, were no more. There was no available capital. Now Providence overshadowed Newport; Boston was more attractive; New York was beginning to loom large. At a time when freedom and opportunity beckoned, Rhode Island remained politically conservative; the Jews were not to be emancipated there until nearly seventy years after the Declaration of Independence. Aaron Lopez, probably pre-Revolutionary Newport's most notable merchant, had been drowned in Scott's Pond in 1782. Had he lived, could he have saved the town? It is speculation, of course, but the man was so daring, so ingenious, that he certainly would have salvaged the community's fortunes to some degree. Then again, had he survived the war, he might have been drawn to try his luck elsewhere.¹

The change from British colonial rule to the condition of sovereign republic made a difference to everyone in America, particularly to Christians outside the pale of the established churches—and to Jews. Now no field of endeavor was legally closed to these erstwhile outsiders. Political offices and salaries were open to many; economic opportunities were eas-

ier to exploit; men of ability had a chance to forge ahead. Psychologically, too, Jews were freer; now they could do what they wanted to do, and this circumstance spurred them on. Mordecai Noah, who began life as a carver's apprentice and as a peddler of sundries from the workshop, rose in New York City to become Grand Sachem of Tammany Hall and a journalist sufficiently influential to annoy the tenants of the White House. To be sure, there were no opportunities without problems. It was no light matter making a livelihood in those years which knew numerous periods of panic and depression; more than one-third of the years from 1776 to 1840 experienced economic decline. The currency was not always stable; bankruptcies were frequent. Yet there were also rewards. Business took encouragement from a gradually strengthened central government which favored commerce and trade. Individual Jews were eminently successful. By grace of the directory, the affluent Jew was dubbed a "gentleman."²

TRANSPORTS AND INDENTURED SERVANTS

"Gentlemen," comfortably retired Jewish merchant-shippers or capitalists, were at the top of the Jewish socioeconomic ladder. At the bottom in pre-Revolutionary days had been indentured servants and "transports," criminals. With the coming of independence, England could no longer dump her criminals on these shores; however, impoverished indentured servants and redemptionists, Jewish men and women seeking a new life in the new America, continued to come here. Sold to pay their passage, they had to serve three to four years. There is a story of an indentured servant in Philadelphia—Rachel was her name—who wept as she scrubbed the steps for her wealthy master, Samuel Chew. A passerby who asked her the cause of her distress was told that she wept because she was compelled to work on her Sabbath. The sympathetic inquirer, Aaron Levy, redeemed her and later married her. For years the portraits of this couple graced the walls of the Pennsylvania Historical Society. The story is not documented, but redemptions of Jews by fellow Jews were not uncommon. This very Aaron Levy did redeem a fellow-Jew, Isaac Solomon (Saliman), who was obligated to serve four years to pay off his passage, £19.10. When two bond servants arrived in Philadelphia harbor on the afternoon before the Day of Atonement in 1795, the congregation scurried around to raise the necessary funds to redeem them. Redemption was not invariable: in 1801, a husband and wife pleaded in vain with Shearith Israel to ransom them from service in a Gentile home. As late as 1818, Wolf Samuel had sold himself to pay for his passage to America, his land of opportunity. Writing back home, he boasted that he was working for a Jew worth a million, that he was overseer of ninety-four Negroes on a plantation, that he had only two years to serve, that he was given good food and

clothing—in short, he was living “just like a gentleman.” So far the fantasy. The reality? He was working in York, Pennsylvania, for Gentiles who treated him so harshly that in despair he ran away. The master offered a reward for his capture and return. Such runaway “servants,” Jews, are documented in the advertisements of the country’s newspapers. By 1830, however, this system of financing one’s passage had died. A plethora of immigrants made it cheaper for employers to hire help as needed; purchasers did not have to advance the passage money to the ship’s captain.³

FARMERS

After their term of service expired, indentured servants frequently turned to farming, but there is no record that Jewish bond servants became tillers of the soil. There were always some Jewish farmers on this continent, but their numbers were insignificant. Farming was not foreign to Jews from villages and hamlets in Central and Eastern Europe where, though rarely themselves working the soil, they had done business with peasants and yeomen. Here, too, as shopkeepers in small towns they found much of their trade coming from the farmers, for the United States was largely agricultural until well into the nineteenth century. As late as 1790, city and town dwellers numbered little more than 3 percent of the population. Some Jewish merchants in the colonial years and later in the early national period owned farms and ran cattle. These were ranchers with registered brands, yet essentially they were businessmen. Mathias Bush, of Chestnut Hill near Philadelphia, owned a small farm of twenty some acres. Once a tavern perched atop a hill with a beautiful view of the surrounding country, it was located on two main highways, had a large stone house, and a stone stable big enough to hold fifty horses; in addition, there were an orchard and a well fenced-in field. He tried to sell it and suggested that it would make a fine home for a gentleman. Farther west, in the Pennsylvania hinterland of the 1830’s, Secku Meylert (Mailert) farmed, speculated in land, and bought cattle to improve the breed. A decade earlier Jacob Mordecai, the educator, had purchased a farm near Richmond, Virginia, which he tilled with the aid of his slaves. It was his retirement project.⁴

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Hays clan farmed in Westchester County, New York, but they were active also as shopkeepers and politicians. They were yeomen, often with sizable holdings augmented by purchases from the confiscated estates of Loyalists. One of the Hayses, David (d.1812), was a tradesman of substance judging by the promissory notes his heirs had to collect. Most of his trading was undoubtedly done on credit, or do these notes imply that on occasion he

was also a moneylender? David was a committed Jew who kept kosher, did his own slaughtering, and observed the holidays. One of his sons married out and lived as a Christian; a daughter also seemed inclined to defect, for the father threatened to cut her out of his will if she found a husband who was not of the "society." Indeed, after his death she did marry a Gentile; her brother, who had already married a Christian, was not disinherited. Living in the country many miles from New York's Shearith Israel, the Hayses were exposed to assimilation. Ben Hays, another member of the family, gave his neighbors land for a school. He was careful in harvesting his crops to leave something for the poor, following the injunctions of the Bible. In admiration for his sterling qualities his neighbors referred to Ben as "the best Christian in Westchester County."⁵

JEWISH FARMING COLONIES

Throughout American history Jews encouraged other Jews to become horny-handed sons of the soil. As tradesmen living in an almost completely agrarian milieu, they were apparently overwhelmed with a sense of guilt because they used their brains more than their hands—and their Christian neighbors, distrusting all traders, never failed to reinforce the feeling of guilt. The apologete Noah, addressing a congregation of Jews in 1818—and well aware that there were a few Gentiles in the audience—harangued his fellow Jews on the need to leave the "crooked paths of traffic." Waxing eloquent, he reminded his auditors that agriculture was the "cradle of virtue and the school of patriotism." The creation of Jewish agricultural colonies in this country had been envisaged by Jews since the decade of the 1810's. M. E. Levy and Mordecai Noah attempted without success to settle Jews on the land in the 1820's. Isaac Leeser followed their plans with interest. Jews turned to farming only as a last resort during the long years of depression beginning with 1837; the immigrant Jews had to make a living. In the spring of that year a group came together as the Association Zeire Hazon (Tender Sheep as Jer. 50:45 has it.) They hoped to establish a colony out "West" somewhere. The president was the well-known Jewish printer and publisher Solomon H. Jackson; the secretary, who served a local congregation as clerk, was Thomas Washington Donovan, married to a granddaughter of Haym Salomon and probably a convert.⁶

Were the Tender Sheep influenced by contemporary utopian communities? They certainly knew of these secular and religious communistic and cooperative efforts but it is difficult to determine the impact, if any, of Robert Owen, St. Simon, Fourier, and Christian religious enthusiasts upon the Jews. Some of the men who established the Association had been farmers and mechanics in Central Europe. They hoped, too, to cre-

ate a congregation and thus maintain their group and religious identity. As a colony, they would be able to offer resistance to the assimilatory environment. The Tender Sheep were to be a cooperative, not a communistic, enterprise. It was their contention, part of their rationale, that farming would save them from vocations which did nothing to enhance the status of the Jew—peddling and possibly retailing in which haggling was a way of life. The Society died aborning; the New York congregations refused help. Class and other differences seriously impeded congregational cooperation in the city. Shearith Israel was Sephardic; many of its members were native-born; B'nai Jeshurun was Ashkenazic with a strong infusion of Englishmen; Anshe Chesed was a potpourri of Germans, Poles, and Hollanders. Driven by necessity rather than talk, the German immigrants in Anshe Chesed did finally establish a colony in Ulster County called Sholem or Sholom ("Peace"). They laid out a cemetery, created a congregation, the Keepers of the Covenant (*Shomre ha-Brit*) and went to work—but Sholem was not a success. The mortgages were foreclosed by 1841 and members started drifting back to New York, where some of them, men of culture, would make their mark in the Jewish community. American Jews were not destined to become farmers; farming was not their *métier*.⁷

PEDDLERS

The Sholem colony members who remained turned to crafts and trading—peddling no doubt. Cheap as land was, Jewish newcomers, lacking capital and agricultural experience, could not and would not, as individuals, take up farming. Living among Gentiles was no life for them. If they remained on the farm, isolated, it was practically impossible to raise a Jewish family. For a man without capital, one road was nearly always open. Like the last of the settlers at the Sholem colony, they could turn to peddling; there was always a Jewish supplier ready to give an immigrant a line of credit. Thus the aspiring new businessmen started out with a pack of notions, cloth, jewelry, and even an occasional gadget to attract customers. The whole world lay open before the peddler; he could peddle in the city or he could work in the backcountry, and that meant in almost every state of the Union. The frontier? The peddler went west, but he stayed behind the frontier; he needed customers, villages, farmsteads, a core town where he could replenish his stock of goods. Full of hope, he might start as a basket peddler and then after carrying a bundle on his back move up to a packhorse, to a team and wagon, or to a bateau on the bayous of the Mississippi. Sometimes a peddler joined forces with another plodder, a congenial sort; when a peddler saved a little, he brought over a brother and they teamed up together. In the year 1814, a Pittsfield, Mas-

sachusetts man found a pair of tefillin (phylacteries) in a field. Had some pre-Columbian Jew wandered to America? No, a distraught peddler in desperation had lost them or thrown them away. Leeser scorned peddlers in 1836 as "itinerant traders." This was before the German Jews began arriving in substantial numbers in the late 1830's and during the recession were compelled, for lack of anything else to do, to turn to peddling. Were there many peddlers? There is really no way of knowing; many took out no licenses. What about the directories and the congregational marriage registers? There the humblest itinerant portrayed himself as a trader or merchant. Were any of them notably successful? Some fell but rose again; others never ceased peddling. It was often a miserable life and never a highly respected vocation; the peddler was close to the bottom of the social ladder. He was Cohen, Levy, not Mr. Cohen, Mr. Levy. The hazards he faced were many: wars, depressions, illness, robbery, murder.⁸

For many, peddling was only a start. Benjamin Franklin, then president of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, signed the peddler's license of Solomon Raphael in 1787. After a number of years, Raphael had a shop, then a tavern, then a jewelry establishment of sorts. Between 1787 and 1796, he changed addresses four times—physical mobility and occupational change are intertwined. The 1790's found him in Richmond, where he was arrested for stealing an indentured servant from her employer, Israel I. Cohen. Apparently domestic servants were at a premium. Later an auctioneer, Raphael called himself a merchant, and by the early nineteenth century he was a merchant of some means, for he owned a slave, Priscilla, whom he emancipated in the days of Jefferson's presidency. Dr. B. J. Raphael, professor in a medical college in New York, who married into an assimilated Jewish family, was a grandson. Raphael's record indicates the occupational and social mobility that typified many an American Jewish career. Raphael went up in the world, albeit slowly; his English letters tended to be gibberish and he was delinquent in congregational dues.⁹

Successful peddlers might and did become retailers, wholesalers, manufacturers, even bankers. Jacob Elsas (Elsass) is one among many paradigms. Back home in Wuerttemberg, young Elsas had gone to work at the age of eleven, slaving for a cattle dealer and helping his brother, a weaver, become a cattle dealer himself. Finally, he left for America with a group of other young men. In 1839, when he arrived in New York at the age of twenty-one, he had fifty cents in his pocket. Selling the gold ring he owned, he was able to reach Philadelphia where a trusting wholesaler outfitted him. He peddled jewelry and even saved a little to send home to his mother and eight other relatives. Moving west, he peddled in Kentucky and southern Ohio till he had enough to open a dry goods and clothing store in Portsmouth, Ohio, at the southern end of the canal link-

ing the Ohio and the Mississippi to the Great Lakes. Prospering, he married, moved on to Cincinnati, became a wholesaler, amassed a fortune, and turned to industry as a builder, a tanner, a brewer. Like other entrepreneurs, Elsas was not always successful in his undertakings, but he remained wealthy enough to send fourteen substitutes into the army during the Civil War; he himself was not subject to the draft. As a good citizen, he helped erect a monument to the men who had died in battle; he accepted an appointment as city park commissioner and became a patron of the Cincinnati music festival, the Saengerfest. Cincinnati Jewry respected him for his efforts to establish its large cemetery and esteemed him as a cobuilder of its “cathedral” synagog and a dedicated worker in its philanthropic associations.¹⁰

What did the pack peddler carry? Some yard goods, notions, cheap jewelry. The wagon peddler, however, had an extensive inventory of dry goods and clothing, and this is where the profit lay. Were these necessities? For the isolated farmer or villager they were. For the children in Harrodsburg, Kentucky, during the 1820’s, what was more important—a piece of cloth or a snuffbox that played *Yankee Doodle*? There is no question; in the hinterland the peddler was an important convenience merchant. Let there be no mistake; he purveyed goods, not ideas. His occupation was—so he hoped—a transitional one as he sought to understand America, its language, its mores. There are instances of newcomers with some means who entered peddling deliberately to learn the American way of life. Folklore would have every Jewish peddler mouthing a German accented American jargon. That may have been largely true, but he often ended his life wearing broadcloth, with a gold watch in his vest and a respectable balance in the bank. Above all, peddling was the royal road to Americanization. The German peddler Louis Stix invited a farmer’s daughter to a party and, when ready to go home, left her there. The next day he returned to the farm and papa went after him with a pitchfork. His Americanization process was speeded up!¹¹

ARTISANS

Peddlers had often begun life in Germany as artisans. The Central European states, agrarian until well into the nineteenth century, pushed Jews into the crafts; artisans were given privileges. Consequently few Jews from German-speaking territories landed here without some skills; they were not day laborers. Some émigrés of the late 1830’s, landing during the depression, tried everything in order to eke out an existence. Ambitious and competent Jewish craftsmen, determined to improve themselves, soon turned to trade. How many skilled Jewish laborers kept to their craft is unknown. But this much is certain; there is hardly a skill

which was not practiced by a Jew during the years 1776-1840. Philadelphia Jewry included craftsmen who produced combs, umbrellas, candles, saddles, watches, hats, trunks, shoes, brushes, cabinets, and embroidery. There was a furrier and a cap maker, a worker in leather, a bookbinder, a carver and a gilder. Tobacconists were found in many towns. Myer Derkheim of Richmond (d. 1818), a soapmaker, augmented his slender income as the town lamplighter and as a circumciser for East Coast Jewry. His travels to perform the sacred task took him from Maine to South Carolina. His circumcision record, now hidden away in some library, is important, for it documents the residence of Jews—loyal Jews—in the most distant towns and villages. New York had a chocolate maker and a copperplate artisan as well as a coppersmith, Asher Myers, whose brother, Myer Myers, a notable craftsman, was president of the Gold and Silversmiths' Society of New York in 1786. Some of his beautiful pieces are still in existence. Myers, with a most appealing cultural ecumenism, fashioned silver ritual pieces for synagogues and churches. Most of the goldsmiths and silversmiths did as he did and ran jewelry shops; at times Myer included groceries in the wares he offered for sale.¹²

The scholarly Baltimore polemicist, Joseph Simson, was an outstanding lapidary seal engraver. Isaiah Isaacs in neighboring Virginia, probably the first permanent settler there to profess Judaism openly, was a silversmith who had emigrated from England; he speedily turned to trade. Michael Levy, another Virginia craftsman, was a clock and watchmaker who worked in both Baltimore and Philadelphia; his son was "Commodore" Uriah P. Levy. Still another Virginia watchmaker and silversmith, known through a fascinating letter written by his wife, was Hyman Samuel, who first appeared on the American scene in Petersburg; later he would live in Richmond, Baltimore, Norfolk, and Charleston, too. Why he moved about so much is difficult to determine; he was a very skilled artisan, financially successful. His wife, a devout Jew, kept urging him to move to a large city where they could live among observant coreligionists. Out West, in Cincinnati, Joseph Jonas had no lust to roam. This English immigrant, Cincinnati's first practicing Jew, did well as a watchmaker. An articulate leader of the Jewish community, Jonas ultimately became one of the city's best known and respected citizens. One might think that immigrant Jewish craftsmen would stick to their trade. Artisans then had a relatively short working day in this country; by 1835 most skilled men did not put in more than ten hours on a shift. It was no fear of hard work that drew Jews away from artisanry. Hard labor, after all, was enjoined by Genesis 3:19: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." They were not lazy, but they were ambitious. They had made sacrifices to get here; they had dear ones at home in need of help. This is what impelled them to reach out when they saw opportunities to advance themselves.¹³

Many Jewish craftsmen, maybe most of them, were artisan-shopkeepers. They did not identify themselves with "labor," but preferred to view themselves as prospective merchants. This will explain why they took no interest in the labor movement. They were looking to the future, to affluence. Witness the career of Baltimore's Jonas Friedenwald (1801-1893), the patriarch of a family which lent lustre to the city through his descendants, notable physicians and academicians. Friedenwald, who came from the same village in Hesse Darmstadt which had given birth to Jonas Phillips, landed on a wintery Thursday night in 1831/1832. He went down the side of the ship and walked across the frozen river in order to find lodging for his family before Friday night, the onset of the Sabbath. A committed traditionalist, he began his new life in Baltimore as an itinerant umbrella mender. Later he opened a grocery and added clothing to his stock. He gathered old iron, collected and sold used nails after he straightened them, and finally became the proprietor of a hardware store. It is almost no exaggeration to assert that every Jew in those early days was an Odysseus whose fortune changed many times before he found an economic niche into which he could settle permanently. Jacob Ezekiel (1812-1899) is an example, important only because he is typical. Ezekiel's family was Dutch; he himself was a native Philadelphian who learned to dye clothes and later to make watercolors and indelible ink. He sought a trade that would provide for him adequately. His parents apprenticed him to a Christian bookbinder with the understanding that he was not to work on the Sabbath or on Jewish Holy Days. On those days he ate with relatives. By 1833, he was in Baltimore, in the bookbinding business, eating his meals with a Jewish pawnbroker. The following year found him in Richmond where he would remain for decades, turning there to dry goods, to clothing, to clerking. For thirty years he served the Sephardic congregation as clerk. For fun and companionship he had his comrades in the Richmond militia; back home in Philadelphia he had run with a fire hose company. Following the Civil War which left Richmond but a shadow of its former self, he and his family moved to Cincinnati where he served for another generation as secretary to the Board of Governors of the Hebrew Union College. His son, Moses, achieved considerable fame as one of the first American Jews to become a sculptor.¹⁴

Jacob Ezekiel never became a rich man; Friedenwald made a small but tidy fortune when he retired before the Civil War to devote himself to the Jewish community; John Moss of Philadelphia (1771-1847) was an artisan destined to become a very successful capitalist. A contemporary Jew who was not fond of Moss said that he was all wrapped up in business. The statement was probably correct; his absorption in his career may well account—in part at least—for his rise in the world. Moss began as an engraver on glass; it is hardly to be doubted that he learned his trade in

London whence he had come to America at the age of twenty-five. After working at his craft, he turned to dry goods; it took him over a decade to get that far. Before long he was to become a merchant-shipper. One of his ships, the *Moss*, was a 330-ton vessel; the carved figure on the prow was said to be a striking likeness of Mrs. Moss, the daughter of a Dutch Jew who had married a girl in the little western town of Harris's Ferry (Harrisburg). Retiring at the age of fifty-two was merely a stage in a new career for Moss. Now he became a capitalist-entrepreneur advocating and furthering the use of anthracite coal both here and abroad; his investments were made in canals, turnpikes, banks, railroads, and insurance companies. Masonry recognized him as one of its devotees; though no Irishman, he was flattered by his election to the Hibernian Society. Tradition has it that this was his reward for once having helped an immigrant from the Emerald Isle. The St. George Society, concerned with men of English provenance, elected him a steward; the town's Jacksonians sent him to Council. His concern for the community at large was reflected in his generosity to a hospital and an orphan society; the Merchant's Exchange received two marble lions, replicas of those which graced the tomb of Pope Clement XIII. During the Damascus crisis of 1840, when the Jews of the Syrian city were accused of ritual murder, he served as chairman of Philadelphia's Committee of Correspondence and helped the Jews join with other Jewish communities in a protest against the renewal of medieval bigotry.¹⁵

DIVERSE OCCUPATIONS AND SHOPKEEPERS

Commercially, the postrevolutionary years were in one respect no different than the later decades. Jews found ways into the interstices of the economy in their effort to make a living. The political liberal Isaac Pinto, an accomplished linguist, "historian and philosopher," served for a period in the mid-1780's as the official interpreter not only for the Office of Foreign Affairs but for other executive departments and for the Congress. After the turn of the century, when Charleston was an important national depot, Jews were found among the interpreters, clerks, and auditors of the Customs House; they were inspectors of imports and accountants. In the early 1820's Solomon Sacerdote ("priest," Cohen?) owned a gambling house in New Orleans. Some Jews ran livery stables; others were appointed constables and police officers. America's most famous Jewish guardian of the law was Jacob Hays, of the Westchester County New York Hays family. Hays defected from Jewry—he may not have become a formal convert—and raised a family of Christians, some of whom became notable figures in the commercial life of New York City; they include a president of a bank and of a railroad. Hays *père* was New York

City's High Constable for almost fifty years. The Common Council ordered his portrait painted and saw to it that it was hung; it was treasured in the City Hall collection. Councilmen and criminals alike respected this man. Relatively common were the inns, taverns, coffeehouses and boardinghouses run by Jews. In the 1790's Moses Homburg, of Philadelphia, sold dry goods in his tavern; one of his claims to fame—if he has any—was that he was an ancestor of one of the Delaware Duponts. Levy Andrew Levy and his family ran a boardinghouse in Baltimore. Decades earlier he had been an Indian trader working out of Lancaster and Pittsburgh; during the French and Indian War the Indians had taken him captive, but had finally released him unharmed. Baltimore's relatively small community included several boardinghouses kept by old-line settlers who catered to Gentiles; apparently it was a vocation of some dignity.¹⁶

What goods stocked the shelves of the early American shopkeepers? It is literally true that there is almost nothing that they did not handle: dry goods, groceries, drugs, notions, music, stationery, books, hardware, candles, saddles, combs, brushes, umbrellas, hats and caps, shoes, jewelry, watches, clocks, beeswax, lottery tickets, tobacco, china, glassware, liquor, and clothing. Second-hand clothing was nearly always sold in special shops, primarily in the larger towns. By 1840, Chatham Street in New York was known for its used clothing establishments. Most retail shops were small—one room sufficed—just large enough to do business. Some were owned by women. Sally Etting, of Baltimore, probably did not operate out of a shop but out of her home. She got her supplies, tea primarily, from a member of the family in Philadelphia and no doubt offered her limited wares to friends and acquaintances. Mrs. Philip Benjamin, Judah P. Benjamin's mother, ran a small dry goods store in Beaufort, South Carolina, not too far from the Georgia line. Later, so it would seem, the family sold fruit in Charleston. The Benjamins were very poor, but they did pay their synagog bill—which was substantial. Savannah's Esther Sheftall had a small shop with an even smaller stock, but she was not dependent on sales; she had means. In small towns like Easton, merchants sold for cash or country produce, which included lumber and staves. Barter was not uncommon. An egregiously unsuccessful businessman, Lorenzo da Ponte ran a small shop in Sunbury, Pennsylvania. This man, famous today as Mozart's librettist for the *Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così Fan Tutte*, hustled to make a living for his family; on occasion, he supplied grain to distillers. Once, when badly in need of goods which were at the time in short supply, he managed to replenish his shelves from the wholesalers of Reading, Pennsylvania; they confused the name da Ponte with Dupont, the munitions manufacturer, whose credit was excellent. The St. Louis pioneer businessman Joseph Philipson kept an account book which testifies to shelves well-stocked in 1807.

Townspople were offered an assortment: dry goods, notions, hardware, brandy, shoes. By 1839, Lewis Pollock had already opened his place of business in Yerba Buena, a California village to be renamed San Francisco before another decade passed. Clothing and saddlery were very much in evidence.¹⁷

By 1840, there were Jewish retailers in almost every community of size all the way from New York to California. Running a shop and supplying the day-to-day necessities of urban dwellers, village neighbors, and farmers was the principal form of livelihood for many, if not most American Jews. The city directories are eloquent in their serried lists; the Jews were a nation of shopkeepers. They struggled; their capital was limited; there was always a heavy infusion of immigrants trying to keep their heads above water. American Jewry before 1840 belonged preponderantly to the lower middle class. The Jews as a whole were in no sense affluent. Numerically, the American Jewish population was inconsequential; for decades it was never to reach, let alone exceed, 1 percent of the total population. But their importance exceeds their numbers, for the Jews dwelt in urbanized areas which were disproportionately powerful in agrarian America. The handful of Jews in the towns and cities was to exercise considerable influence. There is not much difference between the shopkeepers of colonial and early republican days. They both sold hard, soft (dry) and wet goods. Trade in the two epochs is similar for the basic agricultural economy did not change. Shopkeepers in those days had little in common with the peddlers; the former carried larger stocks and sold on credit. The shopkeeper was a sedentary merchant; the people came to him; the peddler was itinerant; he came to the people; he had a small stock and he sold for cash.

MERCHANT-SHIPPIERS

INTRODUCTION

If in colonial and postrevolutionary cities and villages the shopkeeper was at the bottom of the mercantile ladder, the merchant-shipper was at the top. This important tradesman was a retailer, wholesaler, importer, exporter, a domestic-household industrialist, even a banker of sorts. He was the dominant figure in the world of commerce and shipping in colonial times and in the first few decades of the nineteenth century. His eyes were fixed on the North American littoral, on the Caribbean, on Europe, even on the Far East. His back was to the American West. Up to the 1840's, the oceangoing enterpriser was still to play a very important role in the commerce of the tidewater country. The West was filling up, but the masses were still east of the mountains. By 1840 the important ports were

Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Richmond, Norfolk, Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, and New Orleans. There were Jewish shippers of substance in several—but not all—of these towns; seven of these centers sheltered growing Jewish communities. American exports were cotton, tobacco, lumber, naval stores, indigo, rice, pig iron, furs, and provisions (Jewish merchants shipped kosher meat to the West Indies and to Surinam). Imports included woolen and cotton textiles, sugar, coffee, molasses, rum, and assorted consumers' wares. From India and China came teas, silks, textiles, chinaware. For the shippers on the American coast, there were good times and bad times; up to 1807, there was prosperity in commerce and the carrying trade transporting provisions and raw materials. From 1807 to 1812 the Americans were faced with the problem of steering a course between the English and the French who were fighting in Europe for world empire. To avoid entanglements and harassments, the young American republic imposed embargoes in varying degrees; from 1812 to 1815, the country found itself at war with the English. Commerce here suffered, but merchants, with an ethics all their own, circumvented the laws and made an effort to supply their customers, even those in England. There were years when the lean and ill favored kine did eat up the fat kine; the occasional depression years between 1819 and 1840 were bad; but there were good years too. On the whole the years from 1815 to 1840 were at least tolerable commercially.¹⁸

By the 1830's the domestic trade was becoming increasingly important, since settlers in large numbers had begun crossing the mountains into the Mississippi basin. Large sums were sunk into canals, turnpikes, steamboats, railroads, wilderness tracts, town lots, manufacturing, banking. Investors began turning their backs to the Atlantic and facing westward. The river and lake ports, steamboat towns, were growing; some of them were destined to survive. Important were Cleveland, Cincinnati, Louisville, St. Louis, and New Orleans. The towns with a future shipped grain and provisions down the rivers to the plantations; foods and cotton were transhipped to the East Coast; cotton and tobacco in huge quantities reached European markets. Sensing opportunity in the new transallegheeny towns, Jews began moving west, establishing communities of their own. By 1840, one-third of all the towns with Jewish communities were west of the Alleghenies; nearly one-third of all America had settled in the valleys of the Mississippi and its tributaries. The Jews were slow to leave the eastern cities; they preferred the larger places where they could more easily develop communities and build religious enclaves of their own.¹⁹

JEWS AS MERCHANT-SHIPPIERS

Although there were probably as many notable Jewish merchant-shippers in the early national period as there had been in colonial days, this type of commerce declined in relative importance. By the 1830's, the sizable increase in the general population and the expansion across the mountains toward the Mississippi made domestic trade more valuable. Jewish merchants, adhering to their colonial pattern of foreign and domestic trade, continued to ship goods out of the Atlantic ports and later out of the Gulf ports. Newport was the only East Coast harbor to decline. After Lopez's death, his family continued to trade with the Islands and with the English, but primarily by way of New York City; thus they were really jobbers, not merchant-shippers. The Mark brothers, Jacob and Philip, quondam purveyors for the Hessian troops in British-occupied New York, remained in town after the war as merchant-shippers importing dry goods from Amsterdam on their own brig. Samuel N. Judah, related by marriage to New York's best Jewish families, engaged in the South American trade and then turned to banking. Hayman Levy, fur trader, army purveyor, merchant-shipper, Whig patriot, synagog president, continued his sizable mercantile activities for several years after the Revolution. Less than a decade after his death, his son Isaac sailed for Madras and Calcutta. He started out in January, 1798, and in July, still on board, celebrated the Fourth; it was not until the spring of 1799 that he returned home. Like Levy *fits*, Jews were beginning to move into the India trade. Solomon Simson (1738-1801) was trading with India in the 1780's and with China, too. This Revolutionary War militiaman, candle manufacturer, and political liberal was an imaginative, successful businessman. The China trade lured many after the *Empress of China* sailed into New York's harbor with a cargo in 1785. Philadelphia was particularly interested in a trade that promised to be lucrative. The second generation of Gratzes, as venturesome as their forebears but far more successful, tried their luck in the Far East. After the routes to China had been well established, the Baltimore Ettings became specialists in this Oriental traffic. Solomon Etting was one of the first men in town, if not the first, to subscribe heavily for shares in the Baltimore East India Company (1807). The family was active in this trade for a long generation. Ben Etting, Solomon's nephew, made seven trips to Canton as a supercargo. In one trip, in 1832, he made the return voyage in the record time of 98 days with a cargo of shawls, satins, and 2,000 boxes of firecrackers (there were forty packs in each box).²⁰

Judging by the range of his interests and his successes, Solomon was the best business brain in the Etting family. Born in York, Pennsylvania, he married into the Simon and Gratz clan and moved on to Lancaster and to Philadelphia before finally settling in Baltimore, where one of his first

ventures was a hardware store. Not long thereafter, in the 1790's, he turned to shipping, commerce, and banking. The account book of Rutter & Etting of Baltimore for the years 1796-1802 throws light on Etting's career as a merchant-shipper. In ships of their own or freighting on those of others, Rutter & Etting dispatched cargoes to tidewater America, to Germany, to England, and to their favorite market, the Caribbean. Heavy exporters of flour, they bought and sold a variety of wares and food: tobacco, cigars, cotton, dry goods, India textiles, hides, whiskey, brandy, and marble, too. All was grist for their mill. It was their good fortune that a local bank gave them a generous line of credit. This was probably the Union Bank; the Ettings were stockholders. Etting helped establish the first water company in town, and as councilman in 1827-1828, represented the city when the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad was chartered. In 1830, as chairman of a committee of the Baltimore Infirmity, a local hospital attached to the university, he negotiated with the federal government, offering to admit seamen and others. His prices seem to have been reasonable; private patients were to pay \$4 a week; those who died could be interred for \$2, at most \$3. When the city set out to expand its borders, it appointed Etting member of the committee charged with this task and later rewarded him by naming a street after him.²¹

ISAAC MOSES AND MOSES MYERS

Isaac Moses (1742-1818) was a large-scale merchant who left New York City when the British occupied it. Like many other Jews in that city, he made his headquarters in Philadelphia during the Revolution. There, as Isaac Moses & Company, he distinguished himself as one of America's best known merchant-shippers and blockade-runners; like others, too, the firm was ruined when prices collapsed after the war and debtors ignored their obligations. At the time Isaac Moses & Company found itself insolvent, 1784-1785, the firm had already returned to New York. After the dissolution of the old company, Isaac Moses set out to recoup his fortune. A new firm under the name Isaac Moses & Sons rose speedily to prominence. As enterprising merchants they reached out wherever there was a prospect of profit; they, too, followed the China and East India trade. Moses and his sons were commissionmen, brokers, retailers, wholesalers. They were ready to deal in any commodity: foods, furs, mahogany, liquors, jewelry, furniture, and cotton of course. They acted for others and often on their own account. Money was dispatched abroad; thus, in a very small way, they functioned as bankers. Isaac Moses owned bank stocks and was a member of the New York Chamber of Commerce. While serving the firm as resident agent in Europe, Joshua, a son, attended the coronation of Napoleon I.²²

There had been at least two other partners in the original Revolutionary War firm of Isaac Moses & Company—Samuel Myers and Moses Myers. Because the firm was insolvent, many of its papers are extant: successful men leave no papers, bankrupts do, hence the availability of Moses Myers's account books and correspondence files for the 1780's and for the second decade of the new century when Myers was again bankrupt—in 1819 when the economy entered a depression that lasted for years. Moses Myers's life story is limned here briefly in order to show the range and reach of an American merchant-shipper in the first decades of the 1800's. He was typical in the multiplicity and variety of his commercial interests. Actually it is difficult to compare merchants of stature for no two were exactly alike; each was a personality *sui generis*; each had his own collection of customers and his own way of doing business. Moses Myers was the son of the Canadian trader Hyam Myers who had once served as the *shohet* for New York's Shearith Israel. As a young man, Moses Myers enjoyed years of prosperity as a partner in the international firm of Isaac Moses & Company, but the firm's postwar collapse left him no choice but to start life over again. By that time the two intimates, Samuel and Moses Myers, had lost faith in Isaac Moses, whether justly or not is difficult to say. The two Myerses, continuing their partnership, finally picked Norfolk as the seat of their new establishment; they believed the town had a future, but after a couple of years Samuel Myers went off on his own and soon became a rich merchant. Petersburg and Richmond were the scenes of his success; his way up the ladder was certainly eased by his marriage to a daughter of Moses Michael Hays of Boston.

Moses Myers, too, rose rapidly after his move to Norfolk. He married a Canadian widow with money; her husband had been captured by Indians during the French and Indian War and had barely escaped being burnt at the stake by his captors. Just four years after Myers settled in Norfolk, he built a beautiful Georgian mansion, still standing, distinguished by its Adam style interior and graced by Gilbert Stuart's portrait of Myers and his wife and a Sully portrait of their son John. Like his erstwhile partners, Isaac Moses in New York and Samuel Myers in Richmond, Moses Myers's trading was characteristically diversified. His packet boats engaged in coastal shipping, plying the Bay between Baltimore and Norfolk, but he also traded extensively with the Islands and Europe. As a commission merchant, he served Stephen Girard of Pennsylvania. Myers bought and sold ships, retailed and wholesaled merchandise, sat on the board of a bank, and performed banking services for his clients, among them some of the outstanding planters of the Old Dominion. Throughout the years of war and peace, he handled prizes seized on the high seas, speculated in Washington real estate, served as an agent for the French, Dutch, and Danes, and sent his sons abroad to keep an eye on his com-

mercial interests. His exports before Jefferson's imposition of an embargo were typical: tobacco, lumber, iron, naval stores, indigo, rice; he imported dry goods, sugar, rum, and coffee. Like many another, this firm, too, known for its dignity and integrity, went down in the panic year of 1819. All American shippers had been harassed beyond endurance. Trading with Europe was forbidden or restricted during the years of the Napoleon-British war; the futile 1812-1815 struggle with the English dislocated overseas shipping; the postwar decline in prices—as the English swamped the markets with finished wares—disrupted trade and brought chaos in its wake.²³

Merchant-shippers, the town's elite, were burdened with responsibility, though favored with opportunities. The colonial hangover of deference to "gentlemen" brought obligations. Moses Myers as citizen became a president of the Lower Branch of the Common Council and enjoyed high rank in the local militia. In a way, all this was his due. Without means after his failure, he turned for relief to the government and became a customs collector and an agent of the Marine hospital. Before receiving this political plum, he had to surmount considerable opposition. As Congressman Stephen van Rensselaer said, opposition to Myers rose because he was one of the first honest men in that collectorship. Unfortunately for Myers, now an old man of almost eighty, Jackson came to power and replaced him. This Norfolk merchant had an unhappy life. Some of his children did not live beyond infancy; others grew up only to die young. One of his sons, a midshipman in the navy, perished at sea. His wife bore him twelve sons and daughters; only three married and—this is not altogether typical—they married Jews. His children were attractive and well educated, a superior lot. John, the oldest, was an active member of the firm. During the 1812 War he served on the staff of a Virginia general of militia. It was John who had organized the local voluntary fire department and served as its chief. In March, 1820, Commodore Barron, the unfortunate commander of the ill-fated *Chesapeake*, called on his friend John Myers to borrow his dueling pistols. At Bladensburg, outside of Washington, there followed the tragic encounter in which Stephen Decatur lost his life. Samuel, three years younger than John, graduated from William and Mary and became a lawyer. On hearing that a local man, Richard Bowen, had severely beaten his father with a cane, Samuel ran for his gun and shot Bowen to death. The family and his influential in-laws managed to save him from the gallows, but for many years he lived in voluntary exile in Pensacola and in Richmond. These two sons, John and Samuel, predeceased their father; Myer Myers (d.1877) survived all his siblings to recoup the family's fortune. He was all business; while in Stockholm on a trip for the firm the father wrote and said apologetically that his letter "smells of the shop"—to which young Myer responded,

"the shop and its odors are honorable." Myer did not identify with Jews and Judaism but he never became a Christian; his wife, a born Jew, converted to Christianity after her husband's death. Her father Joseph Marx was a religious radical.²⁴

When Moses Myers passed away, one of the local newspapers said that in his day he had been one of the most important merchant-shippers south of the Potomac. This may not be an exaggeration; the painter and dramatist William Dunlap, who visited Norfolk in 1820, wrote that Myers had been one of the outstanding merchants of Norfolk. Dunlap added that the family were "Jews, well informed, genteel, and uncommonly handsome in the younger part of the family." Moses Myers's loss of his fortune apparently did not lessen the confidence his friends reposed to him. That same year, Moses Elias Levy, who had been in the West Indies, brought his young son David to Norfolk and placed him there in the care of his trusted friend Myers. Young David remained in the city under the tutelage of this cultured gentleman till 1827 when he again rejoined his family in the territory of Florida which David would one day represent as its first United States senator. Moses Myers was a typical merchant-shipper in his all-embracing mercantile outreach. He had once been a partner of a firm that in 1775 advanced a very large sum in specie to Congress to help finance the Canada expedition despite the fact that Jews were still denied political equality in the new America. Even though his career ended in failure, it demonstrates that the tidewater merchant-shipper was still important in the American economy during the first third of the new century.²⁵

THE PRAGERS OF PHILADELPHIA

We have just read that each large merchant-shipper was *sui generis*. This was certainly true of the Pragers of Philadelphia. In many respects they were not actually merchant-shippers. They had no vessels of their own nor did they charter ships, but they did ship goods abroad and they imported wares. What did they buy and what did they sell? Who were they? To a degree they were different from other American Jewish merchant-shippers. All the others maintained firms whose roots were here; not so the Pragers who are interesting because theirs was the only American Jewish firm based in Europe; these Philadelphians were a branch of a business originally established at Amsterdam in the 1740's. Still another branch, the most important one in fact, was in London. During the Revolutionary War, in the years 1781-1783, there was also a short-lived segment of the firm in Ostend. Set up to bypass London which was at war with the United States and Holland, the Flemish branch made it possible for the Londoners to do business with the United States and the Continent. The London branch, established in 1762, was very important in the

late eighteenth century; it was run by Yehiel Prager, the most daring member of the family. Two of his brothers, Jacob and David, remained in Amsterdam. The firm name in London was Israel Levin Salomons—Yehiel Prager's secular name. After his death in 1788 the London firm was continued under the name of I. L. Salomons's Widow & Prager. Eight years later, Yehiel's wife decided to close the business. The Amsterdam-London nexus had been broken in 1794-1795 when the French occupied Holland. The English would have no truck with the French, their traditional enemy. The London branch did some business in bills of exchange, though it did not specialize in that field; occasionally it even dabbled in securities and bullion. As an international firm in need of extensive financial services, it turned to bankers in Holland, Germany, and France, non-Jews for the most part. The Londoners, who enjoyed an excellent reputation in the city, were primarily commission merchants exporting and importing wares and raw materials from North America, the West Indies, and the Far East. By the 1770's, Yehiel Prager, eager to make a "killing," had set out to become a dominant force in the diamond, drug (camphor and cassia), and Maryland tobacco trade, but was not notably successful in these monopolistic speculations. As had been true for Lopez of Newport, much of the business carried on by the Londoners depended on the liberal credit extended them by others.

In 1783 when the war with America was over, the Prager brothers sent three of their children to Philadelphia to establish a minor branch there. Philadelphia was chosen because at that time it was the country's outstanding city—the *de facto* capital of the United States. There was another reason why this business *pied-à-terre* was set up; there was a real need to find jobs, opportunities, for the younger Pragers. The clan was numerous; the three brothers, two in Amsterdam and one in London, could boast of at least fifteen sons and ten daughters. Now that America was independent, the family thought there would be a better chance to carry on trade; bypassing England, raw materials from America could be shipped directly to Holland and other parts of the Continent. The name of the Philadelphia firm for the years 1783-1789, was Praegers, Liebart & Co. After 1789, the Philadelphia branch became known as Prager & Co. From 1783 on, three of the younger Pragers—Yehiel Jr., Meyer, Sr., and Meyer, Jr., sons of the two Amsterdam partners—ran the business here. Meyer Sr., was probably in charge up to 1787, when he transferred his activity to the London branch. Yehiel's secular name was probably Michael; the two Meyers bore the secular name Mark. Michael was one of the founders of the Insurance Company of North America. Though the Philadelphians did some business on their own account, they functioned essentially as agents of the parent company, the partners in Amsterdam and London, and were substantial importers. Like all merchants, they bought

and sold on commission and dealt in bills of exchange, a common medium of payment. Among the wares they handled were drugs, alum, copperas, lead for paints, pepper, stationery, steel, tin, sailcloth, shot, coffee, and indigo. For a time they were engaged in shipping back large quantities of Maryland tobacco; Yehiel, of London, in all probability employed them to help him corner the market in that commodity. They apparently carried on no China trade, although they were quick to report the return of the *Empress of China* in 1785 with her cargo of Oriental wares.

Men of culture, patrons of the theatre, well-educated, the Pragers wrote a good English letter. One of them, Mark (Meyer, Meyerke), was a social acquaintance of Washington and dined with him. He seems to have been a Deist; at all events, he disclaimed any interest in Judaism. Yehiel, Sr., in London had given the young men a letter of introduction to the Gratzes—distant kinsmen—but it is doubtful whether they had much, if any, contact with the Jewish community. There is reason to believe that the Amsterdam parents of the three Philadelphia Pragers would have wished their sons to associate with local Jews. Though not devout, the Amsterdam parents did maintain kosher homes, and when the three younger men sailed in 1783-1784 for Philadelphia they, too, carried their own kosher provisions. How many Jews in the United States refused after landing to identify with their people? The Pragers may have reflected a significant pattern.²⁶

MERCHANTS OF DIVERSE HUE

The available details on the trading of the Pragers's American branch shows how difficult it is to fit all merchant-shippers to the same procrustean bed. Very few Jewish businessmen were actually merchant-shippers of the scope represented by Isaac Moses and Moses Myers. On the other hand, many Jews did call themselves "merchants." There was no guild, no police state, to hinder them. In the 1786 New York directory, most Jews listed described themselves as merchants, though many were no more than shopkeepers. The noun "merchants" appealed to them; it advertised a status proudly claimed by the smallest storekeeper and the wealthiest transoceanic shipper. In the course of time it would become the title of almost any retailer. A distinction must be made between the merchant and the merchant-shipper. On the whole, the former's outreach was more limited, he had less capital or manipulated less credit. This period also saw the emergence of the Jewish trader who, neither shipper nor merchant in the colonial sense, was on his way to becoming a mercantile specialist. Even as late as 1840 many merchants—and of course Jews among them—were merchandisers ready to perform any commercial service which promised a profit. This they had in common with the trans-

oceanic shipper. Much like the shippers, exporters and importers, a substantial merchant sold at both retail and wholesale, offered banking services, bought or sold on commission, and occasionally even exported or imported a cargo of goods. Still, he was not primarily oriented to the transoceanic trade but was more a large shopkeeper concerned with domestic traffic. Internal commerce was assuming increasing importance as hundreds of thousands of settlers crossed the mountains and floated down the streams that fed the Mississippi. The line between the large-scale shipper and the merchant was often a thin one. More and more the typical Jewish businessman tended to be a storekeeper who sold hard, soft, and wet goods at retail in a local market. If he had a growing clientele, he employed clerks. Clerking offered an opportunity to learn a business and ultimately to achieve economic independence. Many Jews turned to clerking; by 1840, it was an alternative to peddling. The Rev. Isaac Leeser began his American career working as a clerk for an uncle in Richmond until his cultural and religious interests impelled him into the clergy—an unusual career switch, but Leeser was an extraordinary man.²⁷

Abraham N. Cardozo clerked for Gentiles in a Virginia coal business in 1797. Later, so it seems, he became a merchant, for he left a very substantial estate. Jews demonstrated a tendency to reach out almost anywhere to make a dollar. There were merchants who sold powder and shot, liquors and wines. Selling groceries and hides in 1786, a New Yorker offered to rent out a storehouse and a dwelling. Naphtali Phillips began as a shopkeeper, but turned to journalism and politics; during the undeclared war with France, Benjamin S. Judah offered to buy cannon for the government; Judah Moses, of Richmond, tried to make a deal with the Prussian government bartering tobacco for textiles, porcelain, and hardware. Stationed in Philadelphia, Samuel Etting, a son of Solomon, kept in touch with the firm of Robert Garrett, of Baltimore. As a purchasing and sales agent, he had been trying to sell whiskey for the Baltimoreans; he suggested purchases, quoting prices on teas (eight different types), pepper, nutmeg, indigo, coffee, and French brandy. The New York importer Solomon Moses—still another member of the Gratz clan—offered his customers East Indian soft goods, Guatemalan and Louisiana indigo, and sugars. Later, as the Anglo-French wars made ocean trading difficult for Americans, he took up the auction and commission business.²⁸

It is difficult to determine whether the metropolitan tidewater Jewish merchants were more specialized than businessmen in the hinterland. Certainly merchants in the inland cities, as in Richmond, tended to be generalists handling a wide assortment of wares if we are to judge from Marcus Elkan's advertisement in the *Virginia Gazette* for October 11, 1787: dry goods, hose, shoes, hats, saddles, dishes, hardware, bar iron, powder and shot, wines and beer. He sold for cash, for country produce,

or public securities. By the turn of the century, the largest mercantile establishment in Richmond appears to have been that of Cohen & Isaacs. Isaiah Isaacs (1747-1806), a silversmith, first married a Gentile; after her death, he found himself a wife in the well-known Hays family of New York. In the 1780's, he and Jacob I. Cohen established a partnership with many interests: they owned a tavern, slaves, Dismal Swamp tracts, and other lands in several Virginia counties. Yet they were not primarily speculators in acreage; land warrants which they received from soldiers and others served simply as a medium of exchange, a sort of currency in the 1780's. When the warrant box was full of this scrip, the partners sent it to their surveyor out on Virginia's western frontier. That is how Daniel Boone came to lay out 10,000 acres for them on the Licking River in what is today the state of Kentucky. In submitting his bill, Boone warned them that if the messenger carrying the money was killed by "Indins," the responsibility would be theirs.²⁹

It was Isaiah Isaacs who gave the fledgling Richmond congregation, Beth Shalome, ground for the first cemetery; earlier, even before Beth Shalome's founding, he had made a generous gift to the building fund for Philadelphia's Mikveh Israel. Cohen, then, not yet a partner and with his fortune still to be made, could spare little for the Philadelphia synagog. After their partnership was firmly established, Cohen spent much of his time in Philadelphia, probably as a resident buyer, and met there the widow Esther (Elizabeth) Mordecai, originally a convert to Judaism. Impoverished after the death of her husband, she was dependent, to a degree, on the largess of Mikveh Israel. What could a widow do in those days? Her three teenage boys, so it would appear, could help but little. Cohen wanted to marry her, but as a "cohen," a priest, he was forbidden by Jewish law to marry a proselyte. He ignored the warnings of the congregation and with the moral support of some of the outstanding Jews in town—they signed his wedding certificate—espoused "Queen Esther," as one of her admirers called her. In effect, Cohen thumbed his nose at the synagog authorities. Less than two decades later, he was elected president of that very congregation. His generosity to it documents his affection for Mikveh Israel, for he gave the synagog a Scroll of the Law, a manuscript parchment of the Book of Esther, a copper utensil to make unleavened bread for Passover, and a sum of money to endow the memorial prayer recited on the anniversary of Esther's death.³⁰

JOSEPH MARX

Cohen & Isaacs, like many other merchants of the 1780's, assembled and sold almost any commodity, all under one roof, extended long-term credit, and accepted payment in almost any salable medium. Quite different was the approach characterising the trading activities of Joseph

Marx (1772-1840) who flourished in Richmond two or three decades after Cohen & Isaacs had passed its zenith. As merchants, Cohen & Isaacs had faced the eighteenth century; Marx faced the nineteenth. This newcomer represented a new, less parochial type of business. Working closely with Virginia's elite, he emphasized finance, did business on a grand scale, and ultimately amassed very substantial wealth. Although some of his clients were ruined in the 1819 panic, he managed to survive; it was an achievement not to be dragged down with them. Marx, a German immigrant, came to Virginia in 1791, a year before Cohen & Isaacs finally dissolved their partnership. By the second decade of the new century the brilliant, thoughtful Marx had already made a place for himself. He worked closely with his son Samuel, a well educated young man with an M.A. degree. In later years, Samuel helped organize a canal company and served as the president of a bank. Another son, Frederick, studied abroad and returned to practice medicine. Here one can see the emergence of a pattern that was to become more prevalent as the decades passed: the first immigrant generation managed to survive and even made money; the children, highly acculturated, turned to the professions or continued with distinction the commercial successes of the parent. The papers of Joseph Marx have not yet been studied in detail; they merit analysis, for Marx was an important merchant who carried on a varied, extensive trade and served some of Virginia's most notable citizens. Working closely with a brother in London, Marx and his son carried on a brisk import and export trade, even though their countinghouse in the piedmont was ninety miles from Chesapeake Bay. Speculating in land, Marx acquired large grants; he shipped grain to Europe for plantation owners, served as their factor, financed them, and worked closely with a local bank which he had helped establish. This immigrant had gone far; he became a cultured American, wrote an excellent English letter, and learned to think for himself, to evolve his own approach to traditional Judaism.³¹

COUNTRY MERCHANTS

The Marxes of Virginia were not country merchants; they traded on an international scale and in a sophisticated fashion. In the early nineteenth century, Charlottesville, Virginia, sheltered at least two shopkeepers, David Isaacs, a brother of Isaiah, and Isaac Raphael, a son of that Solomon Raphael (Raffald) who had started out as a peddler. Isaac Raphael's wife was a fine musician known for her mastery of the piano and the organ. On occasion Raphael would serve as a banker for Jefferson in nearby Monticello. The Raphael store, under the name of Raphael & Wolfe, tended to be an outfitting enterprise, specializing in groceries and liquors for the nearby farmers and plantation owners. Wilmington, Delaware, in 1815 could boast of a Jewish merchant who emphasized his role as a

wholesaler, advertising that he was prepared to send goods to village merchants at Philadelphia prices. There was no need, therefore, to make the trip to distant Philadelphia, he said, but do not come on a Saturday; that is my Sabbath and my business is closed. Still farther north in Easton, Pennsylvania, Michael Hart, the Indian trader—not a fur merchant—had succeeded in opening a shop in 1773 shortly before the Revolution. There his wife and his fifteen children enjoyed life on the profits of the store and a grist mill. Hart never acquired wealth, but he owned a stone house, kept a kosher table—he was his own shohet—collected some silverplate, had a servant (a slave), and by the first decade of the new century had bought a warehouse where he stored country produce, lumber, and hops which he bartered for almost anything a man or woman might wish: stockings, buttons, knives, hats, playing cards, iron pots, pepper, and whiskey—in hundreds of gallons. After his death in 1813, there was not enough cash laid by to support the widow and her numerous young ones. She moved to Philadelphia and opened a boardinghouse. These are the short and simple annals of a Pennsylvania country merchant.³²

Some Jewish merchants in small towns like Wilmington or Charlottesville serviced outlying villages and farmers, shopkeepers and plantation owners throughout the county and even beyond. By 1840, there were Jewish stores in many county seats, often no more than villages. By the 1810's, Jews had begun to settle in the Ohio backcountry. After wandering about in the young state, a Jewish peddler might well make his home in a village and invite the custom of his neighbors and the nearby farmers. Store buildings were often small, at times no more than log houses. Dry goods and liquor were important items in the small inventory. The shops might even double as saloons. Country produce was accepted in barter.³³

MERCANTILE SPECIALISTS

FUR MERCHANTS

Specialization set in, albeit slowly, in the course of the nineteenth century when the country became more populous. The shopkeepers in colonial days had been generalists. Indeed it is very much to be questioned whether the so-called fur traders of the eighteenth century were specialists limiting themselves to the buying and selling of furs; they seem rather, to have been merchants who accepted furs as a medium of payment; they would have preferred good paper money or specie. In the last third of the eighteenth century, it is true, Pennsylvania merchants such as the Simon-Gratz group were oriented towards the West. They did business across the mountains, anticipating the "Great Migration" of later

days. Their customers were the French on the Mississippi and the English to the east, on the lands between the Blue Ridge mountains and the Father of Waters. Though there were Jews in the early days who took out Indian traders' licenses, some of them probably did not traffic directly with the Indians, but supplied the traders who did. As the nineteenth century approached, fewer Jews manifested any interest in this traffic; the Indians were rapidly pushed westward. Many town and country merchants were always ready to accept furs, skins, and hides in payment for goods. Savannah's Mordecai Sheftall in his postbellum days was trafficking in deerskins and raccoon pelts. His brother Levi and the New York merchant Jacob Mark were in an allied trade, selling Indian goods to the government for distribution to its wards. It was said that Phineas Israel (Johnson) was trading with the Indians in Indiana about the year 1817, though by that time Indiana had already been admitted as a state and before very long the Indians would be removed by the national authorities.³⁴

John Hays had originally settled in the French settlements of the Illinois country as a fur buyer before he turned to other gainful pursuits. Hays, reared in Montreal or Quebec, certainly knew his fellow Canadian, the fur trader Jacob Franks; there were fewer than 200 Jewish souls in all of Canada. The Jews met in Montreal's synagog, if only on the Passover and the High Holy Days. By the 1790's, Franks was stationed at Green Bay in what was later to become Wisconsin Territory. In all probability, he was distantly related to the distinguished eighteenth century American-Jewish merchant family bearing his name. The recurrence of the given name Jacob would seem to imply descent from a common ancestor. Thus the Canadian Indian trader came from an Anglo-Jewish family whose members were scattered all the way from Green Bay and Mackinac to Canada, the East Coast of the United States, England, and the distant East Indies. The urge to make a living and to get ahead in a generation when virtually everywhere Jews suffered political and economic disabilities compelled them to seek out the hazardous peripheral areas in order to advance themselves. About the year 1789, one of the Franks girls, who had married an army officer, Capt. George Lawe, accompanied him on a mission leaving behind a number of children, among them a young boy of nine. This boy, John, was brought to Canada, by the Frankses, no doubt, and educated in Quebec; by the time he was seventeen or eighteen, he had made the trek to Mackinac and then south down Lake Michigan to Green Bay, where Uncle Jacob had already set up his trading post. Travelers who visited this outlying settlement described Franks and Lawe as Jews. According to rabbinical law, John was incontestably a Jew—even though he had been baptized as a Protestant at birth and was a member of the Episcopalian church. When John came to this village in 1795/1797 the only thing American about it was its location. The people were

largely French, many of the traders English, and all were oriented in their sympathies to the lands of their provenance and their supplies: Canada and England. It was no whim that had brought Franks to Green Bay; the town was very strategically located: except for a short portage at Fort Winnebago, it was on a complete water route from Montreal and Europe to the Mississippi and New Orleans by way of the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers.³⁵

Here it was that Jacob had settled, at first as an agent for others, but in a few years he was out hustling on his own account. He built the first saw and grist mill and the first blacksmithy in this part of the Old Northwest, and it was at this frontier outpost that John Lawe spent the rest of his life. He became a skilled Indian trader, learned the fur business, and like any other loyal Englishman—he had been born in old York—fought for his native land in the War of 1812. But after the war started, Uncle Jacob had gone back to the civilization of Mackinac and finally to Montreal itself to enjoy the fruits of his hard-earned labors. His stock of goods, his lands, and even an assortment of children he had begotten in the wilderness were turned over to John Lawe; Jacob was now ready to live on what he had and on what his nephew would send on to him. It was an excellent arrangement; Franks forwarded the supplies and marketed the furs, Indian mats, and feathers that came through. Jacob's wife, Mary Solomons—one of Levi Solomons's daughters—served as her husband's clerk, keeping John in touch not only with the best prices but also with the latest murder trial at York (Toronto) and the state of the Queen's health.³⁶

The two decades before the War of 1812 were the halcyon days for Franks and Lawe; the coming of the Americans to Green Bay about 1816 only brought trouble. The soldiers in the local garrison, Fort Howard, took advantage of the Anglophile traders; John Jacob Astor, determined to win a monopoly of the fur trade through his American Fur Company, had Congress pass a law restricting traders' licenses to American citizens; that made it difficult for Lawe to do business though it is true that he had served as a judge in the territory. Later, however, he was naturalized and received the coveted right to trade. But let there be no mistake; it was not the rudeness and the petty pilferings of the American troops that hamstrung the trade of Franks and Lawe; it was the disappearance of the frontier. As the settlers poured in, game became scarce; the Indians still had to live; they still needed whiskey, blankets, cloth, knives, traps, and guns, supplies they secured on credit against the furs they were going to bring in. In the meantime, Lawe and others were now compelled by circumstance to draw their supplies from the American Fur Company, a vast mercantile octopus which offered a liberal line of credit to the traders, but closed in on them when they fell behind in their payments. When there were no furs, the traders were in a desperate plight, besieged on the one

hand by the Indians, who had to have their food and supplies, and on the other hand by the American Fur Company, which had paid the traders modest prices for furs, charged them steep prices for their supplies, and was now demanding that its accounts be settled. On the whole, the American Fur Company had consistently made handsome profits; the traders grew progressively poorer unless they had other sources of income. By 1823, John Lawe claimed that he owed the company \$10,000, a huge sum in those days. He was never to enjoy affluence. The company held mortgages on his lands. Some historians are of the opinion that he failed to take advantage of the opportunities which the Wisconsin frontier offered him.

His wife, Theresa Rankin, was the daughter of a Chippewa woman and an English trader. His eight children, who grew up in his rambling one-story house behind a nine-foot cedar picket stockade, probably spoke better French than English and were all Catholics and churchgoers. Mama saw to that and made sure that papa was given a Catholic burial. One of the sons married into the John Adams's family. John Lawe was a devoted father, pathetically eager to educate his youngsters and to integrate them into the social and religious life of his friends and neighbors. If there had ever been anything "Jewish" about him, it had long since faded. The only Jewish reference in his correspondence was a sneering remark by his sister Rebecca Franks Kemble about their kinsman Henry Joseph, of Berthier: he has too much of the "Jew blood" in him, she said, to assist the Levys who were in distress. The few Jewish families in Canada were often feuding; it gave them an opportunity to vent their frustrations.

As a young man, John was lithe with a twenty-some inch waist line; in later years, he was huge, weighing about three hundred pounds. Although Uncle Jacob, toward the end of his widowed and impoverished life, bitterly denounced John as a scoundrel because he would not—probably he could not—aid him financially, the nephew was known to all as a man of generosity and integrity. One recorded incident shows that he had great physical vitality and courage, too. In 1845, one year before his death, John was sixty-five; he was at Lake Poygan as the annual Menominee Indian payment was being made. Constantly, for two nights and a day he was on the alert, and as the Indians collected their silver dollars, he and other traders stood there collecting their debts. When it was all over, he had \$9,000 in silver, which he put in a locked chest and loaded onto his Mackinac bateau. Settling his huge bulk on the chest, he ordered his Scotch voyageur and his two Indian boatmen to climb in and then started for home. They kept going all that night with only an hour's rest, shooting the rapids, plunging over Grand Chute Falls, a sheer drop of six feet; when the bow of the boat was cracked, they slapped a blanket against the sides to hold back the water, but always kept moving. Down they went

by the light of the moon through the Kakaling Rapids, a drop of fifty feet in one mile, and when at dawn they reached the Lawe homestead, the Indian boatmen fell exhausted to the earth, but John and the voyageur carried the locked chest into the office where the trader now sat down at his desk ready for the day's work. He had gone seventy miles since the onset of night, sped through five lakes, hurtled himself on top of his chest over three dangerous falls and thirty miles of treacherous rapids, all amidst the fitful shadows of the moon-streaked Wisconsin night.¹⁷

As the frontier moved west, the fur traders moved, too. Throughout the 1830's, there were always Jewish buyers looking for pelts and hides in the valleys of the Mississippi and the Missouri. Most of these men seem to have been small-scale buyers, some of them Germans who had learned the business back home in Europe where they had been in the cattle, hide, and wool trades. Among them was one large-scale buyer interested in purchasing furs for the European market, primarily for the Leipzig fairs which attracted merchants from all parts of Europe, especially from Poland and Russia. The buyer was Martin William Oppenheim who had come to this country in 1835. His name suggests that he was a Jew. In 1836, Ramsay Crooks, the head of the American Fur Company after Astor withdrew, received a letter from this immigrant asking for a job. Oppenheim was no uncouth German village yokel ready to take the first job that turned up. He was a skilled fur expert who had learned the business from his father in Germany and had rounded out his training in London and in the United States. He was a valuable man; he had experience in the Russian markets and knew the ins and outs of the Leipzig fairs. His knowledge of the German market, so he believed and said, could be very useful to the American Fur Company. Ramsey Crooks thought otherwise; he wrote Oppenheim that he had all the help the business required. It would be interesting to know why Crooks refused to employ him. It is likely that Crooks meant what he said—he had all the help he needed. Agents of his sprawling company were found everywhere, in Canton, China, in London, in Leipzig. Perhaps he distrusted the young man's motives; he was too good; he knew too much. The German may have been interested in penetrating the American company. This much is known: Oppenheim later worked for a rival German organization, a competitor of the American Fur Company.

Crooks was bent on controlling the American supply and the London sale of furs. The one thing he and his associates feared was a direct connection between Leipzig and the American fur traders which would block his efforts to establish a monopoly. That this German and other competitors were not spectres conjured up by Crooks is demonstrated by a letter sent him in 1839 by Pierre Chouteau, Jr. This season, the latter wrote, there is not a town on the Mississippi and Missouri that has not been

infested with buyers of furs and skins, Poles, Germans, Jews, Yankees. Agents from New York and Detroit show themselves at every corner and watch every wagon that pulls into St. Louis; it is hard to get skins. What Chouteau did not know was that some of the Poles and Germans he saw were also Jews. In 1845 a sumptuary law of the autocratic Czar Nicholas I forbade Russian Jews to use fisher pelts; the decree shook the American market.³⁸

SLAVE TRADING

At best buying and selling furs was not much of a business in the early nineteenth century. The Jewish part in it was small; this is equally true of the slave trade. Slowly slavery became very important in this country with the invention of the cotton gin, the development of cotton planting, and the improvement in weaving machinery. Where the traffic in blacks was concerned, Jews were always on the periphery. Few Jews planted tobacco, cotton, or sugar; they were not employers of mass slave labor. Jews in all parts of the country, particularly in the South, frequently purchased blacks to serve as domestic servants. Personality conflicts were common; slaves were sensitive human beings; tragedy was inevitable when estates were settled, and slaves were treated as chattel. Solomon Jacobs of Richmond was widely known as a kind master; his personal letters and his tombstone testify to this. In his love letters to his wife he described in detail how the servants were faring; for him they were members of the family, but after his death his wife sold them; they were mean to her, she said. With very few exceptions, brokers, commission merchants, and shopkeepers deemed slaves an article of commerce. Captain Abraham M. Seixas, the Charleston shopkeeper who kept a supply of men's and women's furnishings, bonds, notes, and slaves, wrote verse praising the virtues of the blacks he offered for sale. Back in colonial days Lopez and his father-in-law Rivera had carried on an import of slaves from the West African coast; it was a trade which Rivera continued into the 1780's, just a few years before his death. The Monsanto brothers in Natchez and New Orleans were slave traders on a modest scale; they had other interests. Living under the Spanish crown on the Lower Mississippi in the days before "Louisiana" became American, Jews were officially not tolerated; they had been expelled from Spain in 1492. Even so, everyone knew that the Monsantos were Jews; it was an open secret and the authorities made no effort to harass them. In later decades, a number of Jewish merchants throughout the South specialized in slave trading. It is estimated that 3 out of the 74 slave traders in Richmond were Jews, 4 out of 44 in Charleston, and 1 out of 12 in Memphis. The largest among the traders was the Davis clan of Petersburg and Richmond. The family began as peddlers and then specialized in this particular commodity. The sales of

all Jewish traders lumped together did not equal that of the one Gentile firm dominant in the business. If Jews in larger numbers were absent from this traffic, it was not necessarily because of scruples; there is little or no evidence to this effect. Most Jews lacked the capital to pursue what was after all, a hazardous, speculative business.³⁹

DRY GOODS DEALERS, AUCTIONEERS, COMMISSION MERCHANTS,
AND BROKERS

Slave dealers were specialists; so were the dry goods men who now made their appearance and limited themselves to the sale of soft goods. The 1830's already found a few entrepreneurs of this type in Philadelphia, a metropolis; the larger the city, the more likelihood that businessmen would limit themselves to specific branches of commerce and trade; they could appeal to a wider clientele. One of the most notable owners of dry goods emporia at this time was Lyon J. Levy, who enjoyed presidential patronage. He sold French and English dry goods, Irish linens, children's embroidered robes, silks, shawls, boy's clothing, and mourning attire. Advertising that he carried the latest Paris styles, Levy, it is quite clear, catered to the carriage trade. His place of business was magnificent; indeed there were not many merchants of his calibre in those days. Stores such as his were very probably precursors of the department stores which would emerge in later decades. The part that Jews played in post-Civil War days in the transition from large dry goods magazines to the department stores is yet to be determined. Department stores owned by Jews did not begin to appear on the scene until the last quarter of the century.⁴⁰

The conspicuous specialists among the Jews were the auctioneers, the brokers, and the commission merchants, *commissionaires*, if you will. Brokers were men who for a fee negotiated transactions, contracts, between buyers and sellers. Auctioneers sold parcels of goods to the highest bidder. The wares at times were their own, not those of others who had authorized their sale on a fee basis. This was a good business; auctioneers were licensed by the government; the appointment more often than not was a political plum. In the early nineteenth century several Jews were found among the privileged few in New York City. One of the city's auctioneers in the 1830's was Aaron Levy (1771-1852), the well-known militia votary and land speculator. He owned an art gallery where he auctioned off old masters. The appointment was his reward for enthusiastic support of the Jacksonian Democrats. Among those fortunate enough to be licensed in an earlier day was Levy's father-in-law, Isaac Moses, the merchant-shipper; Captain Mordecai Myers, the 1812 War veteran, Benjamin Seixas, the stockbroker, Ephraim Hart, the land speculator, and young Raphael Moses of South Carolina, Florida, and Georgia. Raphael

Moses, grandiloquent Southern orator, lawyer, and politician, started life as an auctioneer. Before he became one of Georgia's notables, he was a bookkeeper, a peddler of watches, the owner of a "cheap cash store," a dry goods merchant, a speculator in stocks, secretary of a pioneer railroad company, and even a banker for a short period. When he finally decided to go into law, he studied for six weeks and passed the bar examination. Auctioneering was a common method of doing business wholesale in the generation before and after the year 1800. It could provide a very respectable living; one firm in New York paid a tax of \$1,000 on its auction sales; in 1796 Jacob Jacobs of Charleston, an auctioneer, left an estate that included ten slaves, horses, carriages, notes and bonds. Jonas Phillips of Philadelphia, one of the unlucky aspirants for a license, protested against this monopoly—it was unconstitutional, he insisted. For him a legal circumvention was justified. He advertised heavily that he would send carriages to meet prospective buyers and drive them to a ferry boat which would land them across the Schuylkill, outside the city limits, where he would auction off the wares entrusted to him.⁴¹

David Lopez, Jr., and his brother Aaron, members of Newport's numerous Lopez family, had moved south to Charleston after the Revolution when that city rose to prominence; there they became auctioneers and commission merchants with a warehouse of their own. In a limited sense they were brokers. The word broker is a term that has no specific denotation. After the Revolution, the term and the calling became popular among Jews. Brokers made their appearance, sometimes in relatively large numbers, in all the towns of the country, from Boston south to New Orleans. In a way they were variants of the colonial merchants and merchant-shippers, for brokers were ready to consider any kind of mercantile or financial deal. Unlike their colonial forebears, they had no fixed clientele, no established trade routes, no substantial traffic in raw materials or imports. They were particularly in evidence at Philadelphia, for some twenty-five years the *de facto* when it was not the *de jure* capital of the country. Men turned to this type of commerce for, requiring little capital, it was primarily a job of working for others; the rewards of the brokers lay in the commissions they charged. Indeed most merchants and merchant-shippers were happy to function as commissionmen or brokers. Samuel Myers, of Petersburg, and Moses Myers, of Norfolk, handled chores for Stephen Girard; Solomon Jacobs, of Richmond, bought tobacco for the Rothschilds; the wealthy Harmon Hendricks, of New York, did not disdain a chance to sell goods for a London correspondent. On occasion, a broker would employ a client to dispose of wares; the client who thus became the consignee was always willing to make a commission.

The Dutch immigrant Lazarus Barnett, scarcely a year in this country, found himself a partner and announced that he would do business as a

broker. An analysis of his accounts demonstrates that he sold at auction, operated as a wholesaler, and disposed of consignments on commission; all the transactions were on short- or long-term credit. Barnett's firm specialized in dry goods and gin. Curiously, despite the substantial amount of business the firm did, Barnett—and possibly his partner too—suffered bankruptcy in less than a year. To escape imprisonment for debt, Barnett fled to London. No two brokers operated in the same fashion, since they were dependent on fortuitous commissions and adventitious commercial opportunities. What all did “brokers” do? They served as employment bureaus, as suppliers and vendors of goods; they provided information on domestic and foreign markets. They bought and sold shares in turnpikes, canals, railroads, and manufactories; they dealt in bills of exchange, bought and sold real estate, often farm lands; they chartered, purchased, and disposed of ships, solicited freight, made remittances abroad, lent money. There was no merchandise which was not grist for the broker's mill.⁴²

JUDAH TOURO

One of the most famous commission merchants in the United States was distinguished not for his buying and selling but for his charities. More or less accidentally he became American Jewry's outstanding antebellum philanthropist; Judah Touro (d. 1854) was born in Newport, Rhode Island, on April 28, 1775. Dr. Hunter, who attended Mrs. Touro, charged forty-two shillings for the delivery. The father, Isaac Touro, hazzan of the Newport community, was a Loyalist and died an exile in Jamaica in 1783. Mrs. Touro's brother, Moses M. Hays, assumed the burden of supporting the widow and rearing the three surviving children. The two sons, Judah and Abraham, were trained in the business; both were to do well. After Judah had served as a supercargo to the Mediterranean he returned to New England but soon, in 1801, left for the Franco-Spanish town of New Orleans. Not improbably, as he sailed south, he may have stopped off at other towns to see what they had to offer him. Why he left Boston is not known. There is a tradition that he had fallen in love with one of his cousins and that his suit was not viewed with favor by his uncle. This may have been true, but the woman—so it is believed—upon whom he had fastened his affections was six years older and probably sickly; she died shortly after he arrived in New Orleans. Touro may well have been looking for opportunity and saw it in the Mississippi River port where he spent his remaining years. After Touro was wounded in 1815 at the Battle of New Orleans, his Gentile friend, Rezin Davis Shepherd, brought him home and nursed him back to health. It was this man Shepherd, who became Touro's residuary legatee. Touro never married; indeed in New Orleans he apparently never displayed any interest in women; he was a strange, difficult person.⁴³

Not very much is known about the nature of Touro's mercantile activities. The extant notarial records have not been adequately researched; they are bound to throw more light on his beginnings and his rise to wealth. He may have started as a shopkeeper selling New England goods like soap, candles, and codfish. There is reason to believe that he was essentially an agent buying and selling for others. What may be typical of his activities was a consignment from Christopher C. Champlin of Newport, who shipped Touro a cargo of Swedish iron and American-made bricks. Touro set out to sell the goods—which had come to a very bad market—and then loaded Champlin's chartered vessel with bales of cotton for Liverpool. When Touro hit his stride he probably ceased functioning as a shopkeeper, but in no sense was he ever one of the town's important merchandisers. He had a small office with but one clerk. Nor was he a merchant-shipper, although in 1849 he sent a vessel of his own, the *Judah Touro*, with a cargo around the Horn to California. The voyage took over 200 days—quite a venture for a man of seventy-four, a *commissionaire* normally very cautious in his dealings. How then did he acquire the fortune—hundreds of thousands of dollars in stocks, bonds, mortgages—which he left on his death in 1854? He invested in shipping; the commission business was lucrative and entailed little expense, though he did have to maintain warehouse facilities to store consignments for which he had no customers. As a freight agent, he dispatched goods as far east as Calcutta. Even all this may not explain his wealth. The answer may be simpler. Touro inherited two very large estates, one from his brother Abraham and one from his sister Rebecca. (The Rev. Theodore Clapp said that Touro gave his sister's estate to charity but there is no available evidence to support the preacher's statement.) Touro built commercial buildings, avoided litigation, and invested his surplus funds in local real estate. (During the fifty-two years of his life in New Orleans, the city grew from about 10,000 in population to a metropolis of well over 150,000. It became a boomtown, one of the most important ports in all America; he, perforce, grew with it. The town helped make him rich, even though Touro was no daring speculator. A bachelor with few expenses, he was frugal. One is tempted to say that he saved a fortune.⁴⁴

For most of his half-century in New Orleans, Touro avoided Jews. When he first came to town, very few of his coreligionists lived there. New Orleans was Spanish and Catholic; the Code Noir was thought to be still in force, blacks were kept down, Jews were kept out. Technically, this Sephardi was returning to Spanish territory as a Marrano, a Christian of Jewish ancestry. Actually, no one bothered him; although it had not been made public Louisiana was already a French dependency. Napoleonic New Orleans soon became a fast-growing town attracting all sorts of unattractive adventurers, but Touro would have nothing to do with

them. Jewish newcomers began pouring in only after the city became American in 1803. Touro avoided them, too, it appears. They were not his equal; he was shy, unsociable. Perhaps he evinced little interest in local Jewry because he had come from Boston, where in his childhood there were probably not a half-dozen Jewish families and where Uncle Moses Hays associated with Christians. When New Orleans's Congregation Gates of Mercy was organized in 1828, Touro gave the synagogue a donation, but would not join it. This notable Louisianian became a philanthropist relatively late; he was not prepared to cope affectively with his older sibling, Abraham, one of America's outstanding Jewish philanthropists. (Abraham's only rival in philanthropy was Harmon Hendricks.) Touro's brother was initially the wealthier of the two; he had a shipyard at Medford, Massachusetts, was an officer in a turnpike corporation, and owned stock in toll bridge companies and canals. His chief business was maritime insurance; he was both an underwriter and an insurer.⁴⁵

Abraham Touro was generous; he built a wall around the Newport Jewish cemetery where his mother lay buried; it was, after all, the burying ground of the synagogue his father had served. By 1819, the New Englander had lent money to Sephardic Shearith Israel in New York on condition that the interest be employed to bury indigent Jews, to succor the poor, and educate impoverished children in the ancient Palestinian homeland. In his will, Abraham made a most generous bequest to Shearith Israel and, at the same time, left substantial sums to maintain the Newport synagogue even though the Jewish community there had ceased to exist; money was also set aside to pave the street leading to the Newport Jewish cemetery. This same final testament made very liberal provision for three of Boston's outstanding philanthropic institutions; Abraham's was the first such substantial gift from an American Jew for non-Jewish charitable purposes. His Jewish bequests were limited to Shearith Israel of New York, to the defunct congregation in Newport, and to the Jewish poor in Palestine. Because of his munificence to Jews and others, Richmond's Beth Shalome sought Abraham's help in building its new synagogue. Disturbed by his own losses in the depression years of 1819-1821, he warned the Richmond suppliants not to "ride a free horse to death," but he would contribute his "mite." Why did his will ignore the Sephardic congregations in Philadelphia, Richmond, Charleston, and Savannah? There can be no question of Abraham's devotion to Jewry. In 1816, he had gone to the Boston town clerk and had made a formal statement that he was a Jew. The intent here was to comply with amended Article XI of the 1780 state constitution; Abraham refused to pay taxes to a local church.⁴⁶

Judah Touro died in 1854. After his death, mythical stories began to circulate retailing the Louisiana Touro's quiet but extensive generosity during his lifetime. There was the account of a gift to a drunkard who

had come down in the world, of magnificent help for an impoverished widow left helpless with a brood of children. There seems to be little substance to these reports. Such myths tend to cluster around all deemed notable in their postmortem years. It does seem true that Judah Touro rallied to the help of a destitute fellow-worker who had once clerked with him in Boston. Whatever the reason, Judah did not want to compete with his more attractive brother as a philanthropist, but when Abraham died in 1822, Judah began to demonstrate a desire to help people, in a modest fashion, to be sure. Thus when his sister Rebecca passed away in 1833 and there was no one left in the blood line, the “timid shrinking old man” must have bethought himself. When Leeser and Touro met in New Orleans, the merchant told the Philadelphia cleric that he was “a friend to religion.” He once, in 1819, owned a pew in an Episcopal church—whatever that signifies—but he was no Christian. Touro supported Presbyterians, Catholics, and Unitarians. His gifts to them were generous but when the Jewish newcomers turned to him, they seem to have been given a mere pittance. He spent thousands aiding the town’s Presbyterian congregation led by Parson Theodore Clapp, a liberal; when Clapp’s church was about to be dispossessed in 1822 for lack of means, Touro bought the building at an auction and permitted the congregation to remain at a most modest rental. He could have torn the building down and erected a business structure that would have paid off handsomely. Because of his affection for Clapp, he subsidized him over the years. In 1850 or 1851, the parson’s church burnt down, but Touro provided another sanctuary rent free. He was fully aware of the fact that the established Christian community—Roman Catholic—would under no circumstance help these Protestant heretics.⁴⁷

Touro was reputed to have established a Free Library in Parson Clapp’s church. The library, an institution of no consequence, was probably named after him with the hope that he would support it, but there is no evidence that he did. When many in Mobile were burnt out in a devastating fire, he did respond to their cry for help. That was in 1839, and from that time on his charities became more numerous. He rebuilt the wall around the Jewish cemetery in Newport, helped refurbish the Rhode Island town’s Redwood Library, and endowed an annual gold medal award at the University of Louisiana (now Tulane). As late as the 1940’s, these gold medals were given for excellence in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Ancient History. Touro’s most notable gift was made in 1839 when Amos Lawrence, merchant and philanthropist, said that he would give a \$10,000 matching gift to complete Boston’s Bunker Hill Monument. Though the cornerstone had been laid in 1825, the memorial to the men who had fallen in battle at Bunker Hill was still unfinished. Touro matched Lawrence’s gift. There is some reason to believe that he may

have answered Lawrence's appeal because he thought himself born with this country. The battle of Bunker Hill was fought on the 17th of June; Touro thought that he was born on the 16th. He was wrong if the account book of his accoucheur is accepted: Judah was born on April 28, 1775, a few days after the skirmishes at Lexington and Concord. Most probably Touro confused the two anniversaries. When the monument in Boston was finally dedicated and a banquet was held in Faneuil Hall, these lines praising Lawrence and Touro were read:

Christian and Jew, they carry out one plan,
For though of different faith, each is in heart a man.⁴⁸

In 1824 Judah Touro had made a generous grant to the new Mikveh Israel synagog of the Sephardim in Philadelphia. Living though he did in Christian New Orleans, he never forgot that he was a Sephardi. That may explain his disinclination to identify himself more closely with New Orleans's Congregation Gates of Mercy, most of whose members were Ashkenazim and of humble origin. By 1847, however, the seventy-two-year-old New Orleans pioneer had begun to think "Jewishly." Did he want to make his peace with his "Jewish" God? In 1845 a congregation to be governed by the Sephardic rite had been founded in town; it called itself *The Dispersed of Judah* (*Nefutsot Yehudah*), a name which could well have served a double purpose. The name was a compliment to old Touro; taken from Isaiah 11:12, a verse messianic in character, it voiced the hope for an ultimate return. Two years later Touro bought an Episcopal church for the new *Dispersed of Judah*, renovated it, added a schoolhouse, and himself started going to services. It was only with reluctance that he had joined the new congregation, but once he made up his mind he became a "good Jew," observing the Sabbath meticulously.

Savannah Jews documented Touro's entry into the ranks of Jewish leadership by asking him in a letter for funds to hire a minister. When Leeser came down from Philadelphia to dedicate the New Orleans synagog in 1850, Moses N. Nathan came up from the Caribbean to serve as hazzan. Touro paid most of Nathan's salary, but when the congregation refused to carry its share of the load, Touro reduced his gift and Nathan left. In the early 1850's Touro increased his giving; he helped the struggling Ashkenazic Gates of Mercy, supported the Hebrew Foreign Mission Society in its effort to aid the Chinese Jews, and established an infirmary for his fellow citizens who were constantly facing yellow fever epidemics. The Touro Infirmary charged for its services. The local Hebrew Benevolent Society sent some clients there, though the Infirmary was not intended to be a Jewish charity. After Touro's death, when the Infirmary was bequeathed to the Jewish community, it was continued as a pay hospital, treating slaves among others, and later became a hospice for indigent and sick Jews, for widows and orphans.⁴⁹

The gifts that the New Orleans philanthropist made prior to his death were a foreshadowing of his will. This instrument, dated January 6, 1854, distributed a very large estate. Generous gifts were made to numerous relatives and friends, Jews and non-Jews. Substantial bequests amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars were given to Jewish and Christian institutions. Like his late brother he was concerned with the old Newport cemetery and synagog and saw to it that there were ample funds for both. It was his hope that the Jewish community there would one day be reestablished. And it was. A large sum given for the poor of Palestine was to be administered by England's Moses Montefiore. Bequests too were made for the Chinese Jews. Over \$140,000 was given to American Jewish schools, congregations, and confraternities in twenty different towns. The bulk of the testamentary gifts was willed to Christian communal institutions, Protestant and Catholic, in Boston, Newport, and New Orleans. Included among them were six orphan asylums and an almshouse.⁵⁰

If Touro was a "good" Jew during the last seven years of his life, who or what was responsible for the change? No one can dredge up an indisputable answer. This much is known: Gershom Kursheedt directly and Leaser indirectly worked on the vacillating Touro without letup. Touro could always have left everything to his Christian friend Shepherd and to distant Jewish relatives. It was Kursheedt, a most ardent Jew, who finally induced the aged merchant to leave substantial sums to Jewish institutions. Touro's experiences with his own Sephardic Dispersed of Judah may well have soured him. Kursheedt, grandson of Seixas and son of I. B. Kursheedt, was a New Orleans businessman, communal leader and journalist. Reflecting Leaser's hopes, Kursheedt sought money to finance the founding of a structured American Jewish community with a seminary and a publication society. Leaser long before, in 1841, appealed to America's congregations to meet in conference and organize themselves to establish national religious and cultural institutions, but his was a voice crying in the wilderness. Fortunately, Shepherd, sympathetic to Jews, was on the sidelines coaching Kursheedt. Touro's was a simple mind: Jewish congregations and institutions had to be helped—as long as they were Orthodox. Kursheedt hammered away at Touro for about a decade, presenting Jewish lists to the old man, who made the final decision. Shepherd, the Gentile, helped Touro decide which Christian institutions and societies merited bequests. In the long run, Touro was right, though he was never to realize how wise he was. American Jewry in the 1850's would never have found it possible to organize nationally to build the religiocultural schools and associations which would, in effect, have established a total, integrated Jewish community ruled by a national Jewish board of ministers and laymen. Touro patched up Jewry in every impor-

tant town; he did the same more or less for the Christians. He wanted to help Jews, and he wanted to be a good citizen and serve the larger public, though his gifts were in no sense motivated by a desire to win public acclaim; he was anything but vain.⁵¹

Touro never set out to become a philanthropist; it was not in him. A captious Jew in New York wrote Leaser: what choice did Touro have?— he had no close friends; he wasn't really much of a philanthropist. But the New Yorker was wrong; Touro turned out to be very much of a philanthropist, a truly important historical figure because of his generosity. By the 1850's, the Germans who had been streaming in had set up a host of congregations, societies, and welfare agencies, but few of them were well established. The masses of immigrant Jews were poor. Despite their growing affluence, many of the newcomers were not habitually charitable; they had sweated too hard to make a dollar. Touro's money put numerous organizations on a firm basis; his substantial gifts helped Jewish communities throughout the country entrench themselves. He set an example for American Jewry and for the country as a whole through his nonsectarian benevolence. Cumberland's *Benevolent Hebrew* of 1795 was reborn on American soil.⁵²

Gentiles were very much impressed by his gifts. Longfellow certainly knew what the Touro brothers had done to keep fresh the memory of their Rhode Island home; in the poem "Jewish Cemetery at Newport," he wrote:

Gone are the living, but the dead remain
And not neglected; for a hand unseen
Scattering its bounty, like a summer rain,
Still keeps their graves and their remembrance green.

The last testament of the New Orleans recluse was translated into a number of European languages and published in Italy, Germany, and France as well as England. Jews overseas were impressed. Touro's gifts to Jerusalem touched them. American Jews were no longer uncouth frontiersmen; they were brethren of the House of Israel. Touro was no Jewish George Peabody. The wealthy Peabody set out to establish a host of institutions in this country to raise America's cultural *niveau*. Peabody had a dream of the infinite horizons that could be envisioned through the furtherance of the arts and sciences, through education and the humanities. All this was beyond the ken of the New Orleans merchant. Touro was an unusually modest, retiring man thrust posthumously onto the stage of Jewish and American history. He was no strong-willed notable of heroic stature, but myth made him the ideal American Jew, the generous citizen, the committed religionist.

The Monument

Touro was given a public funeral in Newport and buried in the old synagogal cemetery. The bells of the churches in town tolled and the shops closed. Eight rabbis were present at the graveside where the preachers painted a moral. In New Orleans while his memory was still green, it was proposed to erect a monument to him, but the enthusiasm soon evaporated and nothing was done. Six years later the proposal was taken up again, and the rabbi of Gates of Mercy, James K. Gutheim, still Orthodox in his views, made no objection, though the Second Commandment had for millennia been deemed to forbid Jews to make graven images or likenesses (Exodus 20:4). Isaac M. Wise, Max Lilienthal, the radical Reformer, David Einhorn and the world traveler, I. J. Benjamin, all objected to this break with tradition. The whole subject was finally referred to important scholars in Europe; their opinions all indicated that there would be no objection to an obelisk, but a statue was completely unacceptable. In the meantime, the Civil War broke out in 1861 and the matter was forgotten. Touro's legacies are his monument—more eternal than bronze. There is no question that the inscription on his tombstone is apt: "The last of his name, he inscribed it in the book of philanthropy to be remembered forever."⁵³



In 1776 there were five Jewish communities with congregations in the United States: Newport, R.I., New York City, Philadelphia, Charleston, S.C., and Savannah.



CHAPTER FIVE

THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE AMERICAN JEW:

THE NEW ECONOMY 1776-1840

DEFINITION

No man is of one piece; no man is of one epoch. Touro, born in 1775, belongs to the colonial past; his death in 1854 documents his antebellum modernity. He was a commission merchant and a shipper; more importantly, he was an investor in urban real estate. The population explosion in New Orleans and the city's rise as the great port of the Mississippi Basin poured money into his coffers. All he had to do was to sit on his haunches and watch his unearned increment make him a rich man. The pre-Revolutionary merchant could not master or administer the manifold varieties of business in a land where the population doubled frequently. By the end of the eighteenth century, mercantile specialists had become an imperative necessity. The successful revolt against Great Britain ushered in a commercial revolution, a new economy: extensive land speculation, banking, buying and selling of stocks, bonds, government obligations; building "rapid" transportation; expanding international trade—as far as China—unhampered by English navigation laws; introducing maritime, life, and fire insurance; developing large-scale cotton planting and even turning to industry. The new commercial fields were serviced by a swiftly growing body of professional administrators, lawyers preeminent among them. The new economy was sparked in large part by the New West. It would not be long before the transallegheeny trade would be more important than the transocean traffic. Beyond the tidewater, new opportunities beckoned; thousands moved westward, impelled by land speculation. First came the farmers, then the hamlet builders and peddlers, and finally the shopkeepers, who dreamt of fast growing towns and substantial wealth. The changing economy was concerned not only with the masses who tilled the ground, but with the towns and their potential. Jews, too, played their part in all these revolutionary changes—a modest role, to be sure, befitting their modest numbers.

LAND

By the late eighteenth century, many land speculators looked to the West. No longer could Great Britain hinder the westward thrust. This push across the mountains towards the ever retreating horizon was not new. Jews had always been a part of it. As early as 1702, a London Jewish businessman was among the proprietors of West New Jersey; for all such early proprietors, as for later investors, land was a commodity from which they hoped to profit. By 1708, a South Carolina businessman owned a 1,000-acre parcel. Isaac Levy, of the eighteenth-century Levy-Franks family, had large holdings in the Catskills and in the Georgia Sea Islands. From the 1760's on, the London and Philadelphia Frankses together with their satellites, the Simon-Gratz clan of Lancaster and Philadelphia, were involved both directly and indirectly in the huge colonial enterprises of "Indiana," the Grand Ohio, Vandalia, and the Illinois-Wabash companies. Millions of acres were at stake. In the end, none of these colonies was established, since the wary English would tolerate no settlement beyond the tidewater and the range of their cannon. Like the British, the new United States, too, would not recognize Indian titles to huge grants, and the apprehensive states insisted that the western lands become part of the national domain; the pre-Revolutionary Jewish speculators lost their sizable investments.¹

The proclamation of an America republic in 1776 did not in any sense lower the land speculation fever; if anything, it raised it. Operating within the framework of the states and territories, enterprisers could hope to secure good titles. That was important. Lobbying for grants shifted from imperial London to the national and state capitals. The Yazoo land rascals were given 25,000,000 acres by state legislators before the sale was revoked. While speculators planned and intrigued, often successfully, to secure large wilderness parcels, urban real estate promoters bought and sold town and city lots. Jews had been freeholders in New Netherland ever since the 1660's when Asser Levy made a purchase in Albany despite the barriers erected by the pious Peter Stuyvesant. Wherever Jews dwelt—and in all periods—they bought homes for their own use, purchases generally not prompted by speculation. In 1805, Bernard Hart, of New York City, was dickering with John Jacob Astor for some town lots and getting the worst of the bargain, but Hart was not averse also to large-scale purchases. His South Carolina holdings totaled more than 60,000 acres. Isaac Moses, Hart's contemporary and fellow Shearith Israel member—they both were presidents of the congregation—owned lots, houses, a warehouse, and half of a wharf. The total Moses holdings were valued at about \$135,000. Some of his lands had been the attainted property of the Loyalist De Lanceys, kin to the Jewish Frankses. Moses Lopez and

Mordecai Myers, both of New York City, ran land offices; they were professional realtors, buying, selling, exchanging properties, and remitting taxes to distant western states. Charleston's Mordecai Cohen (d.1848) was reputed to be one of the largest owners of real estate in the city. Having made his fortune in business as a cotton factor for plantation owners, he retired at forty-six in order to devote his time to good works. Because of his wealth and integrity, a railroad put him on its board; the city made him a commissioner of markets. His favorite charity was the local, non-Jewish orphan asylum on which he showered money and devotion. David Judah, of Richmond, was one of that Virginia town's early urban developers.²

All through this period, Jewish merchants dreamt of town and country settlements across the Alleghenies as far west as the Mississippi and as far south as Florida. They never gave up the hope that land speculation would make them rich. Lt. Col. Aaron Levy pushed his town development in Warren County, New York; it was called Mt. Levy; Isaac Franks, together with Dr. Benjamin Rush and others, owned a Pennsylvania tract of 18,400 acres; David Franks, the former British army purveyor, died possessed of large parcels of land in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the Illinois country. His cousin Moses Levy, a "Philadelphia lawyer"—one of the best—was partner in a land company interested in developing the Ohio country, and the merchant-shipping Myerses of Norfolk owned 5,000 acres in the new state of Illinois. Some speculators nursed inflated visions of what their petty holdings would do for them. The French immigrant, Benjamin Nones—in and out of a variety of vocations—owned a few western Pennsylvania acres in 1786. Nostalgically, he called it Bayonne; his rabbi Jacob R. Cohen, was the proud possessor of 301 acres in the neighborhood of Pittsburgh; this was to be the future city of Cohensburg. David Nathans in 1817, fathered the hamlet of Nathansville. The site of present-day Wilkinsburg, in the same area, was once called Jews' Town or the Jews' Land.³

AARON LEVY

One entrepreneur succeeded in establishing a town that has lasted. This was Aaron Levy (1742(?)-1815), merchant, small-scale army purveyor, and Revolutionary War militiaman. As a land agent for others, he looms large, buying as he did hundreds of thousands of acres for Robert Morris and Supreme Court Justice James Wilson. On his own, Levy attempted to develop Levyburg, Levy's Delight, and Levy's Grove. His one success, if it may be deemed such, was Aaronsburgh (Jews' Town) in Centre County, Pennsylvania, laid out in 1786. One part of town was called Aaron's Square; another, which bore his wife's name, was called Rachel's Way. In order to attract buyers, he sold lots by lottery and set aside land

for schools, churches, and cemeteries. The Salem Evangelical (Lutheran) Church was given a lot and a communion set; the German Reformed Church was treated equally well. Levy bore no grudge against the Reformed sectarians because they had remonstrated successfully in Philadelphia when Mikveh Israel prepared to build a synagog near their church. Levy hoped that his town, in the center of the state, would become the capital but it never succeeded even in becoming the county seat; he was further disappointed when the east-west highway failed to run through Aaronsburg. Nevertheless, this settlement founded by and named after a Jew is the first to survive to the present day, if only as a village.⁴

THE GRATZES

Having no children, Aaron Levy made Simon Gratz, son of Michael, his heir. Levy transferred his lands, over 100,000 acres, to this scion of the family. Levy was close to the Gratzes. Whether they liked it or not, the Gratzes had been in the land business for almost two generations, ever since the 1760's when they first bought a 9,000-acre tract in New York's Mohawk Valley. This was the beginning of their involvement with the West, an involvement which would continue till Simon's brother Benjamin died in the 1880's. Even before the Revolution, the aspiring firm of B. & M. Gratz—Barnard and Michael—thought big; two companies, in which they were partners, once claimed a total of some 60,000,000 acres in the Illinois and Wabash country. They worked closely with their kinsman Joseph Simon, the dean of the Pennsylvania Jewish fur entrepreneurs. Through a partner of his—one of many—Simon was interested in the site of the city of Louisville.⁵ The Gratz brothers, of Philadelphia, and Cohen & Isaacs of Richmond, had substantial holdings in Kentucky, once part of Virginia, whose lands then had extended westward to the Mississippi. These firms had acquired acreage by buying up land warrants issued to Revolutionary War veterans in lieu of cash. Henry Hart, of New York State, a brother of Aaron Hart, the Canadian "seigneur," was in the business of buying and selling such warrants in his part of the country. He owned a farm, grist mill, and potash works.⁶ In the late eighteenth century, Isaiah Isaacs, Jacob Mordecai, and other Virginians were given by Governor Patrick Henry a patent to over 12,000 acres in the Dismal Swamp. One wonders what they thought they could do with those wetlands. Through the purchase of scrip, the Gratzes, too, came into possession of large parcels. As merchants, they bought and sold land and warrants on their own account, in partnership with others, or on a commission basis. In the years 1783-1785 they had patented over 100,000 acres in their own name; together with partners, they controlled another parcel of over 320,000 acres. The family holdings were largely centered in southwest Virginia and the upper Ohio basin, areas once Vir-

ginian but later to become part of Kentucky and, following the Old Dominion's secession, of West Virginia. When Michael died in 1811, he himself owned large plots in New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Kentucky, among other places.⁷

The prepossession—mania?—of speculating Americans to acquire large parcels of land and to settle them must be taken into account if one is to understand Mordecai Noah's attempt to establish a Jewish colony on Grand Island in the Niagara River. Despite his ancillary motives, he was but one of hundreds who were moving to open the West in the hope of making a fortune in a hurry. Like all other speculators, the Gratzes of the first and second generation had high hopes. They gave their name to various land parcels, post offices, railroad stops, and hamlets in Pennsylvania and Kentucky. In the 1940's, a post office in Kentucky and a town in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, were still named after them. Did the Gratzes after two generations reap the benefit of all their purchases and surveys? The younger Gratzes may have sold off their acreage at a substantial profit. It remains to be determined how fortunate they really were; their firm was bankrupt in 1826.⁸

THE SOUTH

Much of the speculation in gargantuan tracts was concentrated in Virginia lands because of the state's enormous size, but Jews, like others, were willing to invest anywhere if they could make a profit. Thus individuals turned to the Old South and the New Southwest. By the 1830's, Texas attracted their attention. It was said that the Jewish banking firm of J. L. & S. Joseph was tied in with Samuel Swartwout, who proposed to buy millions of acres in Texas and neighboring Mexico. Swartwout, an intimate friend of Aaron Burr and involved in his schemes, was, as it turned out, a crooked politician. There was a great deal of public discussion, especially in that decade, about freeing Texas and, incidentally, making its enormous acreage available to American businessmen. This agitation had the support of the Josephs and Mordecai Noah of the *Evening Star*. Farther to the east, Richmond's Joseph Marx invested heavily in the Alabama-Mississippi lands of the Chickasaws; Col. Mordecai Sheftall, of Savannah, owned a 2,000-acre plot in Camden County, Georgia, near the Florida border. As soon as Florida became part of the United States (1813-1819), venturesome Jewish businessmen began buying large tracts as investments.

In all likelihood, the largest Jewish speculator was Michael Lazarus, of Charleston, scion of a notable family. Grandfather Lazarus had been a founder of Congregation Beth Elohim; Michael's father, Mark, was a heroic veteran of the attack on British-held Savannah in 1779. Michael himself was the vice president of America's first liberal synagogue; brother

Joshua married into the English Yates-Samuel family from which Sir Herbert Samuel, later High Commissioner for Palestine, would emerge. When in 1844 the governor of South Carolina called on the citizens of the state to celebrate Thanksgiving by offering up their devotions to Jesus Christ, Michael Lazarus chaired the public meeting called by Jewish citizens to protest this disregard of their sensibilities. Lazarus, a politician and entrepreneur, was one of the first Jews to inaugurate steamboat traffic on the Savannah River, thereby opening up markets to the settlers in Georgia and in the South Carolina outback. By 1820, he had purchased over 156,000 acres north of present-day Miami, land for which he paid one dollar an acre. This was sheer speculation. He could not have imagined in his wildest dreams that Miami would one day rise in South Florida, a city with well over 250,000 Jews. When Lazarus acquired his acres, there were in all the United States fewer than 5,000 Israelites.⁹

Very few of the Jews who hazarded their cash and credit were themselves interested in settling on the soil. Moses Elias Levy was a notable exception; he was a pioneer Florida planter and colonizer. In 1835, one of his plantations was raided by the Indians and had to be abandoned. Anticipating his son David, Moses Levy was active in politics too. Eager to further his own views, he ventured into journalism, occasionally writing under the pseudonym “Yulee” which his sons were to adopt as their family name. He had trouble with his two boys; they were very frequently in conflict with him. He was weird in his outlook; no one who has read his writings can doubt that. About the year 1818 he brought his sons to the United States; one was sent to Harvard; the other, David, who in later years would become a representative and senator from Florida, went to live with the Myerses, the Norfolk merchant-shippers, but instead of “minding the store” he buried his nose in books. Neither David Levy Yulee nor his brother was to evince any interest whatsoever in Jews or Judaism. Their sister Rahma married Jonathan Da Costa, of St. Thomas, and became the mother of two notable Americans, Dr. Jacob Mendez Da Costa, the physician, and Charles Da Costa, a member of the New York bar. Both of these younger Da Costas, like their uncles, lived as Christians. Moses E. Levy managed to salvage his investments; most Jewish speculators holding large parcels do not seem to have been so successful. Their capital and credit were often limited; they could not make the necessary improvements—good roads, for instance; they were delinquent in taxes; they overextended themselves. Depressions were frequent; loans were called in. Nevertheless, together with others, they did help open frontier areas wherever they lay, on the Ohio in the 1760’s and in the Florida wilderness during the 1820’s.¹⁰

PLANTERS AND PLANTATIONS

M. E. Levy was exceptional among Jewish land speculators in that he was a planter, indeed one of Florida's pioneer large-scale cultivators. He owned farms on both the east and the west coast of the peninsula. Jewish dirt farmers were rare in the country; even rarer were Jewish plantation owners in the South. It is difficult to determine how many Jews did choose farming as a way of life because of a desire to return to the soil. Very likely some Jewish plantation owners (there were some) turned to the land because it promised them a degree of social status, political leverage. Such planters wanted to upgrade themselves. If Jews were rarely found on the soil, it was due to lack of interest, the fear of isolation and social rejection, a want of capital. If we include Salvador, who had been killed by Indians at the beginning of the Revolutionary War, there were probably not more than twenty large- and middle-scale Jewish planters in the South in the period from 1776 to 1840. Considering the relatively small percentage of plantations and substantial farms in the South and the miniscule number of Jews in that region, we may venture to guess that the percentage of Jewish planters would probably compare favorably with that of the non-Jews.

In the 1820's and 1830's, Polish-born Mordecai Cohen, of Charleston, owned at least two plantations, later turned over to his two sons. Had he bought them as an investment or had he acquired them in the course of business and held on to them? His sons made the plantation a way of life. Cohen, who ran the farms himself for a brief period, was primarily an urban businessman, as was Nathans, another planter who served at one time as president of the Charleston congregation. In many respects Chapman Levy (1787-1850) was outstanding among the Jewish planters; he was typically "Southern." Admitted to the bar at the age of nineteen, he practiced law successfully, took the oath as a militia officer during the War of 1812, accepted a commission as colonel on the governor's staff, served in both houses of the state legislature, and gloried in his belligerent Unionist views during the parlous days of Nullification. Levy, known and respected in Washington, moved west like many other South Carolinians to the new cotton lands of Mississippi where he ran a plantation, apparently one of substantial size. What part did his plantations play in providing him with a social and political background? The available sources betray no Jewish interest on his part; his sister and daughter both married out.¹¹

INSURANCE

Some, if not most, Jewish planters were also successful businessmen or lawyers—which is what makes so unlikely any dedication to the role of dirt farmers. Whether farmers, lawyers, or traders, they were influenced by and participated in the new economy as it made its way in Charleston and other large towns. By the 1830's, Jews in the South Carolina metropolis were already moving into the field of insurance. Individuals were directors of companies. In this same decade, Hyman Gratz, of Philadelphia, assumed the presidency of the Pennsylvania Company for Insurance on Lives and Granting Annuities; in 1818, he had gone on the board of this the first corporation to deal exclusively in life insurance. Hyman's brother Joseph was a director of the Atlantic Insurance Company in the 1820's. Jews had begun buying shares in the Pennsylvania Company as early as 1809 when it first opened its subscription lists. The interest of Jewish traders in the new insurance corporations goes back at least to 1792 with the organization of the Insurance Company of North America, the first marine insurance firm in the United States to offer its stock on the open market. Michael Prager was one of the original founders. A portrait presumed his once hung in the company's rooms in Philadelphia, but it is a fake—a copy of a portrait of a marquis which now adorns the walls of the Louvre. An enterprising artist had provided a series of portraits of the founding fathers of this venerable company; six of them were not authentic or were questionable. Corporate instant respectability! Michael was reputedly an Irishman from County Cork. For the Philadelphia shippers of the 1790's, much of the insurance on their export cargoes had to be underwritten in London or even in Amsterdam, a cumbersome affair and a great nuisance. It was obvious why Michael in the American branch of Prager *frères* would want American underwriters. Michael's purchase of shares in the new enterprise was very probably a personal venture rather than a Prager company investment.¹²

In the early 1800's, Judah Touro's older brother Abraham was engaged in marine and fire insurance in Boston and environs. For the most part he was an agent—not an insurer—securing underwriters for only the limited amounts for which they assumed responsibility. Occasionally Abraham ventured and became an insurer also. If a company was established, the company as a collectivity would be responsible, not the individual insurer; losses could be shared, reduced, which is how maritime insurance companies came to be established in Massachusetts in the last decade of the eighteenth century. One of the pioneers in this new corporate approach was Abraham Touro's uncle, Moses Michael Hays (1739–1805). Like many other Jews who grew up in the British colonies, Hays began as an artisan, a watchmaker; this made possible his acceptance as a

freeman in New York City. He moved on to Newport, then in its heyday, opened a shop with a partner, failed, and started over again in 1772. His was a typical store, offering its customers groceries, hardware, textiles, and hard liquor. With the British occupation of the town he moved on; by 1781 he had decided to settle in Boston where he remained for the rest of his life. Turning speedily to fire and maritime insurance, he himself became one of the organizers of companies in this field. As a pioneer in underwriting marine and fire insurance and furthering the establishment of companies in this new sphere of business, Hays was in reality no specialist. It is very much to be doubted whether prior to 1840 there was any Jewish businessman who devoted himself exclusively to selling insurance. Hays was a colonial tradesman who suffered bankruptcy in 1772, but then adjusted himself enthusiastically and profitably to the post-revolutionary economic challenges.¹³

When he made a new start in Boston in the front room of a coffeehouse on State Street, he became another American Jewish omnibus businessman, a broker. The multiplicity of his proffers and doings is fascinating. He supplied foreign and domestic intelligence in the areas of commerce; apparently he was well acquainted with market conditions in England, France, Spain, Portugal, and South America. When Paul Revere needed iron for his foundry, Hays sent him to Providence with a note of introduction to Brown & Benson, guaranteeing any purchase Revere might make. Hays also sold insurance, discounted notes, lent money, and bought and sold real estate, bills of exchange, and ships too. Indeed, he was an honorary member of the Boston Marine Society in 1789. In the role of a dealer quick to turn an honest penny at anything, he secured freight for China and encouraged the establishment of a bank. As a New England merchant—and he was that, too—he bought and sold fish, whale oil, salt, candles. He had an office on the Long Wharf and traded with the West Indies and the Gulf ports. Hays was thus something of a new man, a colonial merchant *redivivus* with a vision that reached as far as the China sea.

In chronicling this man's life, it is a pleasure to point out that he died a man of wealth. It is no pleasure for the historian nourished on Horatio Alger pap to inter his heroes in the bankruptcy courts. Hays, a native American of good stock, was accepted socially in the better Christian circles; if there were Jews in town—there must have been some newcomers—there is no record that he associated with them, though religiously he was no defector, but a dignified, loyal Jew possessing even a Jewish library, mostly in Hebrew—liturgical works no doubt. Hays was a good citizen: he furthered the local theatre, bought shares in the Boston Athenaeum, contributed to Harvard, and stood out as one of the country's important Masons. The inventory of his holdings testifies eloquently to his

involvement in the new economy; he owned lands, bank stocks, shares in turnpikes and toll bridges. In an ethically-tinged letter sent in 1796 to his son Judah about to set sail for France, the father urged him to maintain the principles of rectitude and honor at all times. His personal letters to his grandchildren manifest an understanding of their psyche; like a child himself he enters into their very special world, embracing it and them with kindness, affection, and insight.¹⁴

BANKING

Moses Michael Hays was the first customer of the second bank to be established in the United States (1784), the Bank of Massachusetts. He realized its importance, and if not one of the prime sponsors, he was among the businessmen who helped bring it to birth and solicited subscriptions for it. Jews were interested in the first three banks established in this country in the early 1780's, for they bought stock in all three. As the broker who handled much of Morris's official financial transactions, Haym Salomon was a substantial customer of the Philadelphia Bank of North America. Though constituting only about 1 percent of New York's population, the Jews bought about 2.5 percent of the stock of that city's first bank; they were interested, but they were small fry. They were still licking the financial wounds incurred in their exile from British-held New York and the postwar depression. It is odd that Isaac Moses was able to buy four shares and yet be bankrupt the following year. It may well be that, as he struggled to survive in the bad years that followed the Revolution, he was eager to fortify his credit at the bank.¹⁵

As urban businessmen, the Jews had much to gain from establishing and supporting banks: financial transactions in the colonial period, juggling bills of exchange, evaluating American and foreign currencies posed many problems. The establishment of banks, it was hoped, would solve many difficulties; financial independence must follow political independence. Despite the break with England, the United States continued to turn to that country for financial aid. By the 1820's, the Rothschilds—already a legend in the United States—were doing business in this country; by 1840, they had agents in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. In three of these cities their agents were Jews, J. L. & S. Joseph & Company in New York, Robert and Isaac Phillips in Philadelphia, and the Cohen brothers in Baltimore. It was the politically influential Cohens who helped the Rothschilds receive the appointment as agents for the Department of State in 1835. After 1837, August Belmont became the Rothschild's chief agent in the United States, particularly in the decade of the 1840's. Even before coming here, he had worked for these international bankers at Frankfort on the Main and Naples. It was the con-

sensus of Belmont's contemporaries that he was a good banker; he survived the panic of the 1830's to become rich and influential.¹⁶

Like many others, the New York Josephs and the Philadelphia Phillips went down in the 1837 crash. No one knows the extent of the losses of the Joseph brothers; estimates run from \$2,000,000 to \$6,000,000. They dragged down others; Europeans were affected, since the Josephs had connections abroad. There were at least four partners in J. L. & S. Joseph & Company: Joseph Lazarus Joseph (1797-1858), Solomon I. (or L.) Joseph (1799-1860), Jacob Levy, Jr., a Jamaican who was also a director in a local bank, and M. Henriques. Levy was a kinsman; Henriques, so it appears, was also related. The two Josephs were from Richmond. As teenagers they barely escaped with their lives on December 26, 1811, when a theatre fire took a heavy toll. It was then that the two brothers swore solemnly that they would observe that anniversary as a special Purim—as a holiday of salvation—fasting all day to the eve and ending with a frolic. They would never again go to a theatre, so they said. After they grew up, they moved on to Philadelphia and then to New York, the scene of their labors and misfortunes. There, as Sephardim, they joined Shearith Israel. Both brothers made good marriages; the one tied himself to notable London families distinguished for their wealth and communal prestige; the other to the New York Harts, Seixases, and Hendrickses. It is questionable how important such marriages and connections were, but one can hardly doubt that they were helpful. The Josephs were involved in New York City real estate urban subdivisions; they had borrowed heavily, and when their loans were called in, they lost everything; at least there were no assets. Contemporaries in their posteventum criticisms maintained that they were not competent bankers.¹⁷

As bankers, the Baltimore Cohens were more successful. These German immigrants began life modestly; two brothers, Jacob I. and Israel I., came to the new United States sometime in the 1770's. Jacob was the Cohen of Richmond's Cohen & Isaacs; Israel, also a Richmondian, opened a small store in the effort to make a living for his wife and numerous children. (He had fathered ten children in fourteen years, nine boys and one girl.) After his death in 1803 his widow and the children moved north to Baltimore; there they were to become the most respected Jewish family in town. The sons, able men, made their way, first as grocers, then as lottery agents. From lotteries they moved into domestic banking, although they did have some international connections. By 1834, Jacob I. Cohen, Jr., the head of the company, had become a member of a local organization dedicated to the commercial furtherance of the city. When the great depression struck three years later, the Cohen bank paid off in specie; it had survived—no mean achievement.¹⁸

The Cohens made their money in the lottery business, the great American pastime in colonial and early republican days. It was a popular Jewish business; selling tickets augmented the income of many a Jewish tradesman. Buying tickets often helped the purchaser combine good citizenship with profit, for the sale of tickets provided the cash needed to support charities, build wharves, advance cultural organizations, and help churches and synagogues, too. In 1808, Mikveh Israel, always in financial distress, sponsored a lottery offering a grand prize of \$10,000. In Wilmington, Delaware, J. S. & D. Solis advertised the lotteries which it favored. Like the Cohens and about 200 others, the Solises also had a lottery office in metropolitan Philadelphia. Cohen's Lottery and Exchange Office was one of the largest businesses of its genre in the United States. One of the drawings it ran in 1817 offered a grand prize of \$100,000—an enormous sum in those days. Individual tickets sold at \$50. The Cohens published a paper of their own, *Cohen's Gazette and Lottery Register*, a business publication listing and describing lotteries, stocks, bank notes; there was even an occasional news item. The company did a mail order business and offered a variety of services to the public in the branches which it had opened in the country's major cities. In 1831 it moved into stockbroking and banking. The intense competition in lotteries and the burdensome regulations impelled the Cohens to divest themselves of their lottery interests; the business was no longer as profitable as it had once been.¹⁹

The Josephs and the Phillips brothers were among the better known Jewish private bankers in the North. (There were certainly others, but historians have yet to trace their records, if any have survived.) The Cohens of Baltimore stood out in Maryland; in New Orleans the Hermanns were important. When the Josephs and their banking associates closed their doors, they helped drag down the Hermanns. The "domino theory" that the collapse of one involved others certainly applied to many in 1837. For what it is worth, rumor had it that when the New Orleans house was stricken in the panic of 1837, its losses amounted to \$10,000,000. After his arrival in America about the year 1804, Samuel, the head of the Hermann family here in the United States, settled down in New Orleans, married a Catholic girl, opened a shop, and gradually increased the scope of his trading. He trafficked in slaves, dealt in real estate and stocks, advanced money to the planters on their crops, moved into the export business, and with ships of his own extended his reach to Europe, the West Indies and Mexico. Somewhat like Hays in Boston, he was in effect a merchant banker but, unlike the former, lived in grand style. For one of his parties in the prosperous 1830's, he sent out 350 invitations. Three of his Christian-reared sons helped him in the business; they were directors of banks, gaslighting companies, marine and fire insurance companies. Two of the Hermann granddaughters made brilliant

marriages. One became the wife of Senator Francis Gifford Newlands, of Nevada; the other married Chauncey M. Depew of New York, the railroad president, United States senator, and famed raconteur.²⁰

In North Carolina, Aaron, one of the Rhode Island Riveras, was cashier of the Bank of Fear in Wilmington. North Carolina—sandwiched in between the far more developed Virginia and South Carolina—was not an important state in the first half of the nineteenth century, nor did it shelter a Jewish community. One of Aaron Rivera's neighbors in this most populous town in the state was Aaron Lazarus, an able merchant capitalist, more successful than Rivera whose own career was in no sense notable. In South Carolina—Charleston, primarily, but also in Georgetown, Cheraw, Columbia, and Hamburg on the Savannah—Jews served as presidents, directors, and cashiers of banks, especially in the early decades of the 1800's when Charleston was one of the country's most prosperous towns and sheltered a sizable and wealthy Jewish community. In Virginia, as in other states before the establishment of banks, individual merchants offered their clients banking services; it was not uncommon for merchants to discount bills of exchange. Indeed, in a primitive fashion they served as banks of deposit and discount. The more affluent Jewish businessmen in the state were early invited to become administrators and officers in the banks or branches that were opening in a number of towns, in Norfolk, Petersburg, and Richmond.²¹

It was almost inevitable that Solomon Etting, one of the leading citizens of Baltimore since the 1790's, would be interested in banking. In that decade he was one of the organizers of the Union Bank, in which he and his family held stock. This was an institution favored by the Jews. Like their colonial predecessors, Jewish merchants were strongly dependent upon long-term credits. Solomon's kinsmen, the Gratzes of Philadelphia, were tied in with the Philadelphia banks. Simon Gratz was a prime organizer of the Schuylkill Bank; brother Hyman was to become a director of the prestigious Girard Bank. By the 1790's, even the conservative Rhode Islanders saw fit to charter the Bank of Rhode Island; Moses Seixas, subsequently Grand Master of the state's Masons, was appointed cashier of the new institution. He and his son, a teller, ran the bank five days a week but never on the Sabbath. On that day these observant Jews refrained from labor; they turned their keys over to a Gentile lad, who in turn gave them to a non-Jewish clerk, thus the religious amenities were served. For his labors the boy was rewarded with delicacies, unleavened bread on Passover and "Haman's ears"—bonbons in this case—on Purim.²²

Throughout the early years of the century, New York sheltered Jewish private bankers but these men played no role of any consequence in the economic life of the community. In this city and in other towns too,

individual Jews were moneylenders and mortgage dealers. Thus, in effect, they were in banking. A petty capitalist of this type probably appeared in the local directories as a “gentleman.” Jewish banking talent had a better chance to display itself in smaller towns; Jews were never to play an important part in New York City’s larger banks; their role was limited to private banking, although on occasion an individual might be appointed a director or even president of a commercial bank. In the late 1830’s when the Josephs’s offices were about to be padlocked and when August Belmont first made his bow, a new financial figure appeared on New York’s business stage: Philip Speyer, who began his career in this country as an importer of consumer goods, though even then he dealt in bills of exchange. With the new decade of the 1840’s, the firm began to turn to foreign and domestic exchange and brokerage in all its branches. It is obvious that the New York Jews of 1840 with a population of a paltry few thousand in a community of 300,000 represented no real financial power. There were a number of wealthy men, but they were not the city’s financial elite; the economic fortresses had been manned for generations by Gentiles. The Hendrickses of course had money, but it is very much to be doubted whether they were comparable to the town’s tycoons.²⁵

In its essential form, pawnbroking both here and abroad was, is, banking. The Jew is the stereotyped pawnbroker in literature and folklore, so it is curious that not many Jews were active in that field during the early nineteenth century. The reasons for this avoidance are not clear. If they were deterred, was it the stigma attached to the enterprise? Pawnbrokers were often suspected of being fences. Yet Jews did not avoid the second-hand clothing trade, dealing in renovated garments. The denizens of Chatham Street in New York were not admired. However, the need for money or credit is universal. The impoverished resorted to the pawnbroker; the merchants and merchant-shippers manipulated their suppliers or turned to the banks; they were grateful for the ferment of the market revolution, for an institution established to supply them with funds in an orderly fashion. Jews were on the whole adept in finances, although during this period they were not invited to exercise their talents. They were familiar with the techniques of exchange; they had respect for capital; they had commercial relations with fellow Jews in foreign markets; economics was for them no dismal science. As early as 1839, E. Levy, to judge from his name, a Jew, living in the Ohio River town of Madison, Indiana, wrote a twenty-four page brochure offering a new method to establish a stable currency. He entitled his essay, *The Republican Bank or the Present System of Banking*. Later, as the depression persisted, he sent a copy to President Tyler. Throughout the country Jews were given modest jobs in the state banks, and even in the national bank. Haym Salomon’s son Ezekiel served as cashier in the New Orleans branch of the rechartered

Bank of the United States; Col. David S. Franks was assistant cashier in the main office of the prestigious national bank. This was a political appointment for a man who merited consideration because of his army service and his need for a job. When commercial banking became a vital part of the American economy in the late nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century, Jews found it very difficult to secure a foothold in this important financial institution. It was increasingly difficult even to maintain the banks that they had already established. The closing decades of the twentieth century found them still excluded from the executive suites of great American banks.²⁴

JEWES AND THE STOCK EXCHANGE

Private bankers were always interested in the buying and selling of stocks and bonds, an important source of income for them. The Josephs were members of the New York Stock Exchange. Security dealers among the Jews made their appearance no later than the Revolution; stocks and obligations of various sorts were commodities which these brokers handled. Moses Cohen, of Philadelphia, advertised in 1782 that he not only bought and sold houses, farms, lots, carriages, and ships but also bills of exchange and Continental and state certificates—and this in addition to an employment bureau. By 1784, there were several such Jewish brokers in the city; by the 1790's, the national assumption of the war-incurred public debt led to increased speculation in government paper. It would take decades before brokers would leave off dealing in merchandise in its multifarious forms and begin limiting themselves to securities. As they emancipated themselves from the British, American businessmen floundered about for years before fashioning instrumentalities to regulate financial dealings. Among the devices they adopted was the stock exchange where securities could be traded in an orderly manner. Thus it was that an association of dealers met together in 1791 at Philadelphia, the financial capital of the country, to establish a trading center for securities. Embryonic exchanges had already existed for decades in the larger cities of the country. The following year a group of over twenty New York curb brokers—three of them Jews—gathered together in a hotel and set down the terms on which they would buy and sell "public stock." This was the beginning of a formal stockbrokers association in New York; in 1817 it called itself the New York Stock and Exchange Board. Then, of the twenty-eight members, two were Jews. By the early nineteenth century, people were investing in government securities, in the stocks of banks, in insurance and transportation companies; the first railroad stock was listed in 1830. There had always been Jews on the exchange and by 1824 they were exercising authority as officers. Jewish

membership in the nineteenth century was never large, particularly in view of the fact that the city ultimately sheltered thousands of Jewish businessmen.²⁵

One of the brokers who helped organize the loose confederation of New York security traders in 1792 was Ephraim Hart (1747-1825), a native of Fuerth in Franconia, who came here in the early 1770's. A number of his fellow countrymen had already settled in New York and other colonies; one of them may have encouraged him to emigrate. Hart sided with the Continentals during the Revolution, went into exile, and was present in 1782 at the dedication of Philadelphia's Mikveh Israel. He gave no gift to the building fund; probably he had very little but later, as he prospered, he would be generous to his New York congregation, Shearith Israel. When the war was over, he returned to New York and soon prospered as a stockbroker, a real estate speculator, a moneylender, and a dry goods dealer. His marriage into the Noah family linked him with well established Jewish families, the Phillipases and the Seixases. By 1794, a man of some means, he was elected president of the congregation; he had come up in the world in the space of a decade.²⁶

Ephraim Hart was on the 1792 stock exchange. A fellow member of Shearith Israel, bearing the same family name, was Bernard Hart (1763/1764-1855). It is not known whether the two were related; Hart is one of the commonest Jewish surnames in the eighteenth-century British colonies. Bernard Hart, London-born, first went to Canada and did business there for a time before making his home in New York City. After he moved south of the border, he may have served briefly as a resident agent for the Canadian merchant Aaron Hart of Three Rivers. There is every reason to believe that he continued to trade and to travel in Canada, where in 1799 he married or had a liaison with a non-Jew, Catherine Brett; their son Henry was the father of the American writer Bret Harte. After Hart's removal to New York, he married a daughter of Benjamin Seixas. Thus like Ephraim Hart he was accepted into the tight little social circle that ruled the local Jewish community. By 1808, Bernard, too, was president of the synagog.

In 1795, during a yellow fever epidemic, he worked day and night helping the sick and the dying. In common with many other American Jews, enjoying the camaraderie of militia service, he enlisted early and by the time of the second war with England was a divisional quartermaster with the rank of major. Very much the social animal, he joined the English ethnic organization, St. George Society. He was the "Father" of the Friary and president of the House of Lords or Under the Rose, a business association that met daily in a Wall Street tavern; as in the Newport Jewish club of 1761 and similar organizations, the amount of liquor permitted a member at a single sitting was limited. From 1831 to 1853, Hart

served the reconstituted stock exchange as its secretary in an honorary capacity. Like other affluent Jewish businessmen in the city, he dealt in securities, real estate, and insurance. His economic interests were wide and diverse, for he remained a traditional merchant, buying and selling for others on commission, speculating in real estate, auctioning off job lots, and providing insurance for those who turned to him. One of his many sons was Emanuel B. Hart, a merchant, broker, and realtor like the father, but also a politician who went to Congress in 1851, the first of the New York Jews to serve in the national legislature. In Baltimore, the wealthy Cohens loomed large on the local stock exchange. They were among the founders; one of the brothers, Benjamin, was to serve as president. They were so influential that they were not fined for non-attendance on the Jewish Holy Days; brokers were expected to be present daily when the list of stocks was read and the bidding began.²⁷

TRANSPORTATION

Among the stocks which the brokers traded were those issued by companies operating turnpikes, toll bridges, canals, and railroads. Jewish businessmen in the cities and small towns were advocating better roads even before the break with England; shopkeepers at both ends of a proposed turnpike knew they would be well served. Thus the handful of Jews in Lancaster wanted to be linked to Philadelphia; merchants who belonged to the metropolis's Mikveh Israel wanted to freight consumer wares to Joseph Simon and to expedite the return of country produce. When the Philadelphia-Lancaster Turnpike Company was finally organized in 1792, shares were bought by at least five Jews, including Simon, who twenty years earlier had sought to tie the two towns together by a King's highway or "publick road." A great step forward was made that same decade of the 1790's when canals were dug. By the 1830's the populated areas of the United States were being rapidly linked together through a system of canals tying the Mississippi to the East Coast. The participation of Jews in canal investments and administration was impressive. Abraham Touro of New England was the largest shareholder in one canal and vice president of another; Jacob Gratz, of Philadelphia, was president of the Union Canal linking the Susquehanna to the Delaware River, the Bay, and the ocean; other Pennsylvania Jewish enterprisers were directors of a canal that joined Pennsylvania to New Jersey, Maryland, and Virginia. In the Old Dominion, one of the Richmond Marxes was in 1835 an organizer of the James River and Kanawha Canal Company, which penetrated nearly 200 miles into the West. In Georgia, Col. M. Myers, a state legislator, was director of a similar waterway that set out to link together three of the most important rivers in the state. These men who hazarded their

fortunes on this type of transportation were courageous, astute speculators. Antebellum Savannah numbered several Jews who, respected members of the general community, were distinguished for their leadership in commerce and law; among them were Col. M. Myers, Solomon Cohen, and Isaac Minis. The first sailing ship to use an auxiliary engine in making its way across the Atlantic in 1819, the *Savannah*, was owned by the Savannah Steamship Company whose incorporators included Minis. It took time before steamships were accepted on the ocean and inland highways. Jews were not numerous among the firms which pioneered this form of transportation. A notable exception was the capitalist and speculator Michael Lazarus, of Charleston.²⁸

Canals offered advantages over the turnpikes, but in many respects the railroads were far superior to the canals as carriers of men and goods. Railroads were faster, could be used at night, and could move forward in almost any weather. As early as 1825, Richmond's Jewish merchants, among others, petitioned for a canal and railroad to carry coal from a nearby mine to the James River. That was before the steam locomotive had been perfected; the cars on this railroad were to employ mule power. Baltimore was well aware that same decade that New York and Pennsylvania, through their system of canals and portage railroads, were tapping the resources of the West and leaving Baltimore far behind commercially. This fear and the need for economic survival impelled the Baltimoreans in 1829 to start building a trunk line west to the Ohio. Thus was the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad born. On July 4, 1828, Charles Carroll, the last surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence, broke ground for the new road. That same year Solomon Etting was elected a director, representing the city of Baltimore; several years later Jacob I. Cohen, Jr., was put on the board. In 1830 when the B. & O. first began transporting passengers, horse power was used. Cohen, an aggressive capitalist, was active as director and vice president of another railroad which set out to link Baltimore with Washington to the south and with New York to the north.²⁹

Aaron Lazarus, one of the three notable sons of Sergeant Major Mark Lazarus, was among the first directors of a railroad that moved north across the state of North Carolina connecting with one that kept moving north to Petersburg and Richmond, thus tying the two states closely together. Another road tying the state capital Raleigh to the Wilmington & Weldon—on whose governing board Aaron Lazarus sat—was the Gaston & Raleigh. Its president was George Washington Mordecai, son of Jacob, the former Warrenton schoolmaster. Rails for this line were imported from England by George's brother Samuel, then a merchant in Petersburg. Like Baltimore and Wilmington, Charleston—justly concerned about its economic future—was determined to maintain its hold on and

divert the products of the South Carolina backcountry eastward rather than down the Savannah River to the rival Georgia port at its mouth. Michael Lazarus met this threat by dispatching his steamboats south to the Savannah and then up the river. But railroads can go where ships cannot. The Charlestonians built a railroad across the state westward to Hamburg on the Savannah. The road when finally completed in 1833 was the longest one in the world; the first steam locomotive built in the United States was used to make the run. Jewish participation in the building of the line has not been documented, but Jews used it. The town of Hamburg had but one bank and a Jew was on its board, and when the Hamburg Volunteers sailed south to do battle with the Seminoles, they included the warrior S. Hyams. Young Philip Phillips, the lawyer, made the trip over the road that same year bringing his sixteen-year-old bride to her new home in Mobile. After the newlyweds crossed the river to Augusta, Georgia, it took them seven days by stagecoach to reach Montgomery on the Alabama River where they could take a steamboat to Mobile.³⁰

The early national period—the years from 1775 to 1840—was marked by a revolution in transportation as the tidewater towns were linked together and the transappalachian lands penetrated. Men like Abraham Touro, the Cohens of Baltimore, the three Lazarus brothers, and George Washington Mordecai were not engineers or technicians; they were administrators or promoters, investors, financiers, entrepreneurs, representing local businessmen trying to advance the communities in which they lived. If their towns prospered, they too would prosper. Obviously the tiny Jewish settlements could play no vital role in these epoch-making innovations, although there is ample evidence that imaginative businessmen realized the economic significance of rapid transportation. They were eager to stimulate the economy and further their own well-being by shipping wares from the towns in which they lived and collecting the products of the hinterland. They were constantly aware that the improvement of travel and transport would mean immigrants, new towns, new Jewish communities which they would certainly welcome. It is worth noting that every inland Jewish community was organized after the beginning of the transport revolution.

INDUSTRY

INTRODUCTION

In the late 1840's Joshua Lazarus, in the role of an industrialist, brought gaslight to Charleston but in general Jews were not pioneers in American industry. The new post-colonial government established corporate forms of business structure; new industries were pioneered with the hope that

Americans would emancipate themselves from England and the Continent and thus be in a better position to compete with merchants abroad. The United States began to make advances in labor-saving devices; power machines were developed. Industry was harnessed to steam; transportation by turnpike, canal, and railroad stimulated trade and agriculture and urbanized the East, creating new markets for the West. Finished wares began to pour out of the cisallegheeny factories—machinery, implements, clocks and watches, foodstuffs, and liquor. With this came mass distribution in domestic and transoceanic markets. By 1840, what part did Jews play in this economic upheaval?³¹

Jewish artisans had been common in colonial times. These craftsmen were also found everywhere among the few “transports” who have been identified as Jews. The trades they practiced were diverse. Even in industry, such as it was, the Jews were not missing. Large-scale candlemaking in factories of a sort was a favorite Jewish industry. Jews played an important part in the manufacture of this commodity and in the short-lived cartel that the manufacturers set up in 1761. Though American industry became an economic factor of some significance after the War of 1812, its growth was gradual. As late as 1840 more cloth was made in homes than in factories. By and large Jews did not turn to industry; they had no industrial tradition and no skills. Under the European guild system, Jews had found it very difficult to secure expert training; they rarely had capital for hazardous new enterprises. American Jews seemed to have preferred speculation in land, in stocks; basically they were conservative. Thus we find no Jews in the making of arms, textiles, or machinery, even though there were dozens of small cotton and woolen mills. (But one “Jewish” name does appear among all these cloth factory owners—Moses Judah, who, despite his doubly Jewish name, was a Gentile.) Textile mills had been built in the South ever since the 1780’s, but Jews apparently evinced no interest, and this in a day when cotton was king. In their investments in the new economy, they tended to opt for transportation securities.³²

There is some evidence that during this early national period there were a number of small-scale industrialists. Like Aaron Lopez, the Newport merchant-shipper, they manufactured a variety of wares and commodities by the put-out, the home, the domestic system. Some no doubt had small factories. David G. Seixas, one of the New York hazzan’s several sons, manufactured sealing wax, printers’ ink, and enamel-coated visiting cards. He opened a brewery, pioneered in making crockery, and experimented with daguerreotype photography. There is no question that he was a skillful technician; it is equally true that he was egregiously unsuccessful in everything he undertook. Another clergyman’s son, Abraham H. Cohen—his father was the hazzan at Mikveh Israel—manufactured seltzer water and proposed organizing a mineral water company. He

wanted to sell stock in his enterprise; his Hygeia Fountain was to be an urban spa (1807-1808). Samples of his wares were sent to President Jefferson, but the scholarly Virginian refused to lend his name. Cohen was successful, however, in securing a recommendation for his product from Benjamin Rush, the eminent practitioner of medicine. George David Rosengarten, who had come from Germany in the 1820's, became a manufacturing pharmacist; the firm he founded, Rosengarten & Sons, was highly respected in the industry. It still existed in the late twentieth century as part of Merck & Company. Another pharmacist and scientist of sorts was Lewis Feuchtwanger, a learned German who not only imported but manufactured metallurgical products. He invented an alloy which he called American Silver Composition. During the panic of 1837, when small coins were scarce, he crafted tokens made up of his "silver"; they were used in his own business and by other firms on the East Coast and in Cincinnati.³³

The Dyers in Baltimore were meat packers, but not for the Jewish trade. In the larger communities, a small number of Jews were active in the kosher meat industry preparing their products for local consumption and for foreign export. During colonial days the export of kosher foodstuffs, beef, cheeses, poultry, sausages, had been a steady source of income to shippers doing business with the Islands, South America, and even the East Indies. Planters growing sugar cane in the Islands had no pastures for grazing. These exports in a diminishing degree continued, replete with a kashrut certificate to satisfy the scrupulous. Intensive studies of the occupational activities of antebellum Jewish businessmen may well reveal that some were engaged in industry. This is certainly a field for research that merits cultivating. Many small enterprises are already known. Jews made pens and quills, manufactured paper, and ran tanyards, sawmills, and grist mills. Others had factories in which they produced oil, silk, chocolate, starch, hair powder, copal varnish, harness, and brogans for sale to humble laborers and slaves. Obviously the line between artisan and manufacturer was still a very narrow one.³⁴

HEMP, CLOTH, AND CLOTHING

The Gratzes and their associates had been shipping kosher meat into the Caribbean since 1767. This enterprising family sent a young member, Benjamin (1792-1884), to look after their interests in Kentucky. A university graduate with an M.A. degree, Benjamin was a lawyer and had served as a cavalry officer in the War of 1812. Lexington, where he settled, was before long to recognize him as one of its most respected citizens. Gratz helped establish a bank and was involved in the building of a macadamized highway and a railroad to the Ohio River. The Lexington & Ohio Railroad, which he would guide later as president, did not reach

its destination, the river at Cincinnati, but the goal indicates Gratz's enterprise in the attempt to compete with Louisville, which had overshadowed Lexington with the coming of the steamboat. Lexington had no navigable river. Gratz and his partner were manufacturers of hemp rope and bagging used in the baling of cotton. At the time Gratz and other manufacturers produced millions of pounds of the product; it was the town's prime industry. When this nonagenarian passed away, a young girl paid tribute to him in the following verse:

How beautiful appears
The memory of a noble life like thine.
Whose countless virtues round so many years
Like clustered jewels shine.³⁵

Gratz was probably the only Jew in the hemp rope and cloth industry; there were more Jews in the garment industry, but here there is a problem of definition. Who is a clothing "manufacturer"? If a man makes a garment for a customer, he is a merchant tailor but if, through home industry he makes garments to be sold off the rack, he ranks as a manufacturer. Unfortunately, the term clothier does not inform the researcher whether he is dealing with a tailor or an industrialist. Jewish merchant tailors were certainly not uncommon. In fact, quite a number were to be found in the colonies no later than the second half of the eighteenth century when Isaac Nunez Cardozo—ancestor of a line of American notables—advertised in Newport that he was a "tailor from New York." Why not "from London," where he had learned his trade? Cardozo's ad appeared in 1774, only a year before Lexington and Concord; the English were anything but popular in America. In the early nineteenth century, Jews began to make their presence felt in the old clothes industry in New York City. They bought and sold, cleaned and renovated the garments they purchased from the gentry. Chatham Street was a center for this traffic. As a contemporary said ironically: "We Gentiles take our religion of the Jews second hand, why not our clothes." Jews had been manufacturing cheap garments for sailors, slaves, and other laborers since Lopez's time in pre-Revolutionary days. During the war for independence, Hayman Levy had made garments for the troops; no machine-made garments, of course, were to make their appearance until the 1840's and 1850's when sewing machines were perfected. Apparently it was not until the late 1830's, at the earliest, that some Jews began manufacturing clothing for the growing market. They still employed the put-out system and depended on town and country women. By 1840, the city directories contained frequent entries of Jews in the clothing trade, but there is no way to determine whether these merchant tailors and clothiers were primarily craftsmen or manufacturers. By 1841, eighty-six factories—small ones no

doubt—were making garments in Cincinnati; clothing was the largest industry in the city. It is probable that some Jews were manufacturers; some were certainly wholesalers; others were retailers. This much is certain: by 1842, a Jew, A. Tentler, had copyrighted a work, *New System of Measuring and Cutting Ladies' Dresses, Cloaks, Collars, Caps, Yokes, etc.*³⁶

LIQUOR

The evidence now available indicates that as late as 1840 not many Jews had become clothing manufacturers, but there is ample evidence that Jews were interested in the production and distribution of hard liquor. Jewish distillers had made their appearance in the colonies no later than 1739. The Hebraically-learned Mordecai M. Mordecai had made an effort in 1775 to eke out a living distilling whiskey on the western Pennsylvania frontier; his stills were on Sukes Run near Pittsburgh. Mordecai functioned as a small-scale manufacturer as did his neighbors in the Monongahela Valley who were to rebel later in the Whiskey Insurrection of the 1790's. Jews made their appearance as distillers in 1807 at Easton, in 1817 at Richmond, and in the 1820's at Philadelphia and Cincinnati. Manuel Judah, the Richmond distiller—he called himself a merchant—was the bondsman when Sophia Wolfe was appointed administratrix of the estate of her late husband, Benjamin Wolfe. Judah went her bond for \$50,000. When she was appointed guardian of her seven sons and one daughter, Judah again went security for her. Sophia's sons established here in the United States and in Europe a liquor business that became one of the largest in the world. One of Sophia's sons, James, was probably the first Jewish lawyer in Virginia; Nathaniel (1810-1865), another son, was a politician and lawyer living in Louisville where he was recognized as one of Kentucky's outstanding criminal lawyers and entrepreneurs. He was president of the Louisville Water Company. After helping secure the acquittal of an accused murderer, he was compelled with his fellow counsel to go underground for a brief period to escape the anger of an outraged mob; it was said that the jury had been bribed. The mob satisfied itself with burning him and Senator John J. Crittenden in effigy. Two other brothers, Udolpho and Joel, moved on to New York where they went into business as partners and on their own; they were in the wine, gin, and hard liquor trade with a distillery of their own. In the 1840's, Udolpho became an international whiskey manufacturer shipping his products all over the world from a warehouse in Germany. A contemporary said that he spent more than a million dollars advertising in American newspapers. Intermarriage seems to have been the rule in this family though several were members of Shearith Israel in the 1830's.³⁷

IRON AND COPPER

During the Revolution and in later decades, a number of Jews evinced interest in the mining and production of iron, though they remained very much on the fringes of the industry. New York's Sampson and Solomon Simson were substantial merchant-shippers, whalers, and cartel candle manufacturers. Sampson's brother Solomon (d.1801), early protagonist of a government mint and president of the radical Democratic Society, was an incorporator of the Associated Manufacturing Iron Company of the City and County of New York in 1786. This company, seemingly, never went beyond the planning stage. In any case, Jews were far more interested in copper than in iron. Asher Myers, brother of Myer Myers, the silversmith, was a coppersmith and brazier. In the 1790's, the quondam Hessian troop purveyors, the Jacob Mark(s) Company, were very active in the copper trade; Jacob Mark controlled the output of a copper mine in New Jersey and was active in both the ferrous and non-ferrous metal trade. Haym M. Salomon went into the copperplating business but accomplished nothing; he was no technician and from all indications was not a competent businessman. (This may explain why he was so eager to cash in on a reputed unpaid loan owed his patriot father.)³⁸

The Hendrickses, of New York, were merchants who made a name for themselves as industrialists specializing in copper. Uriah Hendricks (d. 1798), the founder of the family on this side of the Atlantic, was a merchant and ironmonger. All the Jewish shopkeepers in this country from the earliest days stocked "hard" goods on their shelves. The Hendricks family for decades remained general importers and exporters, carrying on trade with Europe and the West Indies by freighting their goods. The family business expanded under a son Harmon (1775-1858), who had begun to work with his father when only a youngster. At an early stage they began importing bar iron, pig iron, and copper products. They were suppliers and commission agents for Paul Revere's copper firm. After his father's death, Harmon Hendricks continued the transoceanic trade, importing consumer goods of all types and exporting tobacco, iron, cotton, molasses, pearl ash, logwood, and sugar. In this country he did business through a network of agents. More and more Harmon turned his attention to the copper trade, which offered rich opportunities, since the metal was used in stills, soap boilers, kitchen utensils, and as sheathing for ships. A foundry was purchased for reconverting old copper, and it was not long before Hendricks was recognized as America's largest copper importer though he was not averse to dealing in brass, tin, and lead as well.

Harmon, deciding to lay more emphasis on his copper trade, induced his brother-in-law Solomon I. Isaacs to go into business with him. Isaacs, a fifth-generation American, might well be called an aristocrat; his great grandfather had served in 1691 as a militiaman in King Williams' War.

The new firm established in 1814, carried the name Solomon I. Isaacs & Soho Copper Works. The war with England was still going on and copper was in demand for the building of ships. Thus Isaacs and Hendricks, his junior partner, became refiners and manufacturers. Later Harmon was to become the dominant partner; his children were the sole owners. Harmon died a very wealthy man, but it is by no means certain that he made most of his money in the metal business. He had inherited substantial wealth and increased his legacy as a merchant-shipper. When he needed funds on short-term loans, he could always turn to Jacob Levy, Jr., the banker. Hendricks reached out in many directions; he discounted notes, invested in banks—he was a director of one—and bought government bonds, stocks, and mortgages. He put his money into canals, turnpikes, bridges, ferryboats, steamship lines, and insurance companies, into industry and real estate. During the War of 1812, Hendricks subscribed most liberally—\$60,000—to the national war loans. Father Uriah had made his peace, one way or another, with the British in New York; the son was an ardent patriot. Harmon and his generation processed copper to build sailing ships and steamers; his son, the third generation in the business, supplied and helped finance Mathias Baldwin, who built locomotives used both here and abroad. In a day when business ethics often left much to be desired, Harmon certainly maintained his integrity. When a correspondent in London hinted that he lend himself to smuggling, he refused the suggestion. For generations the family members were known and respected for their devotion to the traditions of their fathers; they did no business on the Sabbath, closed their mill on that day, and kept a kosher kitchen. When they traveled, they were ready to live on bread and rice if kosher food was not available.³⁹

JEW AS PUBLISHERS

The purchase by Isaacs and Hendricks of a copper rolling mill in 1814 was in a way an industrial declaration of independence from Great Britain. It would not be long before America attempted to emancipate herself culturally as well from the onetime mother country. Literary magazines were beginning to make their appearance in America; important publishing houses would soon rise. Jewish publishers played their part in the drive to provide books for the American reading public. At first they reprinted books that had already come off the presses in England; later they began publishing books by Americans for Americans. Once more Jews were to become “a people of the book.” With the exception of the candle manufacturing of the 1760’s and copper processing in the early nineteenth century, publishing was one of the few major industries in which American Jews were to play a part. The works which Jewish printers, booksellers, and publishers produced and sold were, with rare exceptions,

of general rather than Jewish interest. Benjamin Gomez (1769-1828), a brother-in-law of Harmon Hendricks, was the country's first Jewish publisher. In the early 1790's, Gomez ran a book shop, sold stationery, and bound books. He advertised that he would sell at wholesale or retail but this pretentious gesture was typical of many retailers; actually their inventories were usually small. Beginning in the early 1790's, Gomez published more than twenty works either singly or jointly with Naphtali Judah. One of his "Jewish" publications was David Levi's answer to the invitation John Priestley had given the Jews to hold an amicable discussion of the evidences of Christianity. That same year, 1794, Priestley's original appeal to the Jews was also reprinted by Gomez, who was clearly no innovator; both books had already appeared in England. During the years 1792-1802, Gomez published the following works, among others: *Female Policy Detected or the Arts of a Designing Woman Laid Open*, Goethe's *the Sorrows of Werter* [sic], an abridged *Robinson Crusoe*, the New Testament, the Book of Common Prayer, John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Laws*, and Fielding's *Tom Jones*. Obviously he was much less interested in furthering American literature than in printing staples that would find a ready market. In later years, B. Gomez, Bookseller and Stationer, would also handle groceries and tobacco; apparently book publishing was not a lucrative business. Significant is the fact that this eighteenth century Orthodox Jew had no scruples selling Christian religious literature.⁴⁰

One of Gomez's kinsmen was Naphtali Judah (1774-1855); he too had married a sister of Harmon Hendricks though the latter, who disliked Judah, did not brag of that relationship. Paper, stationery, had its attraction for Jews. At one time Judah owned a small interest in a paper mill; David Nunez Carvalho, the father of the artist and explorer, Solomon Nunez Carvalho, was a paper manufacturer in Baltimore, if only for a brief period. Judah, like his brother-in-law Gomez, was a shopkeeper, and a stationer-cum-publisher. Neither man had a press of his own; each made contracts with local printers to reprint standard works. There was no problem of foreign copyright; it was simply ignored. Beginning in 1795, Judah reprinted over thirty works, among them the poems of Joel Barlow, Webster's *American Spelling-book*, dramas of the German playwright August F. F. von Kotzebue, David Levi's *Defence of the Old Testament* (against the strictures of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*), and Seixas's *Discourse*, a sermon delivered in the synagog on a "day of humiliation" when open war with the French appeared imminent in 1798. As a political radical, Judah had no hesitation in publishing for the Democratic Society and the Society of Tammany; he was a member of both organizations; nor did his leftist political views deter him from serving as president of New York's conservative Shearith Israel. This was true, too, of other contem-

porary New Yorkers. Membership in a congregation did not necessarily imply a theological commitment; it was more frequently a form of social and ethnic identification. Both Gomez and Judah were concerned primarily, if not solely, with the general market, though it is always possible that reprinting David Levi's apologetic works may have been prompted by Jewish loyalties. They had an eye on a market that numbered millions, not on the at most 1,000 adult Jewish readers in all of North America. Judah's list was more America-directed than Gomez's. Was this intentional?⁴¹

Naphtali Phillips, one of Jonas Phillips's numerous sons—his wife gave birth to over twenty children—followed in his father's footsteps as a merchant, but turned to publishing, journalism, and politics. He was the owner of the *National Advocate* (1813-ca.1820), the first general newspaper to be owned by a Jew. Phillips' nephew Noah edited this paper for several years and on occasion published a work on his own. Another Jewish printer and publisher, not without distinction, was the convert David Aaron Borrenstein, of Princeton, N.J. He had been converted to Christianity in London and trained as a printer in the press established by the London Society for Promoting Christianity, the organization in which the proselyte Joseph Samuel Christian Frederick Frey (né Levy) was active. Borrenstein was or became a man of learning and culture. Frey had immigrated to America where he set up societies to convert American Jews and may have encouraged Borrenstein to come here. This was no later than 1823, for by that year Borrenstein had already published an Aramaic grammar in New York City. The following year a number of works began to appear at the press which he had established in Princeton; among them were a Greek tragedy by Aeschylus and a German New Testament, which he peddled among Pennsylvania's "Dutch" farmers. Notable among the books he printed were *Paradise Lost* and a volume of poetry. Sometime in the 1830's he went back to England where he issued the complete works of Robert Burns. It is not unlikely that he left Princeton because he had been detected in a fraud and had been suspended by his church. Men like Frey and Borrenstein, who came to the United States fleeing from trouble, if not poverty, were unfortunates to whom the fates had been unkind. Some of the converts who fled to these shores were men of outstanding ability. Overeager to make a career here, individuals among them not infrequently sailed close to the wind.⁴²

On occasion, a Jewish shopkeeper or would-be entrepreneur, looking for a quick profit, issued a volume he thought would find a ready sale. One can hardly call these men publishers. There is every reason to believe that Solomon Henry Jackson (d. 1847) was the first printer and publisher determined to issue Jewish books. Jackson, an English Jew of good education in both Jewish and general fields, came to the United States in the

late eighteenth century. Settling in Pike County, Pennsylvania, in the Poconos, he married the daughter of a Presbyterian minister. Was he a convert to Christianity? Is his later ardent and constant preoccupation with Jewish religious institutions to be explained as an unending effort to expiate guilt? This much is known: when his wife died he took his five children to New York City and reared them as Jews. All of them seemed to have taken Jewish mates, including his daughter Lydia (Eliza), married to Dr. Thomas Washington Donovan, an Irishman and an Orthodox Jew. Was he originally a convert? In 1823, Jackson began publishing *The Jew*, a monthly anti-missionary periodical; in 1826, he translated and printed a Sephardic English and Hebrew prayer book; eleven years later came an edition of the Passover *Haggadah*. The latter two religious works had never been printed in this country. Jackson also experimented with inter-linear texts to the prayers and the Pentateuch. In the course of time he became the “Jewish” printer par excellence turning out constitutions, tickets, notices, wedding certificates, and dedication programs. Jackson was very active in New York synagogues; he taught the readers, clerks, and others how to keep their records and conduct sessions along orderly lines. Thus he was an early Americanizer. This deliberate approach to Americanization did not wait for the Jewish settlement houses in the ghettos of the nineteenth-century metropolises; it began no later than 1782 when the new Philadelphia synagogue constitution laid down the basic rules of parliamentary procedure. The Central and East European émigrés of the late eighteenth century were called to order!⁴³

Unlike B. Gomez and N. Judah, Jackson was not a bookseller or stationer; he was a printer-publisher. Benjamin Levy (1786-1860), of New Orleans, was all these and a bookbinder to boot. This Louisianian was one of the Newport Levys, a son of Simeon (d. 1825), who had moved to New York and taught for a time in the Jewish parochial school. It was in New York that Benjamin Levy first began as a stationer before moving south to the Crescent City where he continued in the same line from 1811 on. An enterprising bookseller, he sold novels, literary annuals, classics, plays, works on politics, geographies, and a number of the better known European reviews and quarterlies. Six years after he opened his store in New Orleans books began appearing with his own imprint. Ultimately more than 130 were published during the years 1817-1841. His publications included works in English and French and one in Spanish. Levy was essentially interested in providing special works for tradesmen and lawyers—legal treatises, commercial manuals, business guides, almanacs, and street directories. In 1822, he began to issue the *New Orleans Price-Current and Commercial Intelligencer*, a weekly business journal. His paper, in a way, was a precursor of the *Wall Street Journal* so popular a century and a half later. Benjamin was one of the country’s first Jewish pub-

lishers with a press of his own; he, like Jackson, certainly had his own print shop. Benjamin's son Alexander, who was to carry on the business for a time, began to publish in 1840. To increase his sales Benjamin Levy serviced libraries and carried on a mail-order business, which not only included many neighboring states, but reached out to clients in the Caribbean and South America. His sources in the North supplied him with works from those cultural centers. Successful, Levy was invited to sit on the board of a bank, but when the country was engulfed in the crisis of 1837, he too, like thousands of others, was dragged down. His relation to the struggling Jewish community? Like many other Jews, he had married out; his children were Christians; he evinced no Jewish interests, though he did maintain good relations with his siblings.⁴⁴

Benjamin Levy was a publishing enterpriser of imagination and some distinction. Abraham Hart (1810-1885) was far more important; he was America's outstanding Jewish publisher in the days before the Civil War. This energetic and venturesome marketer went into the business in 1829 when Americans were beginning to read books published by Americans; it was a long generation after the Gomez-Judah pair had first entered the field. By the 1820's Philadelphia was already a publishing center, the second largest one in the world for English books—ranking right after London. Hart's father, owner of a small dry goods and grocery shop, died a young man, leaving a widow and several little children; Abraham, all of thirteen, was called upon to help support the family by opening a stationery and book store. Only three years later, he so impressed an enterprising auctioneer that he dispatched young Hart to Boston with a letter of credit for \$5,000 and complete authority to buy what books he saw fit. His outstanding ability attracted a leading Philadelphia publishing firm, Carey & Lea; they gave him a job and before long, in 1829, established a separate company for a member of the family with the nineteen-year-old Hart as partner; the new firm was known as Carey & Hart. By 1834, it had a branch in Baltimore. That same year, Carey & Hart published David Crockett's ghost-written autobiography, a most successful work; it was followed by another best-seller about the frontiersman after his death in the Alamo. The enterprise which was to characterize the young adventurer is reflected in the speed and daring with which he exploited his opportunities. In 1836, Hart received an advance copy of the first English edition of Bulwer-Lytton's *Rienzi*. Splitting the book into twelve parts, he distributed the fascicles to twelve different printers. The book was ready the next morning; that afternoon, with 500 copies already bound, he sent the lot by stagecoach to New York where they appeared a day before the edition produced by his competitor, Harper & Brothers.⁴⁵

In 1845, Hart paid royalties to Carlyle and others for works which his firm had reprinted. This was unusual in those days when the loose

copyright laws made pirating of foreign publications so easy and profitable. Carlyle was grateful for the courtesy. For reasons of his own, however, Hart was not in sympathy with the copyright laws of that day. By 1849, now in a firm of his own, Hart was recognized as one of America's most prominent publishers. In the course of his career with Carey and subsequently by himself, he issued many notable works, among them literary annuals which included the writings of Poe, Emerson, and Longfellow. Hart published a volume of Longfellow's poems and a poetical collection which the poet had edited. Other notables whose books he printed or reissued were Frederick Marryat, Thackeray, Macaulay, and Disraeli. Carey & Hart published hundreds of books and carried even more titles. Their catalogues listed juveniles, medical works in English and French, and translations from the German and French. Their widely distributed house organ was the *Quarterly Literary Gazette*. In Philadelphia's Jewish community, no man was more influential than Hart. From the 1840's on, there was no layman more devoted to Jewish causes or more active in the town's Jewish institutions. He helped establish the first Jewish Publication Society—there were to be two later rebirths—served as president of Mikveh Israel for over thirty years, and played an important part in many of the town's Jewish charities and cultural organizations. National recognition brought him the presidency of the Board of Delegates of American Israelites and the chairmanship of the governing council of Maimonides College. In 1854, giving up the book business, he turned to investments in mining and buttonhole machinery. Upon his retirement, publishers and booksellers honored him with a banquet in Philadelphia. The last years of his life saw him overtaken by financial reverses though he remained one of the city's most respected citizens.⁴⁶

THE NEW PROFESSIONALS

INTRODUCTION

In a sense, Hart typified the affluent American Jewish businessmen who were confronted by the new economy; it is worth noting that this capitalist put his money into mining and machines. Some Jews were beginning to leave their shops—the traditional strongholds—and to venture into the new forms of trade and commerce rising out of the commercial and industrial revolution of the early nineteenth century. The new economy brought in its wake—and ultimately in its van—a cadre of men capable of satisfying its needs for leadership in the areas of industry, culture, justice, communal service, and medicine: the new professionals, the managers, the officials, the administrators, the lawyers, doctors, and engineers. As the sciences slowly began to make their impact, there was a call for

professionals who were willing to meet the higher standards demanded by a more enlightened citizenry. The corps of trained men increased in size, with the native-born and immigrants, too, supplying recruits to this growing body which was ultimately to exercise great influence in all the activities of the larger urban communities. By the end of the first decade of the century, Jews had begun to appear as civil servants, naval officers, interpreters, journalists, editors, economists, educators, druggists, dentists, lawyers, and physicians as well as politicians of high and low degree. The variety is beguiling. Interesting is the sudden appearance of engineers; the early graduates of West Point were all engineers. Charleston brought forth David Lopez, a builder with architectural sensibilities reflected not only in Beth Elohim's Greek Doric sanctuary, but also in a Presbyterian church and in a Moorish style bank. Among the professionals who now make their bow are actors and dramatists, playwrights and theatre managers. At least four of the Phillips clan were in the theatre; Jews were also portraitists and miniature painters. Nothing comparable had been known in Revolutionary Jewry—and all these changes in sixty-five years!⁴⁷

LAWYERS

With the new industry and expanding markets both here and abroad came the need for knowledgeable administrators. Skillful lawyers now took over; many corporations found them indispensable. It has been pointed out above that Benjamin Gratz and George W. Mordecai managed railroads; both were lawyers. Lawyers were now cherished; this had not always been the case. The previous century had manifested considerable prejudice against them. As late as 1786, the citizens of Braintree, Massachusetts, had suggested that restrictions be imposed on lawyers because their conduct tended more to the town's destruction than to its preservation. Even in the early nineteenth century, few Jews were active in the profession. In some states they could not practice because, as officers of the court, they would have been required to take a Christian oath. One of the country's early Jewish practitioners was Joshua Montefiore (1762-1843), an uncle of the English philanthropist Moses Montefiore. By 1770 Jews in Great Britain had been permitted to practice as attorneys and solicitors, though not as barristers before 1833. Joshua, an adventurer, tried in vain to practice law in English Jamaica. After the English there refused to admit him to the bar, he returned home in 1792 to join an expedition which established a colony on the West African coast. These idealists wanted to prove that a colony in a tropical land could prosper without slave labor. After the failure of the venture, Montefiore joined the British army, but the early nineteenth century found him in the United States (ca. 1803). Here he reprinted some of the legal manuals which he had prepared in England and also published new

works on commercial law. Clearly he was competent. Though we lack absolute proof that he practiced law here, it is reasonable to assume that he did. He had some means because he was the beneficiary of his nephew's largesse; he was a remittance man. Finally at the age of seventy-three, he settled down in St. Albans, Vermont, and married a young Christian woman who bore him at least eight children. They were reared as Christians; but he remained Jewish and, before he passed away, wrote out a translation of the Hebrew burial service which was recited at his funeral.⁴⁸

Not surprisingly, Jewish lawyers in the South first made their appearance in Charleston, for decades the most important town south of Philadelphia. In 1793, three years after the South Carolina Jews were emancipated, Moses Myers, of Georgetown, was admitted to the bar. It was not long before others began practicing law in Charleston, Georgetown, Camden, and very probably in other interior towns. One of the most colorful of the Charleston practitioners was Abraham Moïse, scion of a family which had fled Santo Domingo because of the servile revolts of 1791. After his admission to the bar in 1822, Moïse made a name for himself in both the Jewish and general communities; he became a justice of the peace, enjoyed a lucrative legal practice, and served as one of the leaders of the religiously left-wing Reformed Society of Israelites. In the outback, in Camden on the Wateree River, Chapman Levy was recognized as one of the town's leading citizens; he was a soldier, planter, state legislator, and politician. Several Charlestonians were in later decades to be acclaimed as successful legal practitioners; some of them even attained national recognition. One, Solomon Heydenfeldt, was elected to the California supreme court; Judah P. Benjamin became Secretary of State in Jefferson Davis's Confederate government (1862-1865); still another, Philip Phillips, was in postbellum days to stand out as one of the country's most respected lawyers.⁴⁹

By 1840, there was a sprinkling of Jewish lawyers in all the commonwealths of the South. When one of the younger Sheftalls apprenticed himself to a Gentile attorney in 1810 to learn the art and mystery of the profession, he stipulated that he was to be free on the Sabbath and all Jewish Holy Days, and that he was to eat out. Undoubtedly he kept kosher and ate his meals with the family. George Washington Mordecai was not the first of his family to take the bar examination; he had been preceded by an older brother, Moses, who had studied and practiced in Raleigh. In 1807, as a young man reading Blackstone at home, Moses, with tongue in cheek, told sister Rachel that during a storm a hailstone came rolling down the chimney and extinguished his candle. When he "reenlightened" himself, he searched for it and found it. It was larger than a turkey's egg, he said, and he kept it in warm water till the next

day. Rachel suggested with equal mock seriousness that the entire incident be reported to Thomas Jefferson, the scientist. The disability incorporated in the North Carolina constitution, which closed offices to professing Jews, did not deter these two Mordecai brothers from practicing law. Both married Christians; at least three Mordecai children converted to Christianity.⁵⁰

Jews in Virginia began turning to the law in the early nineteenth century, due perhaps to the fact that they settled in rather late in this colony which had but few towns of size. Jews were normally an urban trading people, but the younger generation would not be denied; some of them had no desire to be businessmen. The merchant Moses Myers sent a son to William and Mary; after graduation, the youngster studied law in Richmond. There, in the capital, Myers's former partner, Samuel Myers, educated his three sons as professionals. Two were in the law; one became a physician. By the 1810's there were at least four attorneys in the state, three of them in Richmond. One of these three, Gustavus Adolphus Myers (1801-1869), became a notable practitioner. It was said that he had the largest practice in the state with clients as far away as Baltimore and New York. After the Civil War when Jefferson Davis was released by the federal authorities, Myers was one of the men who supplied bond for him. Myers's importance as a lawyer is reflected in the roster of his honors and offices: election to the state legislature, president of the Richmond City Council and of a company that published a local newspaper, director of a railroad and an insurance company, presiding officer of two of the best clubs in town, membership in the Virginia Historical Society. He was also the author or adapter of a play frequently performed both here and in England. Though he and his older brother both married out of the faith, he was quite active in the religious and communal life of local Jewry; he represented it on important state occasions; he was Richmond's Israelite *renommé*. After all, noblesse oblige.⁵¹

It was not until 1802 that a Jew, Sampson Simson, was admitted to the bar in New York City. A generation later, in 1840, less than five had taken the bar examination. This is surprising, for lawyers come with business, with commerce and industry. The answer may be simple: in proportion to their numbers there, there were not many truly wealthy Jewish businessmen in New York; when important sums were at stake, they preferred distinguished Gentile practitioners, men of competence and political influence, like Alexander Hamilton. Christians preferred their own counsellors; the city had no outstanding Jewish lawyer to whom Jews might turn if they wanted the best. Simson (1781-1857), had read law in the office of Aaron Burr. He did not have to practice his profession; he was descended from a wealthy family with roots in the city going back for almost a century. An observant Jew, he devoted himself for a while to

the Jewish and general communities before retiring to his estate in Westchester. He enjoyed Masonry, marched as a captain with the militia, tinkered with prison reform, and interested himself in agricultural machinery; he had large holdings in Yonkers. His sturdy Orthodoxy went hand in hand with devotion to the Jews in the land of their fathers, Palestine. Not long before he died, he bestirred himself and brought about the establishment of the first Jewish hospital in New York, the later Mount Sinai.⁵²

New York may not have been able to brag of its Jewish counsellors, because for decades it was overshadowed by Philadelphia. In that generation, the "Philadelphia lawyer" was reputed to be the sharpest and best. The first three "Jewish" lawyers in Pennsylvania, the Levy brothers, were Christians, baptized or halakically Gentile because of their Gentile mother. Two of them were admitted to practice in 1778. Moses, the oldest of the three, was competent and highly regarded; his career was a notable one; the other two created no stir in the legal world, though Samson Levy's sharpness brought him some success. He was widely known in his day for the malapropisms which amused all privileged to hear them. One example: "I maintain, may it please this honorable court, that in every well regulated society justice is to be *dispensed with* throughout the land." As befitted its commercial importance and possibly because of the appeal of its university law school, Philadelphia by 1840 had trained a number of Jewish lawyers, about twelve, if the Levys are included. Several of the graduates during these early decades were members of the extended Simon-Gratz-Etting family and of the prolific Phillips clan. Most of these youngsters who studied law at the University of Pennsylvania were members of notable families. What motivated them in those early years of the republic to prepare themselves for the bar? The desire to enter industry? In no sense. They were wrapped up in politics; they nursed hopes of winning an office, attaining status, gaining power. One of Jonas Phillips's sons, Zalegman (1779-1839), was the first professing Jew in the state to practice law. He matriculated at the university at sixteen, passed the bar exam at twenty, and entered what proved to be a lucrative practice in the field of criminal law. Two of his sons were also attorneys; one of them, Henry Mayer Phillips, went to Congress.⁵³

PHYSICIANS

Prejudice in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was not directed against lawyers alone; physicians, too, were often looked upon with suspicion or disdain. A traveler making his way through Pennsylvania in 1690 said that the province was healthy and hoped that it would never have occasion to use lawyers or physicians. As late as 1780, Jacob Prager of Amsterdam, one of the chief partners of the international firm of Pragers, had his doubts about medicine as a profession: "It is indeed a miserable calling,

but one can never know.” There were Jewish physicians in colonial America as early as 1655 when Dr. Jacob (John) Lumbrozo documented his presence in Maryland by presenting a bill, apparently for medical services. Out on the Illinois frontier a Jew is known to have practiced medicine in 1782 during the days of the Revolution. This was “Doctor” Isaac Levy, of Cahokia who will long be remembered, not for his medical skill of which we know nothing, nor for his activity as a purveyor to the Virginia forces during the war, but for his droll encounter with Monsieur Buteau. This Frenchman, being sued by the good doctor for 400 livres, offered the defense that he had not been cured. The court ruled, therefore, that Levy attend Buteau until a cure had been effected, but Buteau was enjoined to pay heed to the instructions of his physician. Buteau followed the doctor’s prescription, but in his own original way: he took the sixty-seven prescribed pills in two days, instead of seven, because as a clever fellow he figured he would get well that much quicker. So he said: To which Levy replied that, had he indeed taken all the pills in two days, he would not have been here to tell the tale. Result: judgment in the suit was awarded Dr. Isaac Levy of Cahokia.⁵⁴

There were several Jewish physicians in colonial North America; with very few exceptions they appear to have been medical craftsmen, though some may have been genuinely competent. The postrevolutionary period seems to have worked a change in the attitude toward physicians. Medical standards were raised; people turned to physicians of repute, and some Jews, too, sensed that there were opportunities in this area for their children. In the early 1790’s, the Canadian Aaron Hart asked a New York friend Eleazar Levy about educating his fifteen-year-old son Benjamin, who aspired to become a physician. Levy’s answer was that he could become a doctor with or without Latin—that is, he could go to a university or he could apprentice himself to a practitioner and learn to be a doctor, surgeon, and apothecary. Benjamin Hart never practiced medicine; his father, Canada’s most notable Jewish merchant, may have dissuaded him. The son did, however, become a notable Montreal merchant, a lieutenant colonel in the Crown’s armed forces during the War of 1812, and one of the founders of the city’s general hospital; apparently he never lost his interest in medicine. By the early nineteenth century, a number of college-trained Jewish physicians had already begun serving in large towns, all the way from New York to New Orleans. Even before Texas took up arms against Mexico, a German-trained Jewish physician was ministering to the wants of the settlers in the old Spanish mission town of Nacogdoches. Later he moved east to Natchez, but finally returned to his European fatherland. When Texans fought for independence in the decade of the 1830’s, two Jewish surgeons served the insurgents as volunteers; like many other volunteers, they were young men in their twenties looking for adventure.⁵⁵

Before 1840, New Orleans had its share of Jewish physicians, itinerants, quacks, and well-trained professionals, two of whom were university men. Dr. Solomon Mordecai, of the North Carolina Mordecais, hung out his shield in Mobile; Moses Sheftall, of Savannah, had studied with Dr. Benjamin Rush in Philadelphia, but never finished his work at the University of Pennsylvania. Like several other medical practitioners of his day, he was not content to minister to his patients, but was eager to volunteer as a surgeon during the War of 1812 and later to help organize the Georgia Medical Society. Politically ambitious, as were other members of his clan, he sat on the bench as a country judge and served as a state legislator. South Carolina's first native-born resident physician with a college degree was Levi Myers, of Georgetown and Charleston, who began to make the rounds of his patients in the late eighteenth century. Long before him, about the year 1745, Dr. John de Sequeyra (1712-1795), a graduate of the University of Leyden, had practiced medicine in Williamsburg, then the capital of the province of Virginia. In a manuscript still extant he described the diseases prevalent in the province. In the South Carolina capital, Columbia, Mordecai Hendricks De Leon (1791-1848) was recognized as an outstanding citizen and as one of the region's leading physicians. It was due in part to his efforts that an insane asylum was established in the town and he served it for years as its chief physician. Three members of this family practiced medicine; two had studied at the University of Pennsylvania. During the 1830's De Leon served as mayor of Columbia; he was a politician and something of a writer. His leadership and literary qualities were reflected in his three sons, all of whom became notable figures in the United States during the second half of the century. Tradition has it that Abraham, his father, gave the local Jewish benevolent society the ground for its cemetery. This confraternity was the core around which the local Jewish community was built in the 1820's.⁵⁶

Baltimore, Maryland, sheltered Dr. Jonathan Horwitz for years. Though he may have been well trained—he, too, was an alumnus of the university in Philadelphia—there is every reason to believe that he was not a successful physician. College training was no guarantee of a lucrative practice. What the father lacked, the son possessed. The son, Dr. Jonathan Phineas Horwitz, became one of the country's notable medical administrators. The most attractive personality in the medical field among Maryland's Jews was Dr. Joshua I. Cohen (1801-1870), still another member of the prestigious Baltimore Cohens. Cohen belongs to a generation when men of culture, Jews among them, reached out to acquire encyclopedic knowledge, but one wonders how sound was the scholarship of these would-be Renaissance men. It is a historical curiosity that the first professing Jew to take a medical degree in an English university was an American-born Jew, Joseph Hart Myers (1758-1823), son of Naphtali

Hart Myers, a New York merchant and president of the local congregation. The father returned to England when Joseph was still a youngster; the son studied at many medical schools, but finally took his degree at Edinburgh. His published thesis was on diabetes, a disease that has always interested Jewish physicians. Maimonides described it in the twelfth century, and Jewish scholars today continue to study this malady with which many Jews still have to cope. Isaac Abrahams, who took his B.A. degree at Kings' College (Columbia) in 1774, soon turned to medicine. The best known of the New York Jewish doctors was a brilliant Sephardi, Daniel Levi Maduro Peixotto (1800-1843), whose career will be described in a later chapter together with that of Isaac Hays (1796-1870), a Philadelphian of scientific quality, who in his writings foreshadowed the new physician and the new medicine of the late nineteenth century.⁵⁷

As in law and in commerce, so in medicine, too, Philadelphia led the country for decades. Because the medical school in Philadelphia may well have been the best, Jewish students found their way there from other states; there were no quotas for Jews in that generation. In 1834, about four decades after Nassy's return to his South American homeland, Dr. Manly Emanuel, a well-trained London physician, settled in Delaware County south of Philadelphia. There he served as a justice of the peace and as president both of the school board and the county medical society. Later he moved to nearby Philadelphia where he became highly respected for his ability and his devotion to his faith; he was scrupulously observant. His career was atypical in that this graduate of an excellent London school was willing to live in a village and practice for years in a rural community. This was true, too, of Dr. Levi Myers, of Georgetown, South Carolina. Coastal Georgetown was a rice planting center 90 percent of whose inhabitants were blacks, slaves; at the most, the whites could not have numbered more than a thousand. It may well be that the prime source of Myers's income was the sale of drugs, since he also ran an apothecary. Charleston during this period had at least one Jewish dentist; Philadelphia, three.⁵⁸

REFLECTIONS ON JEWS IN THE AMERICAN ECONOMY

PHYSICAL MOBILITY, POVERTY, CRIME

Characteristically the Jewish physicians turned avidly to politics, to Masonry, and to non-professional challenges in both the general and the Jewish communities. One of the reasons they did so is that very few physicians in the United States then found medical practice remunerative. How many of the doctors, Jews among them, were really devoted to medicine as a science? More to the point, most Jews had been emanci-

pated during their own lifetimes; as a long submerged group, they were trying to make a place for themselves socially and culturally; each wanted to be somebody. Because they were seeking to express themselves, they spread themselves thin. Jonas Phillips was just beginning to sense the new economy through his children when he died in 1803. He himself, émigré from a German village, had played several roles here on the American stage. He was a shoet, a clerk, an auctioneer, a blockade runner, a merchant. One of his sons was a physician, another a journalist, a third a lawyer, a fourth an actor, playwright and theatre manager. America was indeed a new world. With the exception of unlicensed and itinerant doctors, Jewish physicians tended to remain in one town; they had to do so to build up a practice. Shopkeepers and so-called merchants were much more mobile, following the will-o'-the-wisp called opportunity: when they failed to make a living in one community, they moved on to fresh pastures. Because some Jewish Philadelphians thought that Baltimore had a future, they moved there; by the second decade of the nineteenth century about one-half of the town's Jews had come from the City of Brotherly Love. Some of these Baltimoreans had a history of moving about: Mordecai M. Mordecai had labored previously in Lancaster, Pittsburgh, and Richmond; Michel De Young, a Dutch immigrant, ran a jewelry shop and a horn comb factory in Baltimore before traveling north to New York City; later, he shifted his residence to Texas and he may also have lived in New Orleans. One of his last stops was Cincinnati, but he had already left it when he died, his eyes set on California. His sons Charles and Michel founded the *San Francisco Chronicle*.⁵⁹

A brief summary of two generations of the Gratzes may be informative, for it will show that some occupational changes were a response to the challenge of the new economic order. The Gratz brothers, Barnard and Michael, had come to the colonies in the 1750's. They started out as clerks in London and Philadelphia; brother Michael, when still a youngster, had even tried his luck for a while in India. Here in America they adventured in coastal shipments, but when the French were expelled after 1763 and their defeat in the Seven Years' War, the Gratzes turned to the Indian trade. The next and obvious step was to start speculating in land, given their hope that the transallegheeny country would become the haven and asylum for the poor and oppressed of Europe. But wherever they turned they never forgot that they were merchants. Despite their involvement in the fur trade, they were not specialists; they were interested in any and every aspect of trade which promised a profit. During the Revolution, they helped outfit a military expedition against the British and the Indians in the Northwest; when necessary, they even engaged in banking procedures, advancing money, discounting notes, drafts, and bills of exchange. The brothers had a series of partners, mostly Gentiles, with

whom they worked closely as they kept their eyes on the Ohio-Mississippi River trade. By the 1790's, both brothers had fallen sick, and Michael's sons began to take over.⁶⁰

Michael had five sons; sometimes they worked in concert, often for themselves; at times there were bitter intrafamily hostilities. These Gratzes were merchants, commission agents, land speculators, merchant-shippers, importers and exporters of wares from East India and China, traders to South America; one brother was a cloth manufacturer. In the early nineteenth century, some of the brothers were doing business on a large scale; in 1802, for instance, they advertised that they had 50,000 pounds of black pepper for sale—an indication of the quantities which they bought and sold. During the War of 1812, they gathered saltpeter from Mammoth Cave to be used in the making of gunpowder. They shipped tobacco, hemp, and Kentucky whiskey down the Ohio and Mississippi to New Orleans, where they picked up a cargo of cotton for export. The sons operated on a far larger scale than the original firm of B. and M. Gratz, and when hard times came, they were so extended that they found it impossible to survive. They were bankrupt in 1826. They had staggered through the long bad years that followed the 1819 depression; they had survived the embargoes of the earlier Jefferson administration, the war with Great Britain, and the postbellum panic, but all to no avail. Some of these Philadelphians were compelled to give up their beautiful home, but, like many other merchants of the day, they fell only to rise again. These able men recouped their losses in the new fields of insurance and transportation. When Simon, the oldest of the brothers, passed away in 1839, he was very wealthy, leaving a beautiful home and grounds, fine furniture, silver and linen, three horses, carriages. His portfolio of stocks was a diversified one with emphasis on transportation securities: turnpikes, a bridge company, a railroad. There was real estate, a coal business. The entire estate exceeded a quarter of a million dollars. Nothing was left to his siblings, not even to the immaculate Rebecca.⁶¹

Simon and his brother Hyman had built a large, wealthy, influential firm before they became insolvent. Bankruptcy threatened many merchants for there were constant hazards to be faced: fires, cholera, typhus, yellow fever, failures of clients, wars and embargoes, piratical privateers, overstocked markets, inflation—and, worst of all, “bad luck.” No one was exempt from financial calamity. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the Gomezes and the Frankses had been the wealthiest, and most powerful families in the New York congregation. In 1796, Moses Gomez, Jr., had suffered reverses which made it necessary for him to retrench. It is to be doubted that his financial decline resulted from the Tory sympathies he had held twenty years earlier; in matters of this sort, the patriots had very short memories once the war was over. Three, possibly four, genera-

tions of Gomezes had lived and died in New York. Moses, Jr., was a cultured gentleman who wrote and spoke an impeccable English, yet now he was constrained literally to take a back seat, a cheaper one in the synagog. Among the congregation's leaders whom he addressed was the parnas, the president, a former German commissary officer who had served the British during the War. Undoubtedly this man, only a few years in America, spoke a broken English and wrote an even worse letter.⁶²

When the bottom fell out of the price of tobacco, Solomon Jacobs, of Richmond, wrote rather facetiously to his wife, then visiting her parents: Can't you introduce the fashion of sneezing, smoking, and chewing among the ladies; it would help out. There were more serious hazards than falling prices: in 1788 Abraham Nathan, of Charleston, a merchant, was killed by the captain of his ship, a partner. The years from 1776 to 1840 saw eight depressions; twenty-six of the sixty-four years were bad ones. Jewish businessmen suffered; much of their trade was on a credit basis; and since they could not collect, they could not pay their suppliers. Because most were men of modest resources, they were always vulnerable. Jacob Mordecai was bankrupt in 1786; James Monroe was one of his creditors, lucky if he ever received five shillings on the pound. Benjamin Nones was twice bankrupt. Petty businessmen had no bed of roses. Haym Salomon, once the most generous Jew in the United States and acclaimed abroad as a "princely philanthropist," did not leave enough for a grave marker.⁶³

Baltimore had no congregation for decades because the elite would not join with the newcomers. The newcomers were too poor or too thrifty to establish a synagog on their own. Even in the West with all of its presumptive opportunities, the race was not always to the pioneer. In early Cincinnati of the 1820's, one half of all Jewish burials were impoverished clients; one quarter of the congregation was unassessed, too poor to pay dues. In order to survive, men did what they could. Isaac Nunez Cardozo, of Easton, was a tailor, a teacher of mathematics, surveying, and navigation, a peddler of ague and fever powders, and once more a tailor. When the New Yorker, Philip Hone, congratulated a Philadelphia Jewish merchant on the signing of the treaty of peace with the British after the War of 1812, the businessman answered lugubriously: "Thank you, thank you, Mr. Hone, but I wish I had not bought them calicoes." War-time high cost goods could not be sold except at a loss. The sufferings which were the lot of many Jewish settlers here probably deterred others in Central Europe from emigrating. A Jewish immigrant in Carbondale, Pennsylvania, wrote back home to a nephew in Germany, a prospective immigrant: "You cannot make headway here unless as a German you will have to unlearn much and learn much." It was the misfortune of the Central European Jewish emigrants that they started coming here in the late

1830's just as the country was about to enter its most serious economic depression. An interesting and illuminating history of American Jews might well be the record of their financial failures.⁶⁴

Poverty breeds crime? Both words are relative terms. Most Jews in this period were not poverty-stricken, though many were indeed poor. If there had been no poor there would have been no need for the charities. Synagogues had been helping the needy since the earliest days; the very first known constitution of an American synagogue made provision for local and itinerant suppliants (1706/1728). Some Jews who fell into the clutches of the law can hardly be deemed criminals. More than once some of Richmond's solid Jewish citizens were arrested and fined for betting on faro in a local tavern (1805-1808); they were, it seems, chronic gamblers. It was only meet that the foreman of the grand jury that investigated gambling should be a Mr. R. Gamble. The early national period apparently nourished a generation of litigants. Jews were constantly bringing suits; court action was a common method, almost a prevalent one, to collect debts. Many people were not able to meet their obligations or refused to do so until forced by the law and the bailiff. Litigation was often occasioned by intrafamily disputes; they were long and bitter, for money was involved. The traditional idyllic picture of intra-Jewish familial and communal harmony was often mocked by the harshness of reality. The knowledgeable researcher hastens to utter a caveat; litigation has high visibility, whereas successful businessmen and harmonious Jewish communities have little history; they luxuriate in invisibility.⁶⁵

Some Jews were irresponsible businessmen; others were sharp, on occasion unscrupulous. Bankrupt Jews frequently left town in order to avoid imprisonment for debt; if jailed, they and their families would languish for lack of support. Lt. Col. Isaacs Franks once went into hiding in order to avoid his debtors. A Charleston merchant was fined for violating the federal trading regulations during the decade of the Jefferson embargo. Individual shopkeepers and merchants turned out to be crooks; they absconded with goods. One luckless creature ran off, leaving his wife, children, and debts to be taken care of by his father-in-law, an impoverished Revolutionary War veteran. Christians were prone to suspect Jews of fraudulent bankruptcies, but it is instructive that a list containing the names of thousands of bankrupts revealed no Jews.

Jewish criminals did exist in 1816. A New York merchant-shipper with a fine reputation was arrested for scuttling a ship and attempting to collect the insurance; his cargo was carefully boxed with rubbish. A Baltimorean was charged with receiving stolen goods, but was found innocent. There seems to have been no question about the guilt of another Baltimore Jew, Emanuel Semon, accused of beating two fellow Jews, one of them a woman. He was fined \$1. In 1818, a peddler was said to have as-

saulted and stabbed the wife of one of the town's Jews; he moved on to New York, arranged for the conversion of his Christian wife, and ended his life in that city as a clothier. Two other residents of Baltimore were hauled into court on the charge that they threatened to take the life of a coreligionist, one Mr. Maurice Cohen. No distinction accrued to the American Jewish community from a visit to these shores by one William Jones. Mr. Jones turned out to be Isaac Solomon, an English crook with an international reputation; he was known in the trade as Ikey Solomon. Reportedly he was the original of Fagin in Dickens's *Oliver Twist*. Back home he had been a notorious fence. Escaping custody after an arrest, he fled to America bringing with him his not inconsiderable talents. He was an educated man. As Mr. William Jones, a jeweler, he forged bank notes, negotiated fraudulent debentures, and discounted worthless English stocks. Obviously Solomon was an entrepreneur at home in the new economy. He ended up in Australia as a transport, but his criminal background did not deter him from joining the Hobart congregation.⁶⁶

UPPER, MIDDLE, AND LOWER CLASS JEWS

The Rich and the Comfortable

Jewish crooks were not numerous. A nineteenth century Christian magistrate in New York City said that Jews were rarely arraigned in his court, even for petty crimes, despite the fact that the number of poor Israelites in the city was proportionately great. The reason for this is simple: when in dire straits, the Jewish poor could always turn to their confraternities or to a congregation for relief; they did not have to steal in order to survive. The apprehensive Jewish community responded to appeals unless the suppliant was known to be an incorrigible criminal—which is why Moses Levy let a Jewish thief be hanged in New York City in 1727. Tradesmen who failed in business did not fall into crime, but usually made some sort of respectable comeback; it was not too long before most of them were again members of the extended middle class in which most Jews were to be found. When in the 1780's the British civil servants and the Loyalists left the country or lost their property, a new politically powerful Whig group took over. Jews were not even on the periphery of this powerful minority which accorded its intimates enviable economic advantages. But the young republic did open roads to Jews; individuals forged ahead financially through their investments in the new transportation media. Every town had one or two who did rise to the top, temporarily at least. Thus rich Jews are found all the way from New Orleans to Boston. New Orleans had the Hermanns and Judah Touro; Charleston had Mordecai Cohen and the Lazarus brothers. Cohen, a Polish newcomer, lent his gold and silver plate to help entertain Lafayette when he visited the city in

1825. The Myers-Hays-Marx clan of Richmond had solid wealth. The bond required when the estate of Joseph Marx was probated was for \$350,000; a similar amount was posted when Samuel Myers died; the bond for his sister-in-law Slowey Hays was \$120,000. Hers was the largest estate left by a woman in Virginia. It is reasonable to assume that much of her wealth and that of Samuel Myers, who married Judith Hays, came as an inheritance from Moses M. Hays, of Boston. In Baltimore, the Ettings and especially the Cohens were possessors of substantial, if not great, wealth; in Philadelphia, John Moss was recognized as an enterprising capitalist of means; the Gratzes, after their fall in the 1820's, rose once more to riches and influence. The home they had vacated in 1826 after their insolvency is a measure of their earlier affluence: it was 28 feet wide, 56 feet deep; the folding doors were of mahogany and the mantels were of marble. There was a separate bathhouse as well as a cistern, a good-sized stable, and a carriage house.⁶⁷

In addition to Moses M. Hays and his son Judah, Boston counted Abraham Touro among its most substantial investors. To the south, New York City always had several rich businessmen since the generation of Nathan Simson, who in the mid-1700's returned "home" to England with a large fortune. The eighteenth-century Jewish elite in Manhattan included the Gomezes, the Simsons, and the Frankses. Some Gomezes had gone down; others had survived. In 1791, the estate of A. Moses Gomez was paying more personal and real estate taxes than the total paid by all other Jewish taxpayers. Others in the 1780's who had achieved affluence were the firms of Jacob and Philip Marks, the Hendrickses, and Isaac Moses. In Revolutionary days, the Markses, Germans, had been British supplymen, and Uriah Hendricks had remained in New York and made his peace with the British occupiers; Isaac Moses was, by contrast, an exile and an ardent Continental patriot. Most Jews in the American metropolis were in the middle or lower brackets. Among them were Benjamin Seixas and Simon Nathan; Seixas was on the way up; Nathan, on the way down. New Yorkers in the 1840's eagerly read Moses Yale Beach's *The Wealth of New York*. It is a grossly inaccurate twenty-five cent chapbook of little worth, but it does indicate who were then considered to be the very wealthy. As early as 1820, New York was already more populous than Philadelphia; by 1830, it was America's leading port; by 1840, it was ten times larger than Charleston. August Belmont had arrived in 1837, and it would not be long before he was numbered among the country's leading bankers; a number of Judah women are acclaimed, but little is known of them; Aaron Gomez, a son-in-law of Harmon Hendricks, is included in the Beach pamphlet, as is also a David Hart from the New Orleans family of that name. One suspects that the wealth of a Judah, a Hart, and a Gomez was inherited. The total Hendricks's fortune

was rated at over \$1,000,000—which does seem a reasonable guess. According to the author, not one of the Jews whom he listed had less than \$100,000. Why he ignored Bernard Hart, who was still alive, is puzzling. The answer may be that Hart was not as wealthy as some of his contemporaries thought he was.⁶⁸

Very rich Jews were rare before 1840, though a substantial number of people in every town had more than enough for their needs, and many may be deemed affluent. Judah P. Benjamin owned a large sugar plantation in Louisiana, but it is very questionable if his was a successful enterprise; it was the fees he earned as one of the country's great lawyers which provided him with a large income. The South Carolina and Mississippi planter Chapman Levy ran his plantations with about thirty slaves; his income, which permitted him to engage actively in politics, probably came from his practice as a lawyer rather than from profits as a farmer. Mordecai Sheftall's unmarried daughter Esther had a small shop, but in her will she left several slaves, ranch acreage, some jewels, and Passover China (1828). The Georgia Sheftall clan and its neighbors the Minises enjoyed a comfortable income; that seems beyond doubt. Esther's father Mordecai, the Revolutionary War quartermaster (d. 1798), left a well-furnished home with pictures, china, linens, and silver as well as a cow and a horse in the stable, and this was but a portion of his estate. The court appointed Sheftall to appraise the estate of Abigail Minis and her son Philip, who had predeceased her. The old lady left a fine home and slaves both on her farm and in the city; Philip, in addition to a well-equipped home with its ample supply of silver plate (collateral!), was the owner of a store whose inventory included hardware, dry goods, and groceries. Though by 1820 Charleston in neighboring South Carolina was no longer to be counted among the great American cities, many of its Jewish citizens had wealth which they had acquired or inherited. Three families had households of twenty or more slaves; one of the Jews in Georgetown also had twenty or more black bondsmen, and this was true, too, of a Jew in the Barnwell District, in the backcountry bordering on Georgia. Jacob Jacobs, of Charleston, seems to have been a typical Charleston businessman, if any businessman can be said to be typical. His will testifies that he owned houses, silver plate, a stable, horses, carriages, and at least ten slaves. Listed as personal property were notes, silver and gold jewelry, bonds, and deeds for land in Georgia.⁶⁹

Richmond's Marcus Elkan is a good example of a local businessman who was "well fixed." At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the heyday of his career as a merchant, the Shenandoah Valley was the largest producer of wheat in the United States. He ran a general store, where he stocked a wide variety of goods. His beautifully furnished home was adorned with pictures of Shakespeare and the British statesmen William

Pitt and Henry Fox. His library, fortunately listed in his will, documents his intelligence and good taste. The estate was appraised at about \$10,000, but was probably worth much more. In an extant taxlist of Richmond citizens for the year 1788, 10 of the 360 taxpayers were Jews. All but one of the Jewish householders had a domestic servant (a slave); one of them had three. Most of the Jews in town were in the middle-class or lower-middle-class bracket. Not a single one is likely to have been affluent at this early date. The Jewish community would not write its constitution for another year; it was just getting organized. By the turn of the century, a decade later, several had already attained a degree of affluence; two or three were on the road to wealth.

How did the middle-class Jew live in Pennsylvania? Mathias Bush may serve as an illustration. This merchant, a partner at times of the Simon-Gratz group, lived in Montgomery County not too far from Philadelphia, on a small farm in a beautiful home tastefully furnished with pictures, mirrors, a silver service, and a small library. By 1825, Philadelphia sheltered dozens of Jewish businessmen: merchants, shopkeepers, grocers, brokers, professional men, artisans. Some, if not many, made an excellent living. The firm of R. & I. Phillips was listed in 1820 as merchants; before long it would become the Philadelphia agent of the English Rothschilds. One of the largest, and certainly the most beautiful, dry goods stores in town was that of Lyon J. Levy. This Levy and the Phillipses, too, were men of substance. There were many others of whom we know, and probably many of whom there is little or no record. As late as 1836, Isaac Leeser referred to Philadelphia as the country's largest Jewish community—the New Yorkers would have disputed that statement.⁷⁰

The Middle Class and the Lower Middle Class

Most American Jews belonged to the middle class or the lower middle class. They were in business; by extension they were all in one rather inclusive economic group. Despite their common economic interests, sharp social distinctions were made. Was there no "common sort"? There was always a lower class—an underclass, we might say today—but among Jews it was very small, and unfortunately its members had no visibility; they left no wills; they had nothing to leave. Jewish indentured servants were shipped here as late as 1819. How many? There is no way of knowing. They served their time or ran away. In either case, they were absorbed by Jewry or by the anonymous Gentile masses; they have no history. Thanks to the numerous directories, it is possible to describe the occupational distribution of America's Jews, since most of them lived in urban centers and the directories listed their vocations. Regrettably, the mere recording of names and vocations is no index to wealth, to class, to

status within the extensive middle-class group which embraced most of them. Even the term merchant is not always helpful; it was beginning, by the early nineteenth century, to lose its significance as a synonym for an elite trader; from now on, the term merely indicated that the proud possessor was a buyer and seller of wares. Yet the listings are useful; they indicate how Jews made a living and make it possible for certain conclusions to be drawn. Most Jews were not poor in the sense of being poverty-stricken; a Jewish proletariat was virtually nonexistent. The few Jewish charity records before the late 1830's reveal that relatively few clients applied for help.⁷¹

A study of New Yorkers listed in the directories for the third decade of the century reveals that of 306 identified Jews, 127 called themselves merchants. This did not include the craftsmen, brokers, stationers, lottery agents, clerks, boardinghouse keepers, druggists, two lawyers, and a civil servant. It is clear, however, that almost everyone was a businessman, at least in the directories. After 1830, analyses of the records indicate the appearance of specialists: a comedian, a dyer, a brewer, a quill manufacturer, a coalyard owner, a liquor dealer. A few may be classed as industrialists, but they may well have been no more than modest artisans. A study limited to the membership of Shearith Israel in the 1830's reveals two police officers, druggists, a shoe polish manufacturer, liquor dealers, various civil servants, a lithographer, a pencil maker, a professor who taught languages, and two clothiers, whatever that term meant at the time. Congregation Anshe Chesed of New York hired a carpenter in 1836 to make repairs in the synagog. His name was Friedsheim. Was he the ancestor of Michael Friedsam, president of B. Altman & Company, who left large sums for charity and education and a collection of old masters to the Metropolitan Museum? At the other end of the country a study of New Orleans Jewry for this same period shows that here too most Jews were in business. They were in clothing, dry goods, brokerage; watchmakers predominated among the artisans, although in general there were but few skilled craftsmen. A cigar manufacturer was probably a cigarmaker working in a small shop with one or two journeymen. Among those gainfully employed New Orleans Jews at this time were also a distiller, a bank manager, a handful of physicians and attorneys.⁷²

It is easier to pinpoint the occupation of Charleston's Jews. Practically every businessman in town has been identified by Elzas in his works on South Carolina. The Charleston directory for 1803 lists 96 householders. Artisans were rare; 57 Jews were shopkeepers, 4 of them were women. It is curious that only 7 called themselves merchants but then all those Charleston tradesmen had been born in the mid-eighteenth century when the term "merchant" was almost sacrosanct and they showed respect for this venerable noun. Auctioneers (wholesalers) were numerous;

there were also four brokers. Among the others, rarely more than one in each category, there was a scrivener, a lumber measurer, a cigarmaker, a turnkey, a fruiterer, a tailor, a horsetrader, and a tobacco manufacturer, the latter someone who made snuff and chewing tobacco. All told, of the 96 listed, 85 were merchandisers. The publisher of the directory, Isaac Elizer, had once been postmaster in a remote South Carolina village; later in 1813 at Charleston, he was to be a notary public and a justice of the peace. His father had been a Newport merchant shipper and slave importer who died impoverished. By 1840, the new economy had already made itself felt in Charleston. The Jews there included at least one individual who was a railroad director, an insurance investor, a builder, an educator, an artist, a civil servant, a doctor, a dentist, and a lawyer.⁷³

Baltimore in 1800 was a large city with but very few Jews, possibly eighty souls. There were a few merchants, some boardinghouse keepers, a tobacco manufacturer, a maker of shoe polish, a broker, a hardware store owner, a grocer, a distiller, a captain of the watch, and a policeman. Most of these people were in modest circumstances. By 1820 immigrants had begun to filter in: peddlers, owners of second-hand stores, a clothier, a taverner, a commission merchant, a pawnbroker, a real estate speculator, a furniture dealer, and manufacturers—one made chemicals, another made paper. As was true of practically all the Jewish industrialists in every town, their manufactories were small enterprises. Artisans now made their appearance: watchmakers, locksmiths, a jeweler, a butcher, a comb-maker, a painter, a glazer, a quillmaker. There was also a pharmacist and a dentist. The upper middle class comprised only two families, the Ettings and the Cohens, merchant and lottery entrepreneurs; in the lower middle class, some peddlers. In 1820, the 11 native-born and immigrant householders had a total of 24 servants; 15 free blacks; 9 slaves. Not one of the immigrant families had a servant; they were still struggling. In the decade that ended in 1830, there were not many occupational variations; the census records a grocer, a pawnbroker, a musician, and a physician. The recent immigrants however were now coming up in the world; of the 24 immigrant households, 10 had black servants, most of them hired personnel, not slaves. The typically Jewish pattern of vocational distribution reflected in the directories of New York, New Orleans, and Baltimore and other records is reflected also in Richmond where by 1819 most Jewish tradesmen called themselves merchants. All told, 21 were listed by occupation; 14 described themselves as merchants, but the 7 remaining also earned their livelihood through different forms of trade; included were a druggist, a lottery salesman, a grocer, a tobacconist, a hatter, and two stores specializing in shoes.⁷⁴

The push westward brought with it the rise of Jewish communities across the mountains. This *Drang nach Westen* is documented in the birth

of confraternities or congregations in Columbia, South Carolina, in Richmond, Virginia, and in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. By 1825, Cincinnati, to be known as the Queen City of the West, had a tiny Jewish community, with a merchant, a tailor, an auctioneer, a watchmaker, a distiller, and a grocer. By 1830, the directories had begun to describe some of Cincinnati's Jewish businessmen as clothiers—probably retailers who kept a stock of ready-to-wear garments. By 1840, the diversity in Cincinnati's mercantile activities became even more marked though Jews, on the whole, were slow to seek new fields of endeavor. Thus local Jews were clothiers, dry goods shopowners, jewelry and watch repairmen, grocers, cigar and liquor dealers, and boardinghouse keepers. Clerks and young peddlers were then arriving in numbers; wholesalers began to take on more sizable proportions. It is not improbable that some of the fourteen clothiers were small-scale garment manufacturers. With the exception of Charleston and Savannah, all American Jewish communities, including New York, were influenced by Philadelphia, the country's preeminent city for decades. The economic life of Philadelphia Jewry differs little from that of the smaller towns, which in a sense were patterned on the Pennsylvania metropolis. There was, of course, much more variety within the traditional categories. Before 1800, there had been several brokers to meet the financial challenges of a new state. In addition to the shopkeepers, who were most numerous, there were innkeepers catering to a non-Jewish clientele, a trunkmaker, an embroiderer, a shoemaker, and a saddler. *The Philadelphia Directory and Strangers' Guide for 1825* discloses that in a selective list of over eighty Jews, half were tradesmen. Among them were second-hand clothes dealers, an importer of watches, an accountant, an interpreter, a shopkeeper who specialized in music, an owner of a wall-paper warehouse. Among the professionals and artisans, in addition to lawyers and physicians, were a cabinetmaker, a carver and gilder, a furrier, a dentist, a maker of scales, and a manufacturer of quill cutting knives. Frances Solomons, widow, was recorded as an umbrella maker. Merchants predominated. With access to the ocean, many continued as importers; in 1827, there were 25 Jewish importers out of a total of about 1,300 in the city.⁷⁵

JEWS, GEOGRAPHY, THE NEW ECONOMY, AND THE CLASS STRUCTURE

When the Revolution began in the mid-1770's, there were five Jewish communities in which the majority of the Jews pursued a modest livelihood, Newport, New York, Philadelphia, Savannah, and Charleston. There was also a minuscule settlement in Lancaster which served as a jumping-off point for the Western traders. After the War, Newport de-

clined rapidly, while Richmond, Baltimore, and Norfolk made a bid for recognition as arenas for Jewish businessmen. Richmond became important in the 1780's, because Virginia was the new republic's largest state. The town was on the James River, which provided transport to the Chesapeake Bay and the ocean. Able businessmen saw an opportunity to exploit the region's grain and tobacco trade. Norfolk, however, never developed a community in that generation; Jewishly it was a one-man town; maybe that is why it failed to grow and, by the same token, that may be the reason Newport did not survive Aaron Lopez. Richmond had a congregation even before Norfolk's Moses Myers achieved his success. In general, Jews go where there is an established community, which may explain why Boston was bypassed for Newport in the late colonial decades. By 1840, Baltimore was a metropolis of over 100,000. Two wealthy Sephardic families enjoyed high visibility there, but a growing, if still anonymous, group of Ashkenazic newcomers was on the rise and would before long become the real core around which a community would agglomerate. Baltimore grew as a Jewish community because the town's fathers, with the Jewish elite at their head, saw the necessity of facing westward. The clipper could not compete with the Conestoga wagon. Important though the foreign trade was, it would have to make way for the commercial promise of the West. American Jews began facing the mountains and the inland river highways. Challenges—new opportunities—were envisaged in the cis-Mississippi lands. By the 1830's Jews were already headed across the Alleghenies establishing bridgeheads which were soon to emerge as important inland Jewish communities. Following the turnpikes, rivers, and canals, the Jews created religious fellowships of their own in Albany on the upper Hudson, Syracuse on the Erie Canal, Cleveland on Lake Erie, Cincinnati and Louisville on the Ohio, St. Louis and New Orleans on the Mississippi. Cincinnati and Louisville commanded the resources of the Ohio Valley. Cincinnati in particular, was strategically located, as it was tied to the South through its river and to the Great Lakes and the East through its canal. New Orleans now became the entrepot for much of the Mississippi Valley; St. Louis would blossom when the push to the West took on new life. The transallegheeny Jewish towns were not to make their presence felt significantly till the decade of the 1840's. Central European Jewish newcomers were yet to come, and, when they did, had to struggle for years till they made their mark.

It is difficult even to estimate what proportion of the country's Jews lived across the mountains. There were said by 1840 to be 15,000 Jews in the United States, and one may guess—and it is only a guess—that a third at most were living in the Mississippi Basin. Perspective must always be retained; the Jewish tidewater communities would never be bypassed. As

early as 1830, it was patent that New York was the city of the future; it siphoned off the trade of the West and controlled much of the commerce of the coastal South. New York sold the South's cotton and supplied its wares; New York was the South's factor. Philadelphia was losing out to the city at the mouth of the Hudson; Baltimore was still in a state of becoming; Charleston, declining in relative importance, remained—small as it was—an important commercial city and Southern Jewry's cultural center. As late as 1850, the ambitious Isaac M. Wise, then of Albany, was flattered when invited to serve as the minister of Charleston's Beth Elohim. New communities would soon rise in the Old Southwest as virgin cotton lands were ploughed in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Charleston's Jewish brains planted themselves on the Gulf as trade was channeled to Mobile and New Orleans. The region offered good soil, new towns, new opportunities.⁷⁶

One suspects that the outstanding Jewish businessmen in the South were relatively more influential in their towns than the wealthy Jews of the North. Ben Gratz in Lexington was certainly more important in his town than any of the Gratzes in Philadelphia. Why did brilliant Jews stand out in the South? The Jews in the North, heavily outnumbered by their peers, could not compete effectively in cultural and commercial terms. In the South, however, there were towns where the blacks, slaves, outnumbered the whites; Jews were needed there because fewer able whites turned to commerce. As the Gentile elite of the region became engrossed in politics and in the nursing of social status, competent Jews moved into the economic vacuum. Unfortunately for them and for their ambitions, they were never able to become leaders in the larger community; they lacked status; the real power lay in the countryside, in the hands of the latifundia lords and their yeomen satellites. Were there any appreciable differences in the economic and occupational activities of the Jews in the South when compared with those of the North? Did the Jews living south of the line with its free trade, low tariff needs, tobacco, cotton, rice, and sugar culture, differ perceptibly in their economic pursuits from the Jews in the North, in a grain-growing, high tariff, incipient industrial economy? No. The products were different, but the economic activity was the same; essentially the Jews of both the North and the South were tradesmen buying and distributing consumer wares.⁷⁷

And the New Economy? The Northern Jews embraced its brokerage aspects enthusiastically. This genre of commerce was nothing new. In one form or another, Jews had been commission merchants in pre-Revolutionary days; they had been commercial go-betweens in Europe for centuries. In the South, the Jews crawled into the interstices of the civil service and into the administrative areas of corporate business; as whites, they made a place for themselves because of the blacks and the region's racial

imbalance. In 1840, more than 50 percent of the population in the South was slave. Some Jews—probably not too many—eagerly welcomed the new challenges of the nineteenth century but every town had its Jewish commercial boosters, who lent their names and talents to any activity that would further commerce and trade. The Baltimore Cohens are exemplary in this respect. The tradition of support for the economy was not absent even in colonial days, for an earlier Sampson Simson (1725-1773) was one of the pillars of New York's Chamber of Commerce in the middle of the eighteenth century. Newport's Jews between 1768 and 1775 were among those who sought paved streets; they contributed to the building of a college and a Baptist church a decade before the Revolution. Jewish merchants in Philadelphia and Lancaster joined others in urging the construction of good roads to further interurban traffic. But tiny American Jewry as a whole did not integrate itself into the fermenting agricultural, technological, transportation, and industrial revolutions. This must be reemphasized. Occupationally the Jews as a body remained in their pre-industrial rut; they liked it.⁷⁸

As noted in preceding pages, Jews were in general not part of the plantation economy; they were not much interested in machinery, textiles, large-scale transportation, or heavy industry. Wealthy merchants were not typical of the Jewish body politic. The shopkeepers—who were more typical—lacked the means to engage in speculative ventures; the old-line native-born who had some capital tended to be very cautious speculators. They followed traditional paths; unlike the New Englanders, they did not shift to industry. Maybe they simply failed to sense the future. The America of 1776-1840 was still a merchants' world for most people, and the Jews saw no need for a radical departure. They stuck to trade, merchandise; they entrenched themselves behind their counters; this was their fortress, their *métier*. The United States had experienced a political bouleversement in 1776, but the commercial and financial changes that followed on its heels were as yet not drastic, so Jews continued to do business at the old stands and in the old fashion. To be sure, they now had more freedom to move in any direction commercially, as the spirit moved them. Remaining rooted in the past, they adapted themselves only slowly to the changes in the economy; they nibbled at banking, transportation, insurance; they served as federal clerks, consuls, and marshals, urban administrators, as officers in the army and navy, as physicians, surgeons, lawyers, politicians—but the rank and file remained in trade. History must reflect the activities not of the few, but of the many.

Socially the Jews were in every class and in one class. Despite the political power that Aaron Lopez and the Franks clan wielded in colonial days, despite their social acceptance in some quarters because of their wealth and connections, they had never really been deemed gentry. They

had always been “Jews.” In the new republic, however, the Jews began to appear as “gentlemen,” in the directories at least. In contrast with most other Americans, Jews were not found among the mass of farmers scrambling for a living; they were not found among the frontiersmen. Many were artisans—more than is usually assumed—but most Jews were businessmen, merchants. Actually the so-called merchants were most often retailers with modest inventories, but “merchant” meant status. As recently as the early 1900’s, Aaron Marcus, of Farmington, West Virginia, a village of less than 1,000, forbade his son, Jacob, to run around town in overalls. “Remember,” he said, “I am a merchant.” Jews as a whole were part of an extended and comprehensive middle class group which included a Harmon Hendricks and a Chapman Levy at the top and an umbrella mender, Jonas Friedenwald, at the bottom.⁷⁹

WHAT, IF ANYTHING, DID JEWS DO FOR THE ECONOMY?

After 1776, the Americans set out to make their own way, to emancipate themselves from Britain in the world of commerce and trade. Independence forced the country to turn to manufacturing; at war with the English, Americans found their supplies cut off; and they had no choice but to establish their own industry, to find new sources of supply for finished goods. Yet many Americans, and Jews among them, faced economic independence with a degree of reluctance, for England had a wide assortment of wares, her prices were right, the goods were of acceptable quality, and ample credit was available. Commercial independence was a luxury which many could not afford. During the crucial transition period from dependence to industrial emancipation, individual merchants and merchant-shippers in towns from Boston to New Orleans supplied the goods imperatively needed. There were Jews among them. Jewish businessmen of substance provided useful services and, like their peers, extended their commerce to Europe, the Caribbean, South America, and even to the Far East. Adhering to a pattern already nearly two centuries old in this country, they imported foreign commodities, stocked the shelves of the town and country merchants, gave them credit, and channeled rural products into the towns and foreign markets. By 1840, the country’s five Jewish coastal communities had grown to at least sixteen on the coast, in the piedmont, and on the canals, lakes, and streams as far west as St. Louis. The shopkeepers in all these settlements were dependent on their suppliers. Some of the wholesalers were Jewish. As purveyors to the masses, the wholesalers and the storekeepers rendered a very important service.

What part did the typical petty Jewish tradesmen play in the new economy, in the national market revolution, in the burgeoning early

nineteenth-century world of technology and more rapid transportation? Very little. Coming as they did from the ghettos and villages of Central and East Europe, these men had few skills and very little capital to ease their entrance into an economy essentially foreign to them. As we have pointed out above in some detail, there were exceptions; individuals did pioneer in some fields; they were buyers and sellers of securities, bankers of high and low degree, patrons of the new forms of transportation and insurance, furtherers of transallegheeny commerce. There were even a few in industry. But, as a body, Jews were not in the vanguard of the new economy. The typical Jewish trader remained a distributor of goods. Women? There was not a community which lacked at least one woman who "girded her loins and ate not the bread of idleness." These women ran shops or fancy goods stores as well as boardinghouses; they even bought, sold, and built buildings. The matriarch Abigail Minis ran a little town and country empire of her own. America, to be sure, was in no sense an egalitarian society for women; practically all the shopkeepers in the towns and cities were men.⁸⁰

The Germans call the science of economics, "national economy"—an apt term, more descriptive than the English "economics." National economy deals with the life of the nation as a totality. The constitution of 1788 made such an economy possible; the commerce of all the states was now to be tied and held together by a unifying force, a central organization, the United States government, which envisaged and reflected the needs and hopes of all the states in the Union. Because they were to be found everywhere and had common commercial interests, Jews favored and furthered this national economy. They were eager to extend their mercantile horizons to embrace not only the United States, but ultimately all the lands that bordered on the seven seas. As a body, the Jews owed economic allegiance to no one state or region, but to the country as a whole. They were not captives of sectionalists, of New England manufacturers, of farmers in the West, or of planters in the South. Concerned with their own interests, which they identified with those of the nation itself, Jews wanted to trade with all groups; their loyalties to a larger America superseded regional loyalties. In a way, through the commercial services they rendered, they helped cement the country and its disparate regions together. And what were these "services"? Distribution of goods to every corner of the land. This was the job which American Jews undertook with some gusto and performed with rather notable success.



CHAPTER SIX

JUDAISM IN THE UNITED STATES:

THE STRUCTURE, 1776-1840

INTRODUCTION

THE ASHKENAZIC SYNAGOG COMMUNITIES

In the generation of the early republic, most Jews believed in the Jewish religion; at any rate, membership in a synagogue was the norm. There appeared to have been no question in their minds: no one could be a Jew without Judaism; Judaism and the Jewish people were one. For Christians, it is Christ who is all important; for Jews, it is Jews who are all important. Religion in those days was the synthesis, the golden thread of Jewish history; it was the past and the present, the core and the spirit of the community. But what was the community? The community was unity; it was concept and reality, the totality of agencies and activities, folkways and practices, beliefs and worship, all these religiously motivated. It included everyone who identified with the Jewish group, whether willingly or reluctantly. Jews did not join the group, they were born into it and identified completely with one another. In spite of their constant and bitter intramural feuds, they stuck together. Most probably they were afraid to be alone; they could never be sure of the Gentiles, not even on these shores. The community nourished synagogues, Jewish philanthropies, schools; it integrated newcomers and gave both the native-born and the foreign-born that unity and cohesion which made for a strong sense of loyalty. The sentiment of kinship embraced Jews everywhere; virtually all Jews held to the concept of *Kelal Yisrael*, the Oneness of the Jewish people.

Religion as such, however, is expressed primarily in a synagogue. Back in biblical times, Jacob, the patriarch, had made a covenant with God: If God would give him bread to eat and a garment to wear, he in turn would set up a *Beth Elohim*, a house of God (Gen. 28:20-22). Jews first had to make a living, then they organized societies and built sanctuaries. They

had had communities, synagogues, back in their ancestral Europe; obviously they would establish them here. They wanted a place, a building, a room, where they could meet, talk, pray, weep. The synagogue was the prime instrumentality of Jewish survival. Their Christian neighbors had built churches and expected the Jews to do likewise; all decent people had houses of worship. When the Declaration of Independence was adopted in July, 1776, there were five synagogues in the new United States—in Newport, New York, Philadelphia, Charleston, and Savannah. These five all followed the Spanish-Portuguese liturgical rite which had been employed since the first settlement in North America was established in the mid-1600's. The Sephardic ritual was accepted as the standard American liturgy. In 1781, during the War, a congregation was also established in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, American Jewry's westernmost outpost. Lancaster was an interior town deemed safe from the British. Refugees from the seacoast assembled here. They probably met in the home of Joseph Simon, who owned two Torah scrolls and their usual ornaments. It is doubtful that the chaplain whom Simon employed knew the Sephardic chants. Lancaster was a patriarchal congregation, dominated by one man, the Ashkenazi Simon—who was later to become a member of Sephardic Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia. During the Revolution, about fifteen men gathered together for worship here, but the Lancaster conventicle is unlikely to have survived the 1780's. It is not improbable that, wherever and whenever backcountry shopkeepers could muster a prayer quorum of ten adult males over thirteen years of age, they would hold worship services.¹

It was in 1786, that some of Charleston, South Carolina, Ashkenazim established a synagogue-community of their own, quite possibly the first such congregation in this country. They may have resorted to their own German or Polish rite, but it is by no means improbable that they, too, continued to use the Sephardic prayer books. It was not unusual in the Western Hemisphere for the "Germans"—the Ashkenazim—of the Caribbean islands and Surinam to adopt the Spanish-Portuguese liturgy. The divisiveness that separated the two groups was ethnic, never creedal. Later, however, Ashkenazic congregations did rely on prayer books reflecting their own German or Polish style. Why did an Ashkenazic congregation come into being in Charleston? It is very probable that there was a quarrel and a resultant secession in the original congregation. The details of the controversy are unknown; there are very few extant sources, but this we know: one group survived and continued to employ the Spanish-Portuguese liturgy. The second "German" group to organize in America met at Philadelphia in 1795. The Revolutionary ethos encouraged dissent. In 1787, German Catholics going off on their own had established a schismatic congregation to the dismay of Bishop Carroll of

Baltimore. A generation earlier, when Philadelphia's Jews were in the throes of an organizational ferment, they, too, may already have envisaged an Ashkenazic service. In any case, positive evidence is lacking that the 1795 German conventicle survived in Philadelphia, but by 1800 the city had a new Ashkenazic group that was destined to persevere. Obviously these newcomers felt that they would be more comfortable with their own non-Sephardic ritual and a compatible membership. "Minor" differences and nuances are always important. If by 1801 they had a cemetery, it may be assumed that the organization was created a year earlier. Philadelphia, then the country's outstanding city, was the first to harbor two ritually diverse congregations. The longstanding colonial American tradition of a single synagog-community was shattered; from now on there would be multiple Jewish religious communities, each one autonomous. In short, the American Protestant tradition would now become the American Jewish tradition. A formal organization of these Philadelphia Germans was effected in 1802; they called themselves the Hebrew German Society, Rodeph Shalom, the Pursuer of Peace, and set out to unite the dissident Ashkenazim in town—hence, the "pursuit" of peace. This urge to peace, the desire for unity, has remained a recurrent motif in American Jewry down to the present day.²

Originally Rodeph Shalom was a sick-care and burial society. When a man took sick, two members sat up with him every night; if he had died away from home, messengers were sent to bring the body back if the distance was less than eighty miles. By 1810, the conventicle became a full congregation with a constitution of its own; two years later, it was chartered by the state. For a time its reader, probably a volunteer, was Wolfe Benjamin, a native Englishman. Back in London, as a distiller, he had come into conflict with the British excise authorities and had left for Philadelphia. He was respected as a generous and learned man. A later reader was the omnibus factotum Jacob Lippman, sometimes known as Rabbi Jacky (Jackey, Jakey). From 1819 to 1834, Lippman served as reader, beadle, circumciser, and probably as collector, too. On the pittance he received—\$50 a year—he could not survive and so augmented his salary from the profits of a second-hand clothing store. Rodeph Shalom finally increased his salary to \$150 a year. The members stinted on the hazzan's salary, but when they received an appeal for help from a new Ashkenazic confraternity in Richmond, they responded generously. It was many years before the congregants had a building of their own; in the meantime, they rented quarters. Over the door of one of the hired halls, they piously painted the Hebrew text of Genesis 28:17, which the Authorized Version translates: "How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the House of God." When the Central Europeans arrived in larger numbers, they joined Rodeph Shalom; the congregation grew and

as the members prospered some moved over to the more prestigious Mikveh Israel and became "Sephardim." By 1840, a third Jewish congregation had arisen in the city, Beth Israel. This new Ashkenazic group looked askance at the acculturated Sephardim of Mikveh Israel and even at the well-settled Ashkenazim of Rodeph Shalom. Like most immigrant conventicles, it was to the right of the town's established congregations, whose Orthodoxy seemed somehow inauthentic.³

It was not uncommon for Jews in their initial form of organization to establish a sick-care and burial society. This is what happened in Philadelphia when the founders of Rodeph Shalom decided to withdraw from Mikveh Israel, and apparently the same process recurred in Columbia, South Carolina. In 1826, a handful of men created a Hebrew Burial Society, which speedily became a Hebrew Benevolent Society, a mutual-benefit, sick-care, burial, and charitable organization. There can be no question that the members joined together for worship services on occasion, although it is difficult to determine whether these Central Europeans used a Sephardic or an Ashkenazic prayer book. In 1819, Cincinnati's Jews, Ashkenazim, had begun to hold services; two years later they bought a cemetery to bury a resident who, dying, had requested Jewish burial. An older settler in town, he had married out and had reared a Christian family. By 1824, the English, Dutch, and German Jews in the city had organized themselves formally; there were twenty households; in 1832 they had over thirty. Thinking of building a synagogue of their own—the first beyond the Alleghenies—they sent letters of appeal throughout the United States, the Islands, and even to England. Here in this western boomtown, they bragged, they were building a congregation where a few years before naught had been heard "but the howling of wild beasts and the more hideous cry of savage man." The appeal was written by Joseph Jonas, the congregation's romantic founder. The new congregation, he pointed out, had a rented room, two Scrolls of the Law, and a volunteer shohet. The cemetery was filling up; the members had already buried four people, two of them poor strangers. One of those buried had been brought up by steamboat from Louisville. If only they had a building of their own, they could draw members from New Orleans! Writing to Sephardic congregations, they reminded them that Ashkenazim were of the "same family and faith." Jonas and his brother had each married a daughter of the Sephardi Gershom Seixas. There was no congregation within 500 miles of Cincinnati—help us stop intermarriage, they pleaded. It took over a decade to get enough money to construct their own synagogue; fifty-two Cincinnati Gentiles each gave \$25, which mounted up to a substantial sum and helped make possible in 1836 the dedication of the first Jewish sanctuary west of the mountains.⁴

NEW YORK CITY'S ASHKENAZIM

The same year—1825—that Joseph Jonas sent out his appeal for funds the Ashkenazim of New York were determined to establish a group of their own. The Ashkenazic congregations soon to rise in the United States were breakaways from older Sephardic synagogues, or pioneer conventicles in the hinterland, or secessions from recently established Ashkenazic congregations. The English and Central European immigrants coming into a new town obviously preferred their familiar Ashkenazic rite to the standard American Sephardic ritual. Whether in New York, Philadelphia, or Richmond, they wanted a synagog life of their own. The motivations for secession are reflected in the history of Bnai Jeshurun of New York, the first non-Sephardic congregation in that city. Though the Central and East Europeans—Ashkenazim—had constituted the majority of New York Jewry since 1720 at the latest, the eighteenth-century non-Iberian newcomers were speedily Sephardized. Their descendants supplied Shearith Israel's members and leaders throughout this period. By the 1820's, however, a substantial number of newcomers in town felt strong enough to push for autonomy. These Jews were English, Dutch, Germans, and Poles. (Many of the latter may well have originated in the Prussian provinces which had once been part of Poland; the Germans would never forgive them for having been born east of the Neisse River.) The nineteenth-century immigrants may have believed that they were being snubbed by the older families in Shearith Israel—just as the East Europeans who came to New York in the late nineteenth century were convinced that the acculturated "Germans" looked down on them. By 1822, the German element in Shearith Israel had already established a charity of its own, the Hebrew Benevolent Society. These Central Europeans became more belligerent as they gathered strength. The struggle was ethnic, liturgical, a fight for power between the old-timers and the ambitious newcomers. The new arrivals, many of them English-born, were men of education. Some had means; others aspired to leadership. Rivalries between the Spanish-Portuguese and the Central European Jews were nothing new; such ethnic and social hostilities surely inspired the establishment of exclusionary Sephardic cemeteries in New York during the seventeenth century and in Charleston during the eighteenth.

By 1825, the New York non-Sephardim were ready to begin their thrust. That year the dissidents established in Shearith Israel an educational group of their own, the Hebra Hinuch Nearim, a Society for Educating the Youth. Along with the hevrah came a series of demands. The non-Sephardim sought a separate service in the synagog, although they were willing to continue the use of the Sephardic rite, and they wanted cheaper offerings, their own voluntary lay reader, more democracy in the conduct of the board, and better educational facilities. Back in the 1600's,

in Holland, the Amsterdam Spanish-Portuguese had allowed incoming Germans to use their synagog for services of their own, but the latter-day New Amsterdam-New Yorkers were too apprehensive to tolerate this push for autonomy, for an Ashkenazic liturgy within the venerable Sephardic synagog. These intimations of Jacksonian democracy, as they may well have been, were not well received at Shearith Israel. Bear in mind that the decade of the 1820's was one of ferment; much of Europe was unhappy in the Age of Metternich; the South Americans were in revolt against Spain. One suspects that the Shearith Israel newcomers were goading the establishment. The congregational leaders responded by setting out to control the admission of newcomers. The break soon followed. In 1825, a new congregation was established, the first Ashkenazic one in the city; it called itself Bnai Jeshurun, the Children of Jeshurun. To justify their secession, they gave their reasons; the United States allows everyone to worship according to the dictates of his conscience; the synagog is too far downtown; it is too small for the Holy Day crowds; the newcomers have a right to their own ritual; they want a more intense form of Judaism. The secessionists seem to have insinuated that the older congregation was slipping religiously. One suspects, too, that Shearith Israel was quite willing to let the protestants go. In the 1730's, the Sephardim had needed the Ashkenazim; now, in the 1820's the Sephardic elite knew that it could survive without the Ashkenazic newcomers. Indeed the Shearith Israel leaders gave the secessionists their blessing; the rich Harmon Hendricks helped finance them; Noah and other Sephardim encouraged them. Who can question that some of the Shearith Israel members muttered the old blessing under their breath: "Blessed be He who hath freed me from this responsibility." This is the congé when a father tells his thirteen-year-old son he is now a man, religiously, and is expected to take care of himself.⁶

The Sons of Jeshurun bought a Negro church, refurbished it, introduced their own rite, and then sent letters all over the Atlantic world asking for money. This procedure, witnessed already in the Cincinnati request for funds, goes back to the 1730's. Like the Cincinnatians, whose appeal the New Yorkers had undoubtedly read, they reminded the Sephardim that all Jews were kinsmen; to the Ashkenazim to whom they turned they emphasized that they were refugees fleeing from European persecution. The dedication address, given in 1827, was delivered by the twenty-three-year-old Henry Hendricks, a member of Shearith Israel. The new congregation could not refuse this request by their wealthy patron, Harmon Hendricks; after all it was a secured loan from him that had made possible the purchase of the church. In the course of time, Bnai Jeshurun became one of the largest synagogs in the country. The rise of this congregation and of other Ashkenazic synagogs was a premonitory

warning that Sephardic rule was approaching its end. Ultimately, later in the nineteenth century, and in the twentieth especially, the city's Ashkenazic Jewry was to become the most influential Jewish body in the world.⁷

Bnai Jeshurun broke the (Ashkenazic) ice. The next fifteen years saw four new congregations established in New York City; three were to survive. Why did different Ashkenazic synagogues arise? Were the liturgical variations that important? For some, yes, they were—but, actually, the causes for proliferation and secession were frequently very personal in nature. New congregations were established because people wanted to be with their very own fellow countrymen. Personal idiosyncrasies and complaints played their part in inciting breakaways; intramural quarrels, prejudices, imagined slights, social ambitions, the desire for office all played an important part in the establishment of new congregations. A man resigned from Bnai Jeshurun in 1835 because of a minor restriction and then set out to establish a new congregation; he succeeded, though it was only three months before the new congregation closed its doors. Earlier in 1828, Anshe Chesed, The Merciful Men, had come into being. Shearith Israel helped the Merciful Men get on its feet, but would not permit it to worship in its building. The Merciful Men was a motley group at first—Germans, Poles, and Dutch—but, when the Central Europeans began to arrive in numbers, the Germans dominated. By 1840, Anshe Chesed had purchased and renovated a Quaker church down on the Lower East Side; two decades later, overtaking Bnai Jeshurun numerically, it became the largest Jewish congregation in the United States. Bnai Jeshurun itself was to experience two or three secessions: in 1839, some Germans and Poles left the mother Ashkenazic synagogue and founded the Gates of Righteousness, Shaarey Zedek; that same year a group of Jews opened The Gates of Heaven, Shaarey Hashamayim. An immigrant had no trouble finding a place to worship where he could truly be with his own.⁸

NEW ORLEANS AND BALTIMORE, LOUISVILLE AND ST. LOUIS

New York was a city with a religious tradition. There had always been a congregation there, and it was expected that newcomers would rally around the synagogue. The New Orleans Jews faced a different situation: A substantial number came there but found no synagogue and wanted none. New Orleans was a “wide open” town—an “emporium of wine, women and segars,” a young Charlestonian once called it. The Jews acculturated speedily, were accepted by the Catholic elite, intermarried, and reared Christian families. They themselves remained Jews; there was no compulsion to embrace Christianity. The Jews there who did take the Jewish religion seriously—and there were always some—were moved by Jacob S. Solis to organize themselves as a congregation. This man, London-born in 1780, had come to the United States about the year 1803. His business

career was a checkered one; there is no reason to believe that he was successful. Opening a store in Wilmington, Delaware, he settled down for a while at least and then moved to Westchester County, New York, where he attempted unsuccessfully in 1826 to establish an academy for Jewish children who were to be taught agriculture, domestic skills, and crafts.

Solis was above all an ardent Jew and, arriving in New Orleans in 1827, set out to establish a synagogue. In this effort, he was successful; Congregation Gates of Mercy, Shanarai-Chasset, was the work of his hands. Sephardic at first, it later adopted the Ashkenazic rite—which is not surprising, since practically all the early members were of non-Iberian origin. The new synagogue published a constitution in 1828, one adapted to its needs in this town. The board was to raise money to build a temple or an “institute,” the latter word reflecting the new European pedagogy with which Solis was very probably familiar. The poor were to be helped; the children were to be educated. The traditional requirement that the individual’s Jewish descent be traced through the mother was disregarded; a child of even one Jewish parent was recognized as a Jew for purposes of education or burial. Christian wives were to receive a Jewish burial; so were prostitutes, adultresses, and suicides, and special sections in the cemetery were reserved for them. During those days of rampant yellow fever epidemics, the congregation was very much concerned with burials; the entire board was expected to attend all funerals. A cemetery had been purchased in March, 1828, a month after the congregation’s founding. When the Gates of Mercy was established in 1828, there were 28 founding members; 33 other Jews in town gave it donations, but refused to join; 11 Gentiles made generous subscriptions. To teach the Jews when to celebrate their Holy Days, Solis and his friends attached a calendar to the constitution which they published. This was true home missionary activity. Since the constitution was intended to build a viable Jewish community, its sponsors had no hesitation in disregarding Jewish laws which would have precluded unity and organization. For a generation, Gates of Mercy, the first synagogue on the Gulf, was the only one in town. For the short time that Solis remained in town, he served as the synagogue’s spiritual leader, then returned to his home in New York, and by 1829 was dead. In a letter to his widow a number of the New Orleans congregants spoke of him as a brother to all men, a father to the orphans, an aid to the poor, a helper for the sick, a companion to the afflicted.⁹

Solis, a devoted volunteer, was succeeded by others determined to keep the congregation alive. Manis Jacobs, his successor, president and acting-rabbi, was a native Hollander. When he died in 1839 his Catholic wife attempted to slip a crucifix into his coffin. During the 1830’s and later, Alfred J. Marks served as secretary and lay rabbi, possibly even as circumciser, though there is some evidence that his own children were

left uncircumcised. The congregation gave him some sort of salary, but he made his living chiefly as an official in the customhouse, as a stage manager, and as an actor. Because he had at times played the part of Rowley in the *School for Scandal*, he was known to his friends as Rowley or Roley Marks. He especially enjoyed his role as a volunteer in the Washington Fire Company, No. 4. A German traveler who attended his services in 1842 was shocked. Marks observed no dietary laws; indeed in all New Orleans there were only four families which attempted to keep kosher and only two which kept the Sabbath. New Orleans Jewry was anything but observant; the assimilatory influences were almost overwhelming. Most boys in New Orleans were not circumcised; many youngsters could read no Hebrew; Purim was not observed because Marks was too busy; even the High Holy Day services were poorly attended. Some immigrants wandered up the Mississippi from New Orleans and settled in Natchez, an old Spanish town which at one time had sheltered a handful of Marranos. Ashkenazic newcomers, coming later, bought a cemetery and probably met together as a prayer union.¹⁰

Baltimore was not New Orleans; there was less emphasis on wine, women, and good food. Here, too, Jews were late to organize because relatively few of them found their way to the city at first. Baltimore was a metropolis but it was slow to attract Jews; the older coastal towns, so it seemed, had more to offer. By 1829, with about thirty families, Baltimoreans were ready to establish a congregation of their own. To be sure the local Jews could have fashioned a community earlier had the elite old-timers been willing to help; for social reasons these pioneers kept aloof and worshipped by themselves. One may assume occasional prayer services were held in the early 1820's, for there were enough newcomers in town and there was always a need for special devotions. By 1829, the Dutch, Germans, Bohemians, and Poles had united to establish an Ashkenazic conventicle—*Nitgy Israel* (*Nidhe Israel*), the Scattered Ones of Israel; later, the worshippers called themselves the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. In January, 1830, they were chartered and immediately published a constitution of their own in English, not German. Unlike their coreligionists in distant New Orleans, they made no compromise with intermarriage, but hewed to the line. Before the decade was over, about the year 1838, another small synagogue opened in a different part of town—the Fell's Point Hebrew Congregation. By 1840, about 100 families had settled in Baltimore, all of them nominally traditional. That year Abraham Rice (Reiss?), an ordained German rabbi, came in to serve the Scattered Israelites. He, the first ordained rabbi to serve a congregation in Baltimore, was an ardent follower of the Law. Baltimoreans of a later generation maintained that he had helped keep Baltimore "Jewish," though in his own eyes his success seemed quite limited. The times were

against him. He is said to have been the first ordained rabbi to officiate in this country.¹¹

Authentic tradition has it that Baltimore Jews were among the first to settle in Louisville at the Falls of the Ohio. Once a man reached the Ohio, the whole West was open to him on the river highways. Jews are known to have already settled in town by the 1820's. About the year 1830 there was a cemetery, in answer to an urgent need, women dying in childbirth and high infant mortality. Louisville, by the 1830's, seems to have established a mutual-aid and burial society, which certainly helped stem the forces of assimilation. Attempts during this decade to organize a synagog were unsuccessful until 1836 when a congregation was established that would one day become Adath Israel, The Community of Israel. Anyone who went around the Falls at Louisville could float down the Ohio into the Mississippi. Poling up the Mississippi would bring a traveler to St. Louis, an old French settlement important because the Mississippi tributary, the Missouri, opened up the western country all the way to the Rocky Mountains. Jews were doing business in St. Louis by the first decade of the new century. This city, like Louisville, set out to build a congregation in the 1830's; prayer quorums began to meet and about the year 1837 a permanent religious society was founded—the later United Hebrew Congregation, called “United” because of the congeries of Jews it tied together.¹²

The West—of that generation—was being infiltrated also from the Gulf and from the Atlantic coastal towns. Charleston's eager young men were to be found in Columbia, South Carolina, and in all the states of the Old Southwest; Jewish adventurers from Philadelphia and Baltimore crossed the mountains to the Ohio; New York's Jewish argonauts sailed up the Hudson to Albany and then moved west on the Erie Canal. Albany, rather surprisingly, had had Jewish settlers or visitors as early as the 1660's under Dutch rule, but had to wait thirteen years after the Erie was opened before German immigrants decided to remain in the city and established a congregation. In 1838, Congregation Beth El was founded; eight years later it hired the young Bohemian émigré Isaac Mayer Wise to minister to it. Wise in later years—by then he had gone on to Cincinnati—organized the American Jewish Reform movement. Settlers and peddlers moving west on the Canal planted themselves in Syracuse and held services. The town sheltered a number of itinerant merchants who returned to it periodically to replenish their packs and wagons at a wholesale house owned by Jews. Congregation Keneseth Shalom, the Society of Concord, opened its doors in 1839. The constant emphasis on peace and concord is not accidental. American Jewry was a melting pot fusing together Jews from a half-dozen different European lands and a dozen different German principalities. Among them were Alsatians from West-

ern Europe and Russians from Eastern Europe. If they were to pray together, peace and concord were imperative. It was a short steamboat trip from the western terminal of the Erie Canal to Cleveland, a city with a future since it could reach out to all the Great Lakes and to the Atlantic, while through the Ohio Canal the whole West lay open before it. Thus it was that a congregation was established in Cleveland in 1839, though individual Jews had lived in the city or its immediate neighborhood since the 1820's. A small body of Bavarian Jews from the village of Unsleben had settled there in the late 1830's and was soon joined by others. A part-time reader and shohet was hired for \$50 a year to serve the Israelite Society, a mutual-aid association. The West was building up.¹³

When Jews establish communities, they go where opportunity beckons. Thus it is not surprising that the community of Easton was reborn in 1839—decades after the passing of colonial Jewish Easton. Jews returned there because the town took on a new lease of life when it became a junction point for three canals. The new Jewish settlers, Germans, wrote their synagogal constitution in that language, but used the Hebrew script; some Jews could not or would not write the Gothic cursive. A few immigrants who knew the Latin alphabet preferred the Hebrew cursive when they wrote English. Dues were not high in the reborn congregation, \$1.50 a year, payable in installments. These Jews were simple, humble shopkeepers. One of the businessmen in town was known to retire to the back of his store to recite his daily prayers; another, losing part of a finger, saw to its proper Jewish burial; the Resurrection was always to be kept in mind. The Easton ritual was Ashkenazic, but the worshippers had no hesitation about employing Sephardic melodies for some of their hymns. Leeser visited them in 1856 and was surprised to find them still using German as the language of instruction in their synagogal school. The Germans, he reminded them, were oppressors of Jews. What he perhaps overlooked was how helpful the German language was in business around Easton; German farmers worked the land in many places in that region.¹⁴

Individual Jews were often pioneers, bold ones. Nevertheless, many new arrivals stayed within the sound of familiar Hebrew prayers; they were Jews who wanted to be with Jews; they needed that comfort, that security. Most of the newcomers stayed east of the Blue Ridge Mountains. That is why a few had settled in Easton. Some of these Germans, however, wandered west into the Virginia piedmont, to Richmond, where there had been a congregation since the late 1780's. It may well be indeed that Sephardic Beth Shalome received them kindly. In any event, caution and economic need impelled new settlers to remain under the umbrella of an older group, even when they were numerically strong enough to introduce a service more to their own liking. By 1839, however, the Central European newcomers had organized a mutual-aid welfare and burial

society, a new fraternity calling itself Hebrah Ahabat Yisrael, the Love of Israel Association. The new congregation which soon emerged from it received the name Congregation Beth Ahabah, the House of Love (1840-41).¹⁵

It is strange to reflect that Virginia, the oldest of the states, was one of the last to foster a Jewish congregation, and even then not until the Revolution was past. It is stranger still that the Jews were slow to penetrate New England, one of the oldest North American areas of settlement. Newport's colonial Salvation of Israel was dead by the turn of the century. New Jewish communities were to develop but slowly in New England when the Jews began to leave the perimeter of New York. There can be no question that the New York Jewish exiles of 1776, living for years in Connecticut during the Revolution, conducted services at least for the Holy Days. Their rabbi, Seixas, was with them from 1776 to 1780. It would take time for Jewish communities to make their appearance in Connecticut; the political climate was not too wholesome, but by 1840 there is a probability that New Haven Jewry was praying together. Out of this group would later come the congregation Mishkan Israel, Israel's Tabernacle. It is also very likely that ten adult males had by that time found one another in Boston and united in prayer. Some 200 years after the first Jew had landed in the city, Boston saw the beginning of a rebirth of New England Jewry. In the distant Midwest, across the Appalachians, newcomers who settled in Cincinnati had no choice but to affiliate with Bnai Israel, The Sons of Israel, the town's Jewish spiritual entrepôt ever since 1824. But, by 1840, or so, the Germans felt strong enough to secede from the older English-style Ashkenazic synagogue and to establish one of their own—B'nai Yeshurun, the Sons of Jeshurun.¹⁶

THE ASHKENAZIM, A SUMMARY

By 1840, whenever the Central Europeans—Ashkenazim—were numerous enough, they began organizing their own prayer groups in the metropolitan centers and in the hinterland. It bears repeating: the social motivation was dominant in synagogal secessions. The Ashkenazic newcomers wanted their pronunciation, or mispronunciation, of the Hebrew; they wanted their theologically inconsequential, liturgical variations; they wanted to be with their own. The newcomers generally spoke German; the old-line citizens of the Sephardic rite spoke English. Such tensions and divisions did not typify the Jews alone. German and Irish Catholics scorned one another, ethnic Catholics wanted their own language, their own traditional way of life reflected in their own religious and communal affairs. Despite the fact that most Jews in the United States were of Central European origin, the differences that separated them were keenly felt. The older congregations were not happy with the newcomers; the recent

arrivals were uncomfortable in the presence of their acculturated fellow Jews. The distinctions were cultural and socioeconomic. The new settlers were religiously more intense, more observant; they wanted a completely European-type service untouched by any American character. Thus it was that multiple congregations sprang up in Philadelphia, New York, Richmond, and Cincinnati. It was the Jewish version of the Protestant, the American tradition—proliferation, a multiplicity of congregations if not of denominations. One may hazard a guess that by the end of this period there were at least 25 Jewish congregations and prayer groups in the country; most were Ashkenazic; as many as 7 may have been Sephardic. The Ashkenazim ruled the hinterland as far west as the left bank of the Mississippi, St. Louis. Memberships were invariably small, but this was true of the Christian churches, too. The monopolistic Sephardic synagogue-community of the colonial and early national decades was dead by 1840. The European style consolidated, authoritative community had no place here; every American synagogue was an autonomous entity making its own rules and doing that which was right in its own eyes. Yet the different congregations in the cities remained friendly; separatism tended to dissipate hostilities.¹⁷

THE SEPHARDIM

INTRODUCTION: NEWPORT JEWRY

Despite the fact that there were at least twenty some Ashkenazic socioreligious fellowships and at the most only seven Sephardic, the latter were dominant during this period religiously, culturally, and socially. They had high visibility inasmuch as their members were the leading tidewater Jews of New York, Philadelphia, Charleston, Savannah, and the Virginia piedmont at Richmond. These Jews were all aware of the differences between the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim: the liturgy, the pronunciation of the Hebrew, the terms used to designate the reading desk and the ark in the synagogue; the resort to Spanish-Portuguese as a semi-sacred tongue, all these marked some of the divisions. Most of those who considered themselves Sephardim, the old-timers, were actually not of Iberian stock, but were of Ashkenazic background, descendants of earlier Ashkenazic settlers who had accepted the Sephardic worship style as the American style. The Ashkephardim, as they may be called, were middle-class Jews with an ethos of their own; they looked down on the newcomers. The distinctions between the old and the new were, after all, not so much religious or ethnic, as they were social and, to a degree, economic. The native-born deemed themselves important; they had prestige, status. The roots of the older settlers went back, in some instances, to the 1650's in

New York City; their rite had long been the standard one in America. Yet these old-timers were doomed to decline in the face of much larger numbers of Ashkenazic immigrants. Sephardic Newport began to disappear when the port lost its importance during and after the Revolution; very few Jews were left in town in the 1790's. Actually Newport Jewry had never numbered even 200 souls. The remaining few who clung to the town after the War were siphoned off to Boston, New York, and Charleston, the new cities of opportunity. Moses Seixas, the cashier of the Bank of Rhode Island, elected to remain; he functioned also as the community's circumciser. The congregation did not even own a proper ram's horn to sound the call to prayer on the High Holy Days. All told, the Newport congregation had lasted but one generation.¹⁸

SAVANNAH

Obviously New York was the oldest congregation in the country; the second oldest was Savannah. Newport very probably had a prayer quorum in the 1670's for a very brief period, there may have been enough Jews in Charleston in the 1690's to meet together for an occasional service, but the Georgia Jewish colonists who arrived as a body in 1733 set themselves up without delay as a congregation. Savannah Jewry, however, seems to have had no capacity to stay alive for any length of time; because of the colony's economic and political problems, the Jewish community did not grow. A permanent group was finally established in 1790 although there is reason to believe that it was preceded by at least two rebirths of the 1733 congregation. The Georgians took on new life in 1790, because the constitution of 1789 accorded them equality. The newly established synagogue-community, like the Philadelphia synagogue, called itself the Hope of Israel, Mickve (Mikveh) Israel. The two communities were probably mindful of the seventeenth-century Curaçao group of the same name. The North Americans leaned heavily on the Islands all through the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Baltimore's Scattered Israelites, Nidhe Yisrael, certainly took the name from the then much more important Barbados synagogue. Savannah Jews had had a cemetery since Oglethorpe's day; Mordecai Sheftall gave them another one in 1773. For fifty years at least, Mickve Israel struggled to survive after its turn-of-the-century rebirth. It was only with difficulty that the members could pay the rent on the room where from time to time they met for services. The few dollars needed had to be borrowed from a burial confraternity which had been established in the late eighteenth century: Meshibat Nefesh, Restoration of the Soul. Occasionally they hired a part-time beadle and a shohet, but there was no full-time paid reader all through this period. Devoted ardent Jews like the De La Mottas, Emanuel and Jacob, volunteered to conduct services as they commuted between Charleston and

Savannah. As late as 1800, there were times when ten adults could not be gathered for a religious quorum. They did buy lottery tickets for the synagogue in the hope of winning a substantial prize and improving their financial position. It was also good public relations to buy lotteries for the benefit of the local poorhouse or hospital.

Why the Savannah congregation did not advance is not easy to divine. Georgia became a boom state as the new cotton lands were cultivated. There is some evidence that the little community was riven by cliques; there was friction between the natives and the incoming aliens. There are indications that a rival group held a service of its own; the congregation threatened to expel the dissidents if they did not hasten to make amends. Of course when the state called on Mickve Israel along with the other religious societies in Georgia to hold public services of thanks or supplication, the Jews complied. A cultured member like Dr. Moses Sheftall would then make a formal address. There had been talk of building a synagogue ever since the 1790's, but this goal was not reached till 1820. Nearly ninety years passed before the first sanctuary was erected. The dedication was a grand affair; the Masons participated, and Dr. Jacob De La Motta made the important address, printed copies of which were sent to Jefferson and Madison. Nine years later, Mickve Israel was gutted by fire and was not rebuilt until 1838. The dedication took place in 1843, when Leeser was brought down from Philadelphia. Why wait five years? How typical was this struggle to stay alive? Most Jewish congregations found it very difficult to balance the budget. Why? Impecuniosity? Thrift? Indifference? Dissension?¹⁹

THE CAROLINAS, VIRGINIA, AND MARYLAND

Jewish Savannah was a satellite of Charleston, which, despite the fact that the South Carolina metropolis had by the 1830's lost its economic preeminence, still sheltered the South's most important Jewish community. Its Jews had wealth, status, and culture; they were highly respected by all other Jewish communities. The first organized Jewish congregation had made its appearance about the year 1749; incorporation came in 1791, a year after a new state constitution enfranchised Jews. The new synagogal charter emphasized not only religion and education, but also the determination of local Jewry to support its poor. Beth Elohim assured the State Assembly that the Jewish community would never be a charity burden. The tone certainly seems apologetic, but the concept of Jewish integration into an overwhelmingly Gentile society was, after all, something very new and precarious in 1791. After living in rented rooms for almost half a century, the congregation renovated a building. The beautiful rebuilt structure, the Old Synagogue, as the Charlestonians called it, sheltered the largest Jewish congregation in the country for some four de-

cedes. Charleston Jews prospered when the city became a shipping and cotton center. Beth Elohim was ardently Sephardic, though there is some evidence that the original synagog owed its establishment to "Germans." Ultimately the Germans and the Portuguese united, a fusion eased by the probability that both congregations originally employed the Sephardic rite, and had been ethnically rather than liturgically disparate. The Jews of the city were seldom without a minister and refused to be satisfied with second best. One of their hazzanim served for twenty years till his death in 1805. After his passing, his wife continued to receive his salary and the use of the parsonage until a successor was appointed; then she was given a pension. In the meantime, Beth Elohim wrote to the mother Sephardic congregation in London and asked the leaders there to send over a man of merit and classical education who would reflect honor on the congregation. It was concerned with its image in the general community. The Londoners, eager to help, sent a man who was totally unfit—and when Beth Elohim shipped him back, the English were furious.²⁰

Two new constitutions adopted in 1820 and 1836 reflect some of the problems and challenges of a large city community. Would-be proselytes were not to be encouraged; converts were to be admitted only after careful scrutiny of their religious credentials; Jewish blacks could not become members; prostitutes and bordello madams were accepted only after they had repented and demonstrated an ability to lead respectable lives. The congregation suffered a great loss when the synagog burnt down in 1838; the new one, built in 1841, is still standing; it is the oldest Jewish sanctuary in continuous use in this country, since Newport's Salvation of Israel was not revived until the 1890's. In 1840, Charleston was shattered by a schism and a secession. Beth Elohim introduced some very minor reforms, though it remained Sephardic in liturgy. The traditionalists—a substantial number—seceded calling themselves Shearith Israel, taking as their model New York's rock-ribbed Sephardic congregation. Thus Charleston now had two Sephardic communities at war with each other. The split hurt Beth Elohim, diminishing its resources radically.²¹

South Carolina's second largest Jewish community maintained itself in Columbia. A congregation organized in 1846 also bore the name Shearith Israel. If indeed it patterned itself on the Charleston secessionists and the New Yorkers, then it, too, must have adopted the Sephardic liturgy. Columbia's Jews had a Hebrew Benevolent Society as early as 1826. Very probably its prime purpose was to serve as a sick-care and burial organization. Undoubtedly, religious services were also conducted. The name employed was borrowed from a similar confraternity which had been established in Charleston in 1784. This latter society, still in existence, is the oldest Jewish association of its kind in this country. Georgetown on the coast north of Charleston may very well have had enough

Jews to constitute a religious quorum, but no evidence that they met for prayer has yet surfaced. Some of them were members of Beth Elohim. Georgetown's Jewry was thoroughly acculturated and may have feared that the establishment of a congregation there would emphasize Jewish disparateness in so overwhelmingly Christian a community. This much is certain: the assimilatory influences in the South have always been stronger than in the North. Wilmington, North Carolina, was to have no formal organized congregation till a later decade, though services were conducted on the High Holy Days in the early 1820's by voluntary readers, men and women. There is every reason to believe that much of the reading was in English from the Sephardic prayer book. The few Jews in Norfolk, Virginia, found it necessary to buy a cemetery in 1820, and there is a strong probability that they met occasionally for services. The Myers family included several adults who could have counted for a quorum, and Scrolls of the Law were available.²²

RICHMOND

It is puzzling why coastal Norfolk, which had an excellent harbor, did not develop into a viable Jewish community whereas Richmond, an inland town, did (and no later than 1789). Richmond thus became the country's westernmost Jewish outpost. The group's constitution was short as befitted a small new community. Worthy of comment is the limitation of membership to free men, a prohibition directed in all likelihood against white bondsmen, Jews, of course. Among the founding members were only one or two Jews of even remote Iberian origin. Why then did the group, the House of Peace, Beth Shalome, adopt the Spanish-Portuguese rite? All the members had probably lived in coastal towns where the minhag Sefarad, the Sephardic worship style, was standard; they all did business with men who belonged to "Iberian" congregations. Beth Shalome employed professional readers, but when there was no incumbent, or if the occasion required it, able men in the congregation were invited to speak. Thus Mordecai addressed his compatriots on Rosh Hashanah of 1824, and at times Solomon Jacobs, among others, was asked to preach and to conduct services. The young Ashkenazi immigrant Isaac Leeser, who occasionally helped the reader, learned the traditional Spanish-Jewish chaunts and was thus able to respond to an invitation from Mikveh Israel of Philadelphia to serve as hazzan.²³

Baltimore's first Jewish settlers—a handful at best—had come there before the revolt against the British. They were Philadelphians with roots in Mikveh Israel. Indeed Baltimore's Jewish elite retained membership in the Philadelphia synagogue for decades. Inasmuch as there was occasional need for services, the Ettings and Cohens—and perhaps the Levys—may well have joined together to constitute a prayer quorum. Services were

held in one of the homes. In 1827, the Ettings gave up their seats and severed their connection with Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia. In those pre-railroad days, they could not run to Philadelphia every time they wished to intone the commemorative Kaddish prayer for their dead. There is some evidence, too, that both Sephardic families observed the dietary laws. Solomon Etting was a trained shohet; the Cohens owned a book dealing with the rules of kashrut. These are indicia, not proofs to be sure, that the families were concerned with tradition. As we have already observed, had these cultured Jews been willing to join with the European newcomers, there would have been no difficulty in setting up an all-inclusive synagog based on America's traditional Spanish-Portuguese min-hag. This the old-timers refused to do, though such fusions had been successfully effected long before this in New York, Philadelphia, Charleston, and Savannah. The Baltimore Sephardim felt no need to co-opt the incoming Germans; they had a minyan of their own and at least one cemetery. A formal Sephardic congregation established in the 1850's, proved to be shortlived.²⁴

PHILADELPHIA AND NEW YORK

Despite the many difficulties which Philadelphia's Hope of Israel, Mikveh Israel, confronted, it was an important Sephardic congregation. In the 1830's and 1840's under Hazzan Leeser, it was destined to exercise a great deal of influence. There is evidence that the Jews in town had organized themselves as early as the 1730's; during the next decade they certainly held services, but, like most other synagog-communities, they grew very slowly. There would be no genuinely substantial inflow of immigrants to the United States till the end of the fourth decade of the nineteenth century. This much is certain: when the Philadelphians and the assembled exiles from British-occupied territory built the town's first synagog building during the Revolution, the liturgy was Sephardic for the simple reason that the exiles who flocked to the city during the Revolution had come from Sephardic communities. The refugees made the new synagog possible; they determined the liturgy that was adopted. The exiles were often men of affluence, substantial merchants and importers. The congregation was always to remain Sephardic—like Shearith Israel in New York—and ardently so, though in the nineteenth century the members of authentic Iberian descent could nearly always be counted on the fingers of one hand. Only 14 of the 61 subscribers to the new building in 1782 were descended from Jews who originally came from Spain and Portugal. In 1782, when the old-timers and exiles foregathered, Philadelphia sheltered the country's largest Jewry. The well-to-do subscribed liberally; valuable Scrolls of the Law were presented or lent to the congregation, and Captain Abraham M. Seixas gave Mikveh Israel a silver cup to be used

for the Saturday night havdalah service. The women sewed mantles to adorn the Scrolls, made curtains for the ark, and a beautiful silk cloth cover for the reading desk. Parliamentary rules of order were laid down for the conduct of meetings. This was an aspect of Americanization; an attempt to put the best foot forward in this, the capital city of the new republic.²⁵

With the coming of peace and the postwar depression, Mikveh Israel found itself in trouble. The membership declined when the war refugees left. These former exiles, often men of influence, returned to their original homes, but even before they left they asked to be reimbursed for the sums they had so generously advanced. The congregation could not or would not pay its debts; internal quarrels exacerbated conditions. There was a substantial mortgage, but very little money to pay the interest. At times there were not enough funds to pay salaries; in the early 1790's, the congregation had less than a dozen paying members. Mikveh Israel had appealed for aid to liberals among the Gentiles; a lottery was licensed and tickets were sold; by the second decade of the new century, the congregation had gotten out of debt and was finally able to meet its obligations. It was a long, hard pull. New members came in, albeit slowly, for the not infrequent financial depressions made it difficult for many to make a living.²⁶

The synagogal functionaries had been receiving salaries since the 1750's; some of them were only part-time workers; salaries were low. In 1776, one man served as reader, teacher, and shohet. The war brought great changes; the congregation blossomed, and in 1780 Gershom Seixas, in exile in Connecticut, was invited to become the minister. He was a dignified, cultured American gentleman. There could be no question about that; with him came, or was reinforced, the Sephardic ritual. Unfortunately for the Philadelphians, when Shearith Israel of New York was taken over in 1783 by its returning Whigs, they recalled Seixas. Philadelphia, in a quandary, employed the next best man, Jacob Raphael Cohen, an anglicized native of North Africa, who had served the Montreal congregation. There in Canada from 1778 to 1781, he had performed the duties of an omnibus synagogal servant, but after quarreling with his congregants—they were a tough lot—he moved on to British-held New York whose Jewish Loyalists appointed him their hazzan. When Seixas returned to Shearith Israel's Mill Street Synagogue in New York, the Philadelphians took Cohen. His life at Mikveh Israel was no bed of roses; he suffered in the early 1800's, for the Jeffersonian embargoes proved ruinous for his congregants. After Cohen's death in 1811, the congregation hired other hazzanim when it could find them. During the years when no minister was available, volunteer readers served the office. Among those whom it hired were Emanuel Nunez Carvalho (in

1815-1817) and Abraham Israel Keys (in 1824-1828). Carvalho, a man of some education and culture, had dared to oppose his board in Charleston but he left many friends in that city. After he died that Carolina congregation memorialized him in its prayers for his services to the community. Carvalho was London trained; Jacob R. Cohen, too, had benefited from a stay in that city, and the Rev. Mr. Abraham Israel Keys had also probably come from the English capital. English polish and culture were much valued on these shores. Keys had been induced to leave a Barbados congregation to take the Philadelphia post. He was very popular, probably the most beloved minister Mikveh Israel had in the first half of the century. True he was no intellectual; for some, that lack was a virtue. A good teacher, he chanted well, limited himself to his liturgical chores, and maintained excellent social relations with the members. All this the board appreciated.²⁷

It was during Keys's tenure in office that a new synagogue was built. The 1782 building was now over forty years old; though the congregation had fewer than 100 members, it was financially sound. In addition to what it itself raised for the new structure, monies came in from other American congregations, from the Caribbean and from London. Important, too, was the sale of tickets for the dedication; 600 were sold. Christians in particular were eager to witness this spectacle, the dedication of an Egyptian-style Jewish "temple." The program of dedication, which took place on January 21, 1825, was an elaborate one. Keys was assisted by the hazzan from New York; both men wore robes. There was a well trained Jewish choir of male and female voices—unusual, since tradition required the segregation of women from men in the sanctuary ritual. One pious Jew tried unsuccessfully to restrict the women singers to the gallery. Keys had also labored to teach the congregants to sing in unison; it was imperative that the audience be impressed, for it included a number of Gentile notables, justices of the Supreme Court and the bishop of the Episcopal Church.²⁸

NEW YORK

By 1840, five different synagogue-communities maintained themselves in New York City; four were Ashkenazic; one was Sephardic. The city on the Hudson now sheltered the largest Jewry in the country; its preeminence has continued down to the present day. The Sephardic congregation, Shearith Israel, is the mother synagogue of North America. Though not the largest congregation it was certainly the most prestigious, with its roots reaching back into the 1650's. It could have bragged that its religious community was well over a century older than that of the Catholics, who had no sanctuary in the city until the 1780's. In 1784 and 1801, legislative acts passed by the state authorities brought new status to Shear-

ith Israel; it was now a chartered, recognized religious organization—a status unknown to the colonial synagogue. It was during this period that the trustees and members experimented with new constitutions. Not improbably, the new organic documents reflected conflicting liberal, Jeffersonian, and Federalist biases. Postrevolutionary Shearith Israel included British Loyalists, Hessian sutlers, and returning Whig exiles. They learned to live together, but there is no reason to believe it was all smooth sailing. The 1780's and 1790's heard talk of a bill of rights; the 1790 congregational statute breathed the spirit of the Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution. Solomon Simson, the synagogue president in 1790, was a radical Whig and Jeffersonian Democrat. But even the 1790 libertarian document rejected for membership a "bound or hired servant"—a prohibition shared with the Southern congregations, Richmond and Charleston. A new constitution adopted in 1805 contained no magniloquent preamble making its bow to an egalitarian philosophy. Obviously the men who wrote this document felt no need to emphasize their political beliefs; they were now concerned solely with details that would help them administer the synagogue effectively. Like Philadelphia's Mikveh Israel, the New York congregation experienced many difficult years financially. The Napoleonic wars disrupted economic life; the salaries of the congregation appointees were not always paid on time. The friends of the late hazzan Gershom Seixas complained that not enough was done for his widow. Seven of the hazzan's children were still teenagers. To defend itself, the board published a pamphlet retailing all that had been done for her. For four years after his death she received his full salary; after that she had been given a pension of sorts. What was important, too, as she was reminded, the congregation had erected a marble monument over her husband's grave and it was reciting memorial prayers for him annually. Her answer is not recorded, but who can doubt that she was tempted to answer she could not feed her brood with a marble monument.²⁹

For years there were only about fifty members and not all of them paid dues. The community was not growing rapidly although there were always a few émigrés arriving at the docks. Immigration was not heavy; many Europeans opted to remain at home and take advantage of Europe's expanding political and economic opportunities. Yet, despite the very slow growth, Shearith Israel realized that it could no longer remain in the tiny building near the tip of Manhattan Island. The Mill Street sanctuary, a mere thirty-five by thirty-five feet in size, was heated by an iron stove and lit by flickering candles. The congregants were moving northward away from the old neighborhood; for some, the walk on the Sabbath was simply too much. Ultimately, the synagogue was torn down, but instead of seeking a new site, the sanctuary was rebuilt on the old lot. The rich helped supply the needed funds; Harmon Hendricks and the two Touro

brothers were very generous. Other American Jews and West Indians were solicited. The New Yorkers might well have built without these outside gifts, but a tradition had been set: when a synagog is built, every Jew must help. The dedication ceremony pattern had also already been seen at Philadelphia in 1782. English language prayers were emphasized; Christian notables were invited. The women in the gallery had a grandstand view of what was going on below; there was no longer a lattice to distort their vision as they followed the ceremonies in the specially printed twenty-one page program. All Hebrew prayers were translated into English, even the acrostic hymn written for the occasion by the learned Abraham Dov Pique.³⁰

The climax of the dedication was an eloquent address by Mordecai Manuel Noah; the printed edition is forty-seven pages long, but it still reads well. The rebuilt Mill Street Synagogue could not for long solve the congregation's spatial and geographic problems. The last service was held downtown in 1833; the following year Shearith Israel moved into new quarters—including a sanctuary and a parsonage—on Crosby Street. The new temple was fitted out with gaslight. This time the dedicatory exercises lasted two days and featured a beautiful musical service. Because it was the Pentecostal (late Spring) season, the synagog was decorated with flowers. Among the notables was the High Constable, Jacob Hays, a born Jew, but no affiliate. Four other policemen were present; it was imperative that order be preserved. Once more Shearith Israel called on Noah to deliver the dedicatory discourse. In 1818, the Major had inveighed against liturgical reforms; now, in 1834, he had come to recognize the need for some changes. Noah and other Jews in that audience could not ignore the advancing nineteenth century with its threat to tradition.³¹

Seixas had been succeeded in 1816 by Moses Levy Maduro Peixotto, a native of Curaçao. Peixotto, originally a merchant, was a fine, cultured gentleman of the old Sephardic school. He knew very little English, however, and found it difficult to preach in that language—a distinct disadvantage in view of the state occasions when the hazzan was expected to address his congregation in the vernacular. After Peixotto's death in 1828, he was succeeded by Gershom Seixas's nephew, Isaac Benjamin Seixas. Like Peixotto, Isaac B. Seixas had been a businessman for years and had turned to the clerical office as a last resort; he had a large family to support. For many years, the new hazzan had lived in Richmond, where he engaged in business and at the same time served as a volunteer reader. He had played his part as a good citizen in Virginia, for he was enrolled in the militia during the War of 1812 and joined others in the effort to bring a railroad into the city. It is possible that, even while he lived in Richmond, Beth Shalome paid for his services; in New York he was a salaried professional living in the parsonage. Shearith Israel kept him busy

for he was also in charge of the congregation's day school. In hiring Seixas, the board had uttered a special caveat; he was to introduce no profane melodies or any used in Christian churches. It would be interesting to know what prompted the congregational authorities to issue that warning. The learned Eleazar S. Lazarus, grandfather of the poetess Emma Lazarus, followed Seixas in 1839 and chaunted the services till Jacques Judah Lyons was appointed. When called to New York, Lyons had been serving in Richmond. His parents were native Americans, but the new hazzan had been born in Surinam. Young Lyons had officiated in that Dutch colony till he accepted the call to Virginia's capital. The New Yorkers liked Lyons, a charming, courteous gentleman, dignified and religiously observant. Lyons, who had pronounced literary interests, left a diary—certainly a most valuable document—but the family destroyed it on his death in 1877: the clergy must not keep diaries!³²

THE STRUCTURE AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE SYNAGOG-COMMUNITY

THE STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS

The Synagog

The "synagog" was a socioreligious institution housed in a building—often not more than a rented room, though sooner or later a house was leased or a building purchased. When a growing community began to reach out it bought and renovated a church and finally erected a sanctuary from the ground up. Up to about 1800 most synagoges had fewer than fifty members, but this is no gauge of synagogal use. It is a good guess, if a conservative one, that many more individuals visited the sanctuaries on the Holy Days. Charleston in the first decade of the nineteenth century was exceptionally large; by 1802, it had about 125 contributors. The country's new Ashkenazic conventicles began modestly; Baltimore's Scattered Israelites had forty-eight members in 1837 almost a decade after it was organized. The typical synagog was a hall with chairs, benches, or pews, a reading desk in the center, and an ark housing the manuscript Pentateuchal Scrolls of the Law. Most congregations also owned scrolls of the Book of Esther. Until the second quarter of the new century, manuscript scrolls were imported from Europe; there were no artisan scribes at work in this country. Other sancta were prayer shawls, phylacteries, prayer books, copper kettles, utensils to bake unleavened bread, and a ram's horn to trumpet the high point of the service during the Days of Awe in the fall. For the autumnal Festival of Booths, the congregants joyfully recited blessings over a citron and branches of the palm, the willow,

and the myrtle. The women graced the balcony; in some buildings, they had their own separate entrance. The first seats in the balcony overlooking the downstairs floor were reserved for matrons; girls were enjoined to use the back seats. This was deemed proper; the girls would not distract the men or be distracted themselves.

Essentially the Sephardim and the Ashkenazim had much in common. Any Jew could wander into any synagogue, pick up a prayer book, and participate in the service with good conscience. Yet it is equally true that no two services were exactly alike. The synagogue, an autonomous institution, was completely independent; there was no hierarchy to compel uniformity; any congregation could do what it chose. Until the rise of the secessionist Ashkenazic conventicles, the Sephardic synagogues in each town set out to exercise authoritarian control over every Jew. It was held forbidden to establish rival synagogues, and congregations even attempted through explicit threats to compel every Jew in town to contribute. Even after the turn of the century, despite genuflections in the direction of democracy, every effort was made to impose compulsory membership. The effort was only a continuation of the monolithic Jewish community which prevailed in some European lands. There the state supported and enforced the dictates of the Jewish communal leaders, but in this country, where church and state were separated, the secular authorities left all synagogues to their own devices. The synagogue monopoly was maintained in Philadelphia to 1800, in Charleston to 1824, in New York to 1825, in Richmond to 1839, in Savannah until the second half of the nineteenth century. After the first secession, there was no integrated local Jewry; coercion was no longer possible. From now on, there were multiple synagogue-communities; institutional atomization became normal; affiliation was entirely voluntary. The synagogue itself was part of a complex. It included not only the prayer auditorium but also quarters for some of the paid officiants. There was a school room that might well serve as a meeting hall. Most congregations had a bathhouse (*mikveh*) for the monthly ritual ablutions of the women. Rodeph Shalom used the Delaware River to immerse proselytes on conversion. A leafy booth was erected in the synagogue yard—and in private homes, too—for the harvest festival *Suc-coth*, *Booths*.³³

The Cemetery

Often the cemetery was a community's first purchase and institution; indeed the need for a cemetery might well trigger the establishment of a synagogue-community. Every congregation had its own cemetery; members would not join unless guaranteed a final resting place. This Eternal Home, *Bet Olam*, as the Jews called it, was imperative owing to the high

mortality rate of lying-in women and infants. Epidemics and children's diseases were constant and devastating. Most cemeteries also had a tiny Purification Chapel, where bodies were prepared for burial. This hut might also serve as a "watchhouse" where a guard could warn off body snatchers and vandals. Jewish cemeteries were frequently vandalized; the tombstones were defaced or carried off; garbage was thrown onto the cemetery lots. In the eighteenth century, tombstones with their inscriptions were expensively imported from Europe; poor people often had no headstones. By 1682, New York City had two burial plots; the second, the Chatham Square Cemetery, is still extant. Three new cemeteries had to be purchased in the first half of the next century as the congregation struggled against the encroachments of a growing metropolis. In 1827, Shearith Israel's burial society Love and Truth, established in 1802 by Hazzan Seixas, published a compendium of the burial service and the ritual for mourning. Bnai Jeshurun had its own burial ground in 1826. Philadelphia had one in 1740—before there was an organized religious community; the few Jews in neighboring Easton used the Michael Hart family plot. In 1786, long before the Baltimore Jews were ready to join together as a community, they purchased a cemetery plot. The two affluent families had their own private burial grounds while the Scattered Israelites Congregation, like all communities, offered its members the benefits of Jewish burial.³⁴

Richmond had two Eternal Homes. The first was a gift of Isaiah Isaacs in 1791, but it was not long before it was covered over to raise the area to street level. It is one of the tragedies of mortality that older cemeteries are frequently neglected. In 1816–1817, Richmond's city council gave the Jews a new cemetery plot, a courtesy accorded all churches by the Common Hall. Lots for a cemetery were frequently granted by town promoters in order to further settlement; Jews were seldom forgotten. Still much influenced by a mercantilistic philosophy, town officials looked upon Jews as desirable citizens. This second Richmond plot was secured through the good offices of Benjamin Wolfe, a member of the city council; Wolfe was the first man to be interred in the new burial ground. Cincinnati was compelled to buy a cemetery in 1821, when a dying Jew, ostensibly a Christian, asked for Jewish burial. Savannah had at least two cemeteries by 1773, the later the gift of Mordecai Sheftall, the earlier a plot given the first Jewish immigrants by Colonel Oglethorpe in 1733. New Orleans's Jewish burial ground was purchased when Congregation Gates of Mercy was founded in 1828.

The first communal cemetery in Charleston was laid out in 1762, more than a decade after a formal community was established, but unquestionably there were earlier cemeteries; Jews had settled there in the 1690's. By 1800, at least three known cemeteries were maintained in

Charleston and one in nearby Georgetown. One of the three in Charleston was restricted to “Portuguese” Jews—bloodline Iberians, who did not want to be buried with those they regarded as fraudulent Sephardim, people of Central European rather than Iberian origin. Charleston’s Beth Elohim, as conservative and as cautious as New York’s Shearith Israel, scrupulously adhered to tradition where burials were concerned. Despite the fact that a Jewish woman had married a Christian, she was given a traditional burial when her time came; she had not forfeited her birthright, declared the congregational fathers in 1841; two years later, however, when David Lopez’s Christian wife died, there was no place for her. Her grieving husband bought an adjoining lot and buried her next to the Jewish cemetery. Jewish burial was a privilege reserved for Jews in good standing. Transgressors were interred on the grounds—but off to the side; others were denied any access to the cemetery proper. Thus a separate section was reserved for suicides, prostitutes, adultresses, and intermarried individuals. Frequently, intermarried Jews were completely excluded from consecrated grounds; they were seen as having betrayed their fellow Jews. In towns where there was no organized community, Jews patronized the local Protestant cemetery; often they established private family plots wherever they lived. Most of these family resting places have long since disappeared; Baltimore is a notable exception. What happens when a family petitions for the interment of a parent who had not supported the local community? The communal authorities bury him, but demand a substantial punitive fee. The death of Robert Phillips, a wealthy Philadelphian, led Mikveh Israel to assess the estate \$200, and when the executors balked, the congregation and the family locked horns. In the final compromise settlement, Mikveh Israel received \$100.³⁵

Some congregations handled burial themselves, though they may have delegated the work to a committee. This seems to have been the custom in Shearith Israel during the seventeenth and most of the next century. In other towns, semi-autonomous organizations were set up to deal specifically with the dying and the dead. Most members, busy in their shops, were only too happy to delegate the onerous task of making provision for those who needed ritual cleansing and burial. The oldest society concerned with this task was established at Charleston in 1784; it was a mutual-aid sick-care and burial association. A year later, Shearith Israel founded a similar organization, which called itself, as did the Charlestonian model, the Hebrew Benevolent Society. Like all fraternities of this nature, the New York group met together socially at an annual dinner. Historians are happy that the menu for the 1789 meeting has been preserved. The guests were served goose, duck, turkey, beef, and cranberries. Tobacco, too, was distributed; the potables were beer and porter. For reasons unknown, this association was short-lived, but was succeeded in

1802 by the Love and Truth Association or the Fellowship of True Love, *Hebra Hased Va Amet*.³⁶

These burial congeries had been part of the administrative apparatus of the synagog since the late eighteenth century. They are historically important because, together with an occasional immigrants' aid society, they marked the rise of communal social-welfare agencies. Socially they are important, because they gave the individual an opportunity to express himself, to find himself in a small intimate group. The members in these burial associations developed a sense of "community" of their own. To govern themselves, they appointed officers and set down a series of regulations and rules of conduct. Violators were fined. In one society a man who refused to sit up with the dead was fined eight shillings; insulting the elected head of this *hevrah* cost the sinner only one shilling (insults were cheap, it would seem). In 1801, an overeager Charlestonian, one Solomon Moses, insisted on helping the *hevrah* prepare a corpse for burial. When Simon Hart, the head of the society, rejected his proffer, Moses punched him. Whereupon the indignant congregation made Moses apologize publicly and fined him heavily. The injured Mr. Hart brought a civil suit in the courts against the belligerent Mr. Moses, who was again fined, but because he had already made his peace with Beth Elohim, the amercement was a modest \$1. One sometimes suspects that the centrifugality inherent in semi-autonomous burial congeries was a reaction to the centripetality of an authoritarian synagog board and president. Congregations were in a dilemma; they needed burial societies, but realized that they might well present a threat to congregational control. In tight little communities, individuals were constantly in a state of rebellion; they were individualists; they resented authority—an everpresent malaise (if that is what it is) in the world of Jewry.³⁷

ORGANIC INSTRUMENTS: CONSTITUTIONS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

Clearly and not surprisingly, all Jewish congregations and religious societies wanted to adopt rules and regulations for their guidance. Under British rule, synagog had never been chartered, never been accorded official recognition, but as soon as the Jews received equality in the new constitutions of the original thirteen states, they proceeded to charter their synagog and to write constitutions. Constitutions, of course, had probably been promulgated as early as the seventeenth century; the oldest extant organic statute of a synagog dates back to 1706. Indeed, governing rules for Jewish organizations are nothing new; European Jews had been writing *takkanot* (regulations) in Hebrew and Yiddish for centuries. Here in this country, Americanism was reflected in the titles of the officers: president, vice president, treasurer, secretary, clerk. More significant is the constant incorporation of the standard parliamentary rules of order in

these documents. This demand for restraint, decorum, orderliness in debate is characteristically American. With typical cultural lag, however, many congregational documents persist in speaking of the *parnas* (president) and the *gabbai* (treasurer).³⁸

There could be no organization without records of some sort. Constitutions and bylaws are found everywhere; then came board minutes and, occasionally, the records of a special body called the trustees who were concerned with the temporalities. Charleston is exemplary in that it kept records of births, circumcisions, marriages, deaths, legacies, and offerings. Unfortunately many of Beth Elohim's important papers were destroyed when the South Carolina state capital was gutted by flames during the Civil War; the congregation's records had been sent there for safekeeping! Extant documents of the early Ashkenazic congregations reflected the simplicity of their administrative efforts. Notes were sometimes written in phonetic English. In some congregations, bilingual announcements and publications—German and English—persisted for decades. New York's *Anshe Chesed*, honoring the prohibition against writing on the Sabbath, had a book where slips could be inserted to record the Saturday gifts of generous donors called to the Torah. Such procedures on the Sabbath were common. Baltimore's Ashkenazi pioneers jotted down all donations made by grateful parishioners or strangers. Identification was simple: the tall man living at Myer's house; the man with the Polish cap. The oldest extant *printed* constitution, dated 1805, was published by Shearith Israel of New York City. From that time on, printed constitutions were common in American Jewish communities. By 1824, indeed, Shearith Israel had begun printing committee reports, and as the administrative apparatus developed, more printed reports of various types were submitted by the officers to boards and congregations. This, too, may well reflect democratic influences. Most congregations had much in common, structurally and ideologically. On occasion, these basic congregational documents reflected the impact of the environment on an Orthodoxy beginning to come to terms with a permissive America. Time ameliorated tradition, though, not as yet to any marked degree.³⁹

Congregational bylaws, rules, regulations, and minutes not infrequently betray the anxieties and problems confronting the synagog leaders and the members. Christian concepts of decorum and devotion were making their impress. Infants, for example, were to be left at home. In Easton, all members were expected to be present at the service in the house of mourning—otherwise there would be no prayer quorum. No one in Savannah was to be called to the reading of the Scroll wearing boots; the streets and roads of the city and countryside were muddy; soiled footgear would offer insult to Jewry's divine Law. Marriages and intermarriages were problems of constant concern. A married couple seeking

seats in Philadelphia's Mikveh Israel was rejected. Why? They had been married by a Christian minister. Let them repent—be married Jewishly—and a place in the synagog would be available. Anshe Chesed in the late 1830's was very much involved in matters touching on marriage. In the United States, culturally Europe's western "frontier," anything could happen. The congregation urged individuals not to perform unauthorized marriages; some candidates for marriages may have left a wife back home. In one instance the congregation tried to induce a runaway husband to return. In 1836, Anshe Chesed required all members to secure board permission before they were married. Intermarriage was nearly always frowned upon; violators lost their synagogal membership. When, however, a man and his sweetheart said that they had been betrothed back in Bavaria, their request to be married was readily granted by Anshe Chesed: the congregants knew that "back home" pharaonic laws limited the number of Jewish marriages. Charleston's fascinating constitutions for 1820 and 1836 are most revealing. Defaulters in dues were segregated in special seats—true mourners' benches! The intermarried were rigorously excluded; Sabbath violators were not tolerated; would-be proselytes were viewed with suspicion; blacks were excluded from membership; prostitutes and madams must live down their past; rival congregations in town were forbidden.⁴⁰

Important as they are, constitutions are but a faint reflection of an institution manned by vibrant human beings. Most congregations had two kinds of members, first-class and others. The word second-class is never used. A full member is called a *yahid*, an outstanding special person; occasionally he is called an elector; the others may be designated seatholders, congregators, and even resident aliens. To be sure, the *non-yehidim* had fewer rights, but no member was ever denied religious honors. The *yahid*, of course, took preference; he paid more. When congregations first started, they made it easy for almost any Jew to join and to hold office. They needed bodies! There was an inverse ratio between the paucity of members and the fullness of democracy. Even so, no matter how desperate congregations were to enroll members, they balked at including indentured servants or black freedmen. These prohibitions may very well have reflected contemporary practices in Christian churches. The very congregation that would pay lip service to Jeffersonian principles would make no exceptions in this area. After a group had been firmly established, there was a tendency to tighten the rules of admission. With the Gentiles in mind constantly, the Jews never faltered in their desire to project an image of utter respectability. One was not automatically admitted because he was a Jew willing to pay the admission fee and the usual dues. Some synagogs began to insist on proof of citizenship and to impose residential requirements in an attempt to keep out itinerants suspected of

dubious antecedents and to prevent a take-over by undesirables; the ballot can become a Trojan horse. Congregations, nearly always apprehensive, did not permit members to join other synagogues; there are occasional exceptions. Intermarried men were nearly always denied admission, but occasionally a subterfuge was employed; the out-marriage was ignored, and the member was called to the Torah as a "single" man. In its early days, Anshe Chesed was prepared to expel a member who apprenticed a son to a Gentile artisan without making provisions for Sabbath and Holy Day observance by the youngster. In all congregations, members, regardless of status, had the right to participate in the services and to enjoy at all times the ministrations of the reader, the beadle, the teacher, and the shohet. There are, of course, special occasions when every Jew is privileged in the synagogue services, when he is a bridegroom, the parent of a newborn child, or father of a son about to become an adult religiously (*bar mitzvah*). He was honored, too, when his wife first came to services after lying-in. All these standard traditional *privilegia* (*hiyyuvim*) were honored in practically all sanctuaries.⁴¹

THE OFFICERS: PRESIDENT, BOARD, OFFICIANTS

The most influential man in the congregation was the president, the *parnas*. He was the boss; this is a European tradition that was honored in the full sense of the word here, both in the colonial regime and in the new republic. Even today the word *parnas* carries the connotation of an authoritarian personality. Nothing was deemed outside his jurisdiction: the worship ritual, the personnel, the distribution of honors, the preservation of decorum, the bestowal of charity, the care of the sick, itinerants, the imposition of fines, the supervision of marriages and burials, the preservation of the dietary laws, the baking of unleavened bread for the Passover, the arrangement of intercessory and Thanksgiving services requested by the state or national government. Still, his authority was never absolute. He was limited by the board and ultimately by the franchises of the membership. This was the United States; the concepts and practices of democracy and majority rule were never forgotten, never totally ignored. In a typical congregation, the board numbered between five and seven men. The Charleston congregation in 1820 had a board of twenty-five and an executive committee of seven. In the 1836 constitution written after a traumatic schism caused by the departure of the Reformers, the board of five was elected for life in a deliberate attempt to frustrate a liberal take-over. Rodeph Shalom's board met occasionally in the home of a member or even in a more congenial place, a rathskeller.

It was also the board which appointed special committees. In those early years of the nineteenth century, there were relatively few committees, but a cemetery committee was a necessity. Burgeoning Charleston

had an endowment committee—which was most unusual. When a problem of religious law arose in a community it was not uncustomary to appoint a “court” of three learned men (*beth din*) in order to come up with an answer that would not violate Jewish tradition. It was imperative in a voluntaristic organization like the synagog that no pressures be exerted if they could be avoided. The members of the board were usually elected by the congregants; on rare occasions, resort was had to an indirect form of appointment. To a degree, boards were self-perpetuating. Attempts were made to limit tenure, but some officers served for many years. It was not unusual to rise to power through the hierarchy of offices. One started as a “Bridegroom of the Law” or as a “Bridegroom of Genesis”—that is, as worshippers honored with the opportunity to close the final weekly cycle of Pentateuchal readings in Deuteronomy and begin the new cycle with the first chapter of Genesis. From this office, one rose to the top as a board member, or as secretary, treasurer, and president. Not all men were eager to wield the presidential gavel. Being a congregational boss was time-consuming; after all, a man had to make a living. Aggravation and frustration were often the lot of every presiding officer. There were deficits to be met, especially in time of war when depression struck and the president had to hustle not only to keep the congregation alive, but also to feed his own family. Few presidents were spared insults; board conflicts were frequent; then, too, there were auxiliary confraternities and frustrated personnel to be pacified. Congregants posed problems. The men and women patronizing the synagog were often immigrants—newcomers, more often than not an unhappy lot—which may well be an understatement.⁴²

THE PAID OFFICIANTS

One of the irritating problems that confronted every board was how to work amicably with the paid functionaries. Some of them—the beadle, for example—were appointed by the board; the hazzan was elected by the congregation. Small synagog, just organized or with few members, made do with volunteers. When a synagog was affluent enough to hire someone part-time or full-time, the one and same hireling might function as beadle, slaughterer, and reader. Congregations of size and a modicum of wealth employed several men, a teacher, a beadle, a hazzan, and a collector of dues. The one man who was never a congregational appointee was the circumciser (*mohel*). Some circumcisers were volunteers, initiating youngsters into Judaism in order to earn the reward for a good deed; it was a labor of love for them. Generally, however, most circumcisers were professionals who were remunerated by the father. Congregational officiants often served as circumcisers, augmenting their scanty incomes by engaging in this meritorious ritual. Seixas, who was also a *mohel*, traveled as far north as Canada in his capacity as circumciser, though most of

his service as a mohel was limited to his own parish. Thus he circumcised one of the sons of Isaac Moses, the notable merchant. Because the child was sickly, the hazzan had to make several trips to attend it. His expenses caring for the infant were heavy, but the father finally reimbursed him for all his labors. An older contemporary of Seixas, Abraham I. Abrahams, had been a popular circumciser in New York in pre-Revolutionary days. Abrahams, a petty businessman and parochial schoolteacher, went as far north as Massachusetts to carry on his sacred work of initiating infants into the covenant. The mohel book of Barnard Jacobs records that he traveled all over eastern Pennsylvania in the line of duty. Like Abrahams, Jacobs was a shopkeeper; so was Myer Derkheim, whose circumcision record book attests to his religious services in England and in many American states. Some youngsters had to wait years before the mohel came; circumcisers rarely found their way into the hinterland.⁴³

THE REBBE, THE TEACHER

The teacher in the early American Jewish community was sometimes called the "rabbi," a variant form of the Yiddish word "rebbe," or teacher. Paying due deference to other vowels, he was on occasion known as the rubi and the ribbi, but he was not a rabbi in the modern or conventional sense. There would be no officiating ordained rabbi, a diplomate and fully authoritative spiritual leader of a congregation, in this country until the end of the fourth decade of the nineteenth century. The rebbe, in any case, was not really to be counted among the congregational servants; he was a part-time appointee whose job it was to teach the children of the poor. For this service the congregation paid him a modest salary and on occasion gave him quarters and some perquisites. All others who attended his semi-communal school—and many did—were "pay" students, their families paid for their tuition. Jewish education was not free or compulsory. It was the rebbe's job to prepare a boy for bar mitzvah and to teach the basic blessings and ceremonies. Together with the hazzan, he might also be assigned the task of watching the children during the services and making sure that they behaved. In Shearith Israel, it was not the rebbe or the beadle who kept an eye on the youngsters segregated in a corner; Hazzan Seixas, perched on his "high place," the reading desk, was expected to keep them under control.⁴⁴

THE BEADLE, THE SHOHET AND THE HAZZAN

The beadle was the communal servant par excellence. What was he called on to do? What was he *not* called on to do? He attended all services, kept the sanctuary clean, made and lit the candles used for illumination and for ritual purposes, kept the Eternal Light burning, and made sure that the

doors were securely locked. In some congregations, it was he who kept the books which recorded the donations of the congregants. He was expected to attend all weddings, funerals, and circumcisions and to do whatever the parnas told him to do.⁴⁵

The shohet, the ritual slaughterer, was a source of headaches for the parnas and his board. One suspects that there was a tradition among these shohets to take no guff from anyone; they were an independent lot. It was the shohet's job to provide kosher meat for the Jews in town, to work with the dispensers, the butchers, making sure that they were not guilty of any ritual violations. This was important since most butchers who sold the meat were Christians; some of them were prone to cheat by substituting non-kosher for kosher products.

The hazzan was the chief officiant in every early American synagog. Consequently, he received the highest salary; the shohet and beadle were always paid less. One can hardly question that the hazzan was paid more than the typical non-college-educated evangelical minister, but he received considerably less than notable Boston or Philadelphia Christian clergymen. Seixas, with a large family, found it difficult to make both ends meet and did not hesitate to haggle with his board about his pay. Salaries varied; twenty years later the hazzan at Anshe Chesed received but \$100 a year, though very probably it was then a part-time job. The cantor or hazzan really functioned as the rabbi, for he was elected by the congregation to serve as its spiritual head. On occasion, even Christians referred to him as the "rabbi"; he was equated by them and by the state with ministers of the gospel. Because Christians accepted the hazzan as an important religious figure, his status was constantly on the rise. One can well understand, therefore, why the Rev. Mr. Leeser, of Philadelphia, was resentful that Mikveh Israel's constitution did not permit him to attend congregational meetings. He was angry to be denied a privilege accorded every thirteen-year-old boy who had been called to the Torah. In addition to a salary, the hazzan was given housing, fuel, unleavened bread for Passover, and a variety of other perquisites. Additional income was derived from marriages, funerals, circumcisions, and from teaching in the congregation's all-day school. On occasion, the hazzan could augment his income by certifying overseas shipments of kosher meat. Congregants who loved and respected their rabbi gave him gifts, and Christian friends were also generous.⁴⁶

What did the board and members expect of their hazzan? They asked that he be a kind, affable man, that he be dignified, a good teacher, and an educated gentleman who could hold his own in good Christian society. Charleston, in particular, was insistent on these qualities. By the 1830's, under the impact of Protestant examples, some congregations began requiring their ministers to preach in English and to address themselves to

moral themes. By 1836, Charleston's Beth Elohim was ready to listen to its hazzan every Saturday or whenever he chose to preach. This, undoubtedly, was the answer to local dissidents, who had seceded to form a group of their own where the sermon was stressed; the conservative leaders of Beth Elohim could not evade history. By the 1840's, in Philadelphia, Rodeph Shalom—German newcomers for the most part—encouraged preaching. If discourses were then delivered in that synagog, the language was most probably German.⁴⁷

THE FUNCTIONING CONGREGATION: MEETINGS AND BUDGETS

American Jewish congregations met at least once a year to attack their problems. Some held quarterly meetings; others met semi-annually. There were synagog where a few determined individuals could force the authorities to call a special meeting of all members; there were towns, too, where the board could hinder protestants if they sought to ventilate their complaints. Most boards met regularly, at least once a month; there was rarely a dearth of issues. The basic problem, a constant and recurrent one, was the need to balance the budget. Frequent financial panics frightened and impoverished members. Money was needed to pay salaries, to repair the sanctuary, to help the poor. The standard sources of income in all congregations were initiation fees, dues, the purchase and rental of seats. The seating problem was always a ticklish one, because seating indicated status, there was always a place set aside for the poor and for visiting Gentiles. The galleries where the women sat were the subject of not infrequent discussion; matrons and girls vied for the front seats; they wanted to see and to be seen. Another source of income was the offerings made when a man was called to the reading of the Torah. He was expected to make a gift and he did, but such donations were not invariably profit, for in many congregations it was permissible to deduct the amount offered from the dues pledged. This was a face-saving device for the typical middle-class householder; money was scarce; a man could thus be generous at no cost. Some congregations set a minimum voluntary offering, but smart alecks offered less than the minimum in order to harass the board. The Shearith Israel secessionists who established Bnai Jeshurun reduced the minimum. Was this a democratic gesture? Was the Shearith Israel minimum too high? Bnai Jeshurun offered a special bargain rate of three blessings for a shilling.⁴⁸

Additional income came from burial fees and special imposts on non-members who required the services of the congregation or its officiants. Money came in through gifts, legacies, annual postmortem blessings. Beth Elohim was exceptional in that it had a well-established endowment

fund. Philadelphia, which had need for the services of an attorney, permitted him to balance his statement for legal fees against his synagogal bills; almost \$400 was involved in this interchange. If a man could not pay his pledges, he would appeal for an abatement; indebtedness to the congregation was a problem with which the board frequently had to cope. Another source of income—one not always easy to evaluate—was the imposition of fines. Men were fined, for example, because they refused to accept congregational office. Fines of this nature were imposed in the London synagogues also; Isaac D'Israeli, the English author, refused to accept an appointment to the board of London's Sephardic Bevis Marks and he resigned in 1813 when the customary fine was demanded. D'Israeli, himself never a convert to Christianity, attended the ceremonies which marked the opening of a liberal synagogue, but in 1817 permitted or encouraged the conversion of his son Benjamin, the later Lord Beaconsfield. Fines were exacted for doing business on the Sabbath, for disorderly conduct, for insulting the honorary officers. One congregation imposed penalties as high as \$250—an enormous sum in a day when a rabbi's annual salary was often less than \$1,000. In 1805, sixty-seven fines were imposed by Beth Elohim and presumably collected.⁴⁹

The Baltimore Hebrew Congregation had an interesting system of alerting its members when they threatened to break the peace. The Scattered Israelites had three cards of different colors, red, white, and blue, which they handed out. The white was a warning: Please behave! The red and blue were fines: one for 25 cents; the other, for 50 cents. In different communities, there were monetary penalties for leaving a meeting without permission of the *parnas*, for talking during the service, for singing louder than the cantor, for chewing tobacco and spitting on the floor, for bringing children under five to the sanctuary, for removing one's prayer shawl before the services were over, for assembling in front of the synagogue after the last hymn had been sung. There is no way to determine whether fines added up to an appreciable source of congregational income. The records of such penalties have, for the most part, been destroyed. In the first decade of the new century, Charleston's Beth Elohim probably enjoyed the largest congregational income in the country, £800; its most generous giver paid about £50 a year. By 1840, New York's Shearith Israel had a budget of about \$6,000; in 1839, Bnai Jeshurun spent \$4,000; Anshe Chesed, thirteen years old in 1841, was spending only \$1,000; ten years later, when its membership was swollen by the incoming Central Europeans, these Men of Love had a budget of \$5,500. The substantial expenditures of the Ashkenazic congregations indicate that they were moving ahead.⁵⁰

THE SERVICES

The ultimate goal of a congregation—possibly not always a conscious one—was to guarantee that Jews and Judaism would survive; its immediate purpose was to make provision for worship. There were three rites in the United States, the Spanish-Portuguese or Sephardic, the German, and the Polish; the latter two Ashkenazic. But no matter what the liturgical style, there were variations in every synagogue, whose rite in turn, was invariably modified somewhat with the advent of a new hazzan. Improvisation was the order of the day. Often the petty differences within any specific rite represented regional or local differences which the congregants brought with them from Europe. These minutiae were deemed sacrosanct; the pettier the liturgical deviations, the more opportunity they offered for congregational squabbles. In 1761, on hearing that a congregation was to be established in Philadelphia, Jacob Henry implied that it would founder on the rock of finding an acceptable common liturgy. What is it going to be, he said sarcastically, Sephardic, German, Polish or Quaker? He invoked the Quakers because their ministers served “without fee or reward.” After publishing a few English translations of liturgical material in the 1760’s, the Jews here finally issued an edition of the Sephardic prayers in 1826; Hebrew and English faced each other on opposite pages.

Ashkenazic prayer books were printed in 1848. Despite what had become a traditional religiocultural lag in America, it was difficult to continue ignoring the Central European majority; these provincials, after all, already had at least seventy-five Ashkenazic synagogues and conventicles in the country. Services were held on late Friday afternoons, on Saturdays, and on the holidays; occasionally a quorum was rounded up for special occasions. Rarely, if ever, were offerings made in English; intoning the gifts, when the Scroll was read, the cantor sang in Hebrew, Spanish-Portuguese, German, or in all probability, Juedisch-Deutsch or Yiddish. When either the national or state governments urged citizens, Jews among them, to assemble in their houses of worship to supplicate the Holy One Blessed Be He or to thank Him, the Children of Israel hastened to respond. They would gather to offer thanksgiving in victory and and to mourn when war, fire, or disease threatened. The Passover seder, the festival of freedom, was an occasion which few missed. It is noteworthy, too, that the seder liturgy, the Haggadah (the Telling of the Exodus from Egypt) was a common one for all Jews, both Sephardim and Ashkenazim. The New Year and the Day of Atonement were celebrated with solemnity; the giving of the Law (the Teaching) was commemorated on Pentecost; Jews, even intermarried ones, sat in booths during the autumnal festival of Tabernacles; Hanukkah was not yet equated with Christmas and its gift giving, although Jews lit their silver candelabra. The most

joyous holiday was Purim, celebrated as a sort of carnival in the weeks before Spring; the day was spent in drinking, gift giving, and games.⁵¹

There were no permanent choirs, though almost invariably choral groups were organized for dedication exercises, if only to impress the large number of Christian visitors. An effort made in 1818 to organize a choir in Shearith Israel met with strong opposition—it was an innovation that smacked of Protestantism and Jewish Reform. The year 1818 saw Hamburg Jews revolt—mildly, to be sure—against tradition; more radical religious dissenters had been raising their voices in Germany for well over a decade, and the New Yorkers knew what was going on in Europe. In some congregations, there were men and women who wanted a choir of male and female voices. By this time, a Jew in Philadelphia was arranging a Hebrew hymn for voice and piano accompaniment. Synagogues did enjoy and approve of congregational singing; maybe that is one of the reasons many rejected the introduction of a choir; the people in the benches wanted to participate themselves. Congregational—rather than pulpit or choral—domination of the service was a Jewish tradition centuries old. It was this desire to retain the worshippers' centrality in the service that induced some Jews to think of preaching as an intrusion. Only one congregation in all America heard discourses with some regularity in the early and middle 1830's, Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia.⁵²

AMERICAN JUDAISM: PRACTICE AND PROBLEMS

Like most Jews everywhere, American Israelites believed that they were duty bound to observe God's law as propounded in the Hebrew Bible and as interpreted by the rabbis for the past 2,000 years. In their own fashion most American Jews here who identified with their people believed that the Law merited obedience. By far the majority was traditional in avowal, if not in practice. In 1825, writing to Brother Ben in Lexington, Rebecca Gratz said that their brothers in Philadelphia were very attentive in synagogue matters. The women's gallery was as well filled as the men's section downstairs. "We all go Friday evening as well as on Saturday morning." In the various congregations, those in authority made efforts to enforce observance, and denunciations of religious transgression were not uncommon. In 1782 Mordecai M. Mordecai, of Philadelphia, denounced Ezekiel Levy for having shaved on the Sabbath. The "fundamentalism" exhibited by Mordecai did not prevent him, when it suited him, from disregarding the Law. In the late 1830's, Anshe Chesed, still rigorous in observance, debarred men from membership for working on the Sabbath. The Philadelphian Moses Nathans accused a Mr. Bromat of writing in a coffee-house on the Sabbath in 1783. Less than a decade later, the same zealous Mr. Nathans married a Gentile in a non-Jewish ceremony. Nathans, after

two years, turned to the congregation and asked that his wife and the couple's two circumcised infants be converted. The congregation was sympathetic and wrote to religious authorities in Europe asking for guidance. The Philadelphians pointed out that Nathans had at all times lived a Jewish life in the traditional sense. Indeed, there were ardent Jews in every town.⁵³

Shearith Israel's members tended to follow the letter of the Law. In 1794, they refused to convert the Gentile wife of a member. Undoubtedly the congregation was influenced by a regulation enacted in 1763 denying conversion to any non-Jew—which was supererogation with a vengeance since there is nothing in Jewish Law to forbid proselytization. It is likely that New York's Jews in the 1760's and in the 1790's assumed so conservative a stance because they feared public reaction if they converted a Christian to Judaism; they were insecure, still responsive to Old World memories. Adhering to rabbinic precepts, Savannah refused to bury the son of a Jew born of a Christian mother; the Philadelphians denied interment to the child of a Jewish woman and a Christian husband. Despite the many evidences of recusancy, most American Jews were loyal to their faith. In 1844, Mrs. Judith Pettigrew was buried in a special section of Philadelphia's Jewish cemetery because she had married a Christian. She was the daughter of Myer Hart, of Easton, who had been one of the founders of that village. Sixty-two years after her marriage, it was held against her that her husband was a Christian. A black woman who worked for a Mr. Marks, of Philadelphia, was a meticulous observer of Jewish traditions. When she died, he asked permission to bury her in the congregation's cemetery. After this request was denied, Marks and a number of friends buried her, nevertheless, but off to the side. One of Philadelphia's notable Jews, Hyman Gratz, was censured in 1827 by Mikveh Israel for bringing some Christian women visitors up to the holy ark and showing them a Scroll of the Law. In his will Gratz left his estate to found a Jewish college in Philadelphia, a legacy which in 1893 made possible the establishment of present-day Gratz College. In matters religious, nineteenth-century American Jewry was still conservative.⁵⁴

Since most Jews accepted traditional religious practices, in principle at least, it is well to ask: what was the nature of their compliance? Most Jews respected the Sabbath and what it stood for, even if they were less than scrupulous in its observance. Others—a minority, to be sure—attended Sabbath services during the year and recited the prayers mechanically, noisily, and joyously. Parents wanted their sons to be bar mitzvah at thirteen. Some members of Shearith Israel wore no praying shawl (tallith) at service; the congregation insisted, however, that it be worn if a member hoped to be honored when the Law was read. This was in 1825 when American Jewry in general was dismayed by the rise of the Reformed

Society of Israelites in Charleston. When in doubt about proper practice, congregations consulted knowledgeable Jews like Israel Baer Kursheedt or turned for guidance to European rabbinical authorities. Congregations distributed liturgical honors—for instance standing by as the Law was read—not merely to solicit offerings, but, at least equally, to encourage and reward the pious and the observant. Many a traveler refused to begin journeys on the Sabbath and, if on the road, made every effort to reach lodgings before sundown on Friday night. In January, 1826, two young Ettings, of the Philadelphia-Baltimore clan, were caught in a storm about twenty miles outside of Baltimore. Night had fallen, the Sabbath was setting in, and they refused to go any farther. The boys stopped the stage, got out on the road, went through their Hebrew prayers, and lit the Sabbath candles. They observed the day of rest in a nearby home, but the storm was so severe they had to get out and tie the house to a tree to prevent it from blowing away. After it was all over, Henry, a young naval officer, thought it all a huge joke. The only evil effect he experienced was a bad cold—which he survived to become a disbursing officer in the navy (years later he retired with the relative rank of commodore). Jonas Phillips, the well-known Philadelphia merchant, paid a fine rather than be sworn on the Sabbath in court.⁵³

With rare exception, Jews prepared and employed the standard Aramaic contract when entering into marriage. According to biblical law, a man was bound to marry a brother's childless widow. The traditional symbolic ceremony (*halitsah*) which released the brother from marrying his bereaved sister-in-law was observed in some congregations, and the widow was free to marry whomever she wished. Efforts were made, not always effectively, to ensure that a Cohen, a man of priestly descent, did not marry a divorcee or a proselyte. Most congregations in the large towns succeeded in building a mikveh (pool) to be used by the women for their monthly ritual ablutions. Manuel Josephson, of Philadelphia, insisted successfully on the establishment of such a bathhouse in 1784. This merchant, respected as a Jewish communal leader and admired for his scholastic attainments, was among the city's most cultured Jews in Jewish and secular studies. When pleading for a mikveh he reminded his coreligionists, a year after the war with England, that because they were now blessed with freedom it was their duty to thank their Father in Heaven by following his injunctions scrupulously. If a mikveh is not built, God will punish us; our fellow Jews will not associate with us; all the curses of the Bible will descend upon us! Our women must be induced to a strict compliance! May God have mercy upon us and send his redeemer to Zion speedily! Town Jews wrote their families in the villages alerting them to the coming Holy Days, since printed Jewish calendars were rare. When David Hays, of Westchester County, New York, wrote to his brother

Michael in 1784, he urged him to recite the anniversary memorial prayer for their mother and to fast on the Day of Atonement. Accompanying the note and the necessary dates of all the Holy Days was a gift of some kosher meat.⁵⁶

In 1798, on a long voyage from New York to Madras, India, two Jews observed the Passover “with strictness . . . God send we may spend the next one in New York.” Wherever there were Jews, they made an effort to provide themselves with matzo, unleavened Passover bread. Samuel Mordecai in Richmond or Petersburg made sure to send the family in Warrenton, North Carolina, a supply of unleavened bread for the holiday. Sheftall Sheftall, a Revolutionary War officer when only a teenager, always fasted on the eve of Passover according to a widely followed medieval custom. In the cities, congregants supervised the baking of matzo whether it was done by Jews or Christians. In some places, it was the synagogue that distributed it, controlled the prices, and made sure that the impoverished received their allotment. The Newport synagogue reportedly had a built-in oven for the baking of matzo for the congregants. Free matzo counted as one of the perquisites of congregational functionaries. Christians were impressed by the Jewish observance of the Passover. “A Protestant,” writing to the press in 1784, complained that Christians neglected the coeval Good Friday. Jews, ardent in their observance of the Passover, were setting Christians an example by staying away from their shops during the paschal holiday.⁵⁷

The Hebrew Bible describes which animals—cattle, fowl, fish—are permitted for food and which are forbidden. Cattle and fowl, if eaten by observant Jews, must be slaughtered, examined, and prepared according to prescribed rules and regulations laid down in rabbinic law. The maintenance of these laws of kashrut occasioned communal leaders much concern. They were determined that these injunctions, divinely ordained in Sacred Writ, be honored. Why were the leaders so insistent on kashrut? Here in America, one goes to synagogue once or twice a week at best, but one eats twenty-one times a week at least. Jews sensed that, if a man made sacrifices to observe the dietary laws and set himself apart, he was committed to tradition and would remain a Jew. Adherence to the kosher code is instant identification; it becomes an ingrained habit, a deterrent against defection; it ties Jews to one another. In actual practice, it may be deemed more important than adherence to other traditional beliefs and dogmas; it is even more important than an occasional visit to the synagogue. Jews believed, in a far more subtle sense than the materialist L. A. Feuerbach, that man is what he eats. (*Der Mensch ist was er isst.*) In short, as long as a man ate kosher he would remain a Jew. This is why communities were so determined to provide kosher food and to require people to keep a kosher kitchen. While visiting a spa, Rebecca Gratz was offered fried

oysters. Her hostess, recalling that the food was forbidden, hastened to apologize, saying to Rebecca, "My memory is bad." "Mine is better," answered Rebecca, "the fish is so good here that I have no temptation to forget it is the only thing on the table to be eaten." Rebecca, one of the best educated Jewish women in all America, enjoyed being Jewish.⁵⁸

Providing kosher meat and enforcing the laws of *kashrut* was practically an insoluble problem. Communities were looking for competent, dependable *shohets*. It was the job of the slaughterers to kill the animal ritually; Christian butchers, licensed by a congregation, cut and distributed the meat. A butcher in New York who compensated the *shohet* was willing to pay for the privilege of handling kosher meats because he had a built-in Jewish-clientele and received a good price for the product he sold. In order to make sure that there was kosher meat which the poor of the community could afford to buy, Harmon Hendricks, the philanthropist, made a contribution. He sought to encourage the eating of lamb which was cheaper. The experiment failed, for the people preferred the more expensive veal to the cheaper lamb. The problem facing the community was that some butchers would cheat and affix kosher seals fraudulently to forbidden carcasses. When cheats were caught, as some were in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they were punished by the municipal authorities. Respecting the needs and sensitivities of the Jews, the local government in New York City between 1796 and 1813 was willing to help them and, if necessary, pass requisite ordinances. Typical of the cheating is the case of the butcher Caleb Vanderberg. When caught in a fraud, he said it was all a joke, but he failed to see the humor of it all when the Common Council deprived him of his license in 1805.⁵⁹

The problem of kosher meat control was only exacerbated by the fact that there were laymen competent to perform *shehitah*. Most of these private *shohets* slaughtered meat for themselves and their friends exclusively; they were honorable men. Notables like Solomon Etting, Ephraim Hart, and Mordecai Sheftall were versed in the art. Etting was an outstanding Baltimore merchant; Hart, a prominent New York businessman; Sheftall, one of Georgia's leading citizens. Another who took care of his own needs was Benjamin Etting Hays, of Mt. Pleasant, New York, whom the Christians called Uncle Ben. A pious Jew, he observed biblical laws by leaving some fruit and grain for the poor on his trees and in his fields. Men like Hays and Sheftall created no problem for anyone, but when a *shohet* went into business for himself and tied himself to a Christian butcher, there was no congregational control—no positive assurance that the product was ritually truly kosher. Kosher food can become a big business; the prospect of gain always carries with it the possibility of fraud. Congregational leaders believed that consumers had to be protected and

in 1813 the Common Council of New York gave Shearith Israel the authority to license shohets and butchers. Victory? The ordinance raised a storm in the congregation; eminent members believed that their political and religious rights were being violated; and within a few days the offending ordinance was revoked. For lack of a better reason, the historian can only assume that behind this attack on sound legislation stood bitter intramural hostilities. Was there a fight for synagogal control between the officers and the power elite which had hitherto dominated? The attempt then to control kashrut—in New York at least—failed.⁶⁰

New York's kashrut problems were multiplied when, in the 1820's, new congregations were established; each synagog had its own shohet; now with multiple slaughterers and a plethora of butchers, control of distribution was completely out of the question. There was no single overall community, no administrative apparatus, no city or state legislation to restrain cheating. Indeed the problem of kashrut supervision has plagued New York Jewry down to the present day. What was true of New York was, to a degree, true of all towns; it was never easy anywhere to guarantee the supply of kosher meat. As people became less exacting, more permissive in these matters, and as their sense of guilt increased, they began to insist that the officiating minister, at least, must be meticulous in his observance of the dietary laws. The hazzan must be the vicarious (observant) Jew in town. There could be no leeway where the paid functionaries were concerned. Thus in, 1809, the teacher and assistant hazzan Emanuel N. Carvalho was accused of eating in the home of a member whose kitchen was not kosher. Lobster had been served! Carvalho was tried, but emerged triumphant from the inquisition; he proved that his black servant was present to make sure that the food served his master was truly kosher.

WOMEN AND OTHER RELIGIOUS DEVOTEES

Kashrut in the home was, is, the concern of the woman. Though women were restricted to the galleries in the synagog, it is not necessary to interpret this segregation as abasement; women were highly respected and cherished. It is worthy of note that, when New York's Mill Street Synagogue was rebuilt in 1817, the grille or wall which had once hidden the women's galleries was not restored. Even the effort to reserve the front seats in the galleries to married women was not altogether successful. Leaser, in his preface to Grace Aguilar's *Spirit of Judaism*, was primarily concerned that women devote themselves to religion, to belief, to piety. Thus they would have a profound influence on their children and, together with men, further the Kingdom of Heaven. In the contemporary Christian churches, women were co-workers with men in every organization, in the missionary, reform, and welfare societies. Men and women

worked shoulder to shoulder as equals. Nothing comparable was evident in the synagogues of that day. Rebecca Gratz was annoyed that some of her sophisticated contemporaries, women too, believed Judaism to be the concern of rabbis and women alone, no one else. Piety, true religiosity among women, was common. Rebecca sensed and felt the presence of God; she was prepared to submit to his will no matter what befell her; she was firm in her beliefs. When Mrs. T. Biddle, her hostess on one occasion, attempted to convert her, Rebecca answered that she was happy in her Jewish faith and could not sympathize with Mrs. Biddle's wish that she accept Christianity. Deborah Moses, the daughter of Hazzan Jacob R. Cohen, of Philadelphia, was exemplary in her piety. Knowing that she was about to die, she laid out her shrouds and gave money to the poor; "charity, righteousness delivereth from death" (Prov. 10:2). "God bless her memory," said her son, Major Raphael J. Moses, the Confederate firebrand, "I know she has gone to her reward and feel that she still lives and loves us." When her will was opened, her grieving children read her last words: "Mourn not beyond the hour sanctified by nature and true grief. The tears which spring from the heart are the only dews the grave should be moistened with. The dead receive sufficient honor in being called to face their God."⁶¹

Following a practice that assumed increasing importance in later generations, Hazzan Seixas wrote the Hebrew of "Our God," *Elohenu* as *Elo-kenu*. The divine name is ineffable, it is too holy ever to be pronounced as written. London's chief rabbi wrote the word God, "G-d." The desire of most worshippers was to continue the old way of life without substantial modification. Their conservative approach was reinforced by the constant arrival of immigrants wedded to orthodoxy. Most newcomers were meticulously observant; certainly initially. Malcolm Stern, the genealogist and historian, has maintained that most Jews identified with a congregation. This was true, he believes, even of the intermarried. Whether Jews joined a synagogue or not most of them did savor Judaism, the religion of their fathers. Anti-Jewish prejudice, never absent, served only to intensify their loyalties. American Jewry and Judaism, an extension of Orthodox Europe, constituted the western frontier of an Atlantic basin community. For some of America's Gentile literati, Europe reached as far west as the Blue Ridge Mountains; for American Jewry, by 1840, it extended to the mouth of the Missouri River; a Bohemian immigrant would feel completely at home in a St. Louis prayer group.⁶²

DECORUM

Kashrut and other religious practices created problems for Jewish leaders and traditional conformists inasmuch as no two individuals walked quite the same religious path. The American ethos, which allowed every man

and woman freedom in all matters religious, served to encourage rugged Jewish individualists. Other problems, too, confronted Jews in the United States; they were no longer living in an ethnic enclave, but in an integrated non-corporative world where Christians outnumbered them about a thousand to one. Jews were thus compelled to reevaluate their conduct and their religious mores. Because of Gentile concepts of behavior in the sanctuary, Jews reexamined their traditional notions of decorum and found them wanting. By Christian standards, Jewish services were indecorous. Disturbed by the mote in the eyes of the Jews, some Christians failed to see the beam in their own eye; tobacco spitting in some churches was by no means uncommon. Still from the vantage point of Western culture, Jewish services came somewhat as a shock. What, then, were these exotics doing when they worshipped? They walked about or carried on conversations with their neighbors, especially when the Law and the Prophets were being read in the original Hebrew. Children ran about; members quarreled with the beadle and even insulted the officers. Young Emanuel B. Hart of Shearith Israel, then twenty-three, was assisting a stranger during the service. Because this was deemed misbehavior, Hart was publicly reprimanded by the parnas. The young man responded by threatening to knock the president down. Hart in later years became a colonel in the militia and went to Washington as a congressman.⁶³

Coshman Pollack, a Savannah, Georgia, Revolutionary War veteran, was another to take offense in the synagog. Infuriated because his wife was denied what he deemed a proper seat, Pollack refused to pay dues. The synagog retaliated by denying him religious honors. When the exiles in Philadelphia were organizing a synagog, in 1782, they were enjoined to behave with decency during worship and unanimously agreed to do so. That same year Abraham Levy, accused of starting a riot in the house of God, was fined fifty pounds of wax. The wax of course was used by the beadle to make candles. Years later in this same congregation, the beadle climbed up to the women's gallery and ordered the young girls to vacate the front seats which they had unlawfully occupied; young women leaning over the banister would only distract the men at their devotions. A brother of one of the girls told the shammash that, if he ever did it again, he would drag him down the stairs. As befitted a cultured American whose roots went back in this country for almost a century, Seixas in Philadelphia and in New York had always insisted on decorum during the services. In 1784, after returning to the city on the Hudson, he appealed to his congregants to behave, to desist from chatting while the prayers were read, to keep their children under control. Reproached by one of the congregational bosses, the scholarly Eleazar Lazarus responded in verse:

When we go to the theatre we pay our money to be amused.
 But when we go to shul we pay our money to be abused.

Emma Lazarus, his granddaughter, wrote more sophisticated poetry.⁶⁴

Like a repetitive phrase on a broken record, constitutions inveterately addressed themselves to the need for orderly conduct in the house of God. The New York worshippers in 1790 were admonished to behave; they would be fined and, if necessary, taken to court—this in the oldest and most respected Jewish congregation in the country. Actually, of course, some worshippers were uncouth. A Mr. Phillips came to services and made such a nuisance of himself that a constable had to haul him off to jail. In all probability, to use the vernacular of the 1790's, he was obnubilated—under the influence. Mrs. Phillips pleaded with Shearith Israel to arrange for his release; she promised “in future to keep him from going to synagog.” The constitution of 1805 was precise in telling the worshippers what was expected of them. They were not to outstep the cantor; no umbrellas or canes were to be brought to one's seat unless one were lame; garments were to be deposited on the free seats near the door. No one was to go out during the service, and when departing, members were to leave in an orderly fashion, not flock out en masse. The constant harping of the bylaws on good behavior was a call to Americanization or, more correctly, to an acceptance of prevailing church mores. Decorum was very important to the self-conscious Jewish leaders of that day. America was slowly crowding out Europe and its thousand-years-old synagogal amenities. Determined to force the congregants into an American mold, the synagog leaders appealed to them or threatened them with fines and expulsion. Order and dignity must be preserved. Lay leaders, ministers, Sephardic and Ashkenazic constitutions reiterated this refrain.

What were the causes of the “disorder” which the synagog strove to control? After a service of four to five hours the worshippers became restless—tired, bored. There were numerous blessings, memorial offerings, auctioning off of honors; all this took time. Many, however, felt that the sale of privileges was needed if the synagog was to survive. Yet there were others who pleaded for a lessening or even the abolition of the blessings, which, indeed, were not required by Jewish canon law. Some pointed out, and this was true, that the income derived from the hawking of blessings was not significant. Decorum picked up when Gentiles were present; the Jews were then on their best behavior. This was particularly true when synagogos were dedicated, and the non-Jewish public was invited to the services. Knowing that the Gentiles might be shocked, Jews conducted themselves so as to command the respect of the visitors. Most congregants were respected businessmen; they were certainly intelligent. Why then did they not “behave”? They prayed as they had always prayed, both here and in Europe. The liturgy was structured, but their

conduct was not; informality was traditional; Jews were at home in the house of God, which was also a house of assembly. Because God was loved, they were ready to do battle for him, and because they were human beings beset with problems, they were more than ready to do battle with one another. Factions brought their quarrels into the synagog. What better place was there to meet and fight? Angry with fellow Jews, some vented their rage on God and stayed away from His house. At times when men were feuding it was difficult to assemble a prayer quorum. As the environment overwhelmed them, they became aware that their Old World decorum was not American. The struggle between the two cultures was thus joined, but no service of that age was completely decorous by the standards of contemporary urban middle-class Christians. Though often bored, Jews loved the service; it was part of them. It would be a generation before any, even the native-born, would become Protestantized enough to "behave."⁶⁵

SQUABBLES, NON-OBSERVANCE, AND RELIGIOSITY

Misbehavior does not necessarily indicate hostility or indifference to religion. On December 13, 1790, Manuel Josephson, president of Philadelphia's Mikveh Israel, called on President Washington and delivered a letter of greeting from American Jewry. Three years later, however, the minister of the same congregation was instructed by the board not to mention Josephson's name or accept any offerings from him. What happened? Just another intracongregational quarrel. His response to a congregational request that he submit some financial accounts and return a shofar was that "the whole congregation might be damn'd." Squabbles in God's house were almost as traditional as the liturgy itself; one sometimes suspects that these quarrels testified to a rugged spiritual health. Apathy and non-observance of the Law were often non-ideological. Though there is evidence that some Jews did not affiliate with the local synagog, most were content to remain Jews and to practice some sort of Judaism; they were committed at least in principle. Religiously, the Gentiles about them provided scant inspiration. The last years of the eighteenth and the first two decades of the nineteenth century were bad years for the churches. It has been estimated that around the year 1800 less than 7 percent of all Americans were members of Christian denominations. Thousands of New York Gentiles protested when ministers threatened to prohibit excursions up the Hudson on the Lord's Day. It was reported in 1815 that there were people in remote reaches of the Mississippi Valley who had never seen a Bible. In effect, speaking in church language, most Christians were then really *Gentiles*.⁶⁶

The Revolution had disrupted lives and thinking; Deism, rationalism, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution had all turned individuals

away from Orthodoxy. Franklin, Jefferson, Madison and other notables were not sympathetic to organized religion. Pessimists clucked that Christianity was on its last legs. Some Jews, too, thought Judaism about to expire; a South Carolina sophisticate prophesied in 1833 that Orthodoxy would not last another fifty ears. Certainly in the early years of the century, the prospects for Judaism appeared anything but rosy. Synagog attendance was minimal. In 1807-1808, Jacob R. Cohen, the Philadelphia hazzan, had a contract requiring him to conduct services even when there was no quorum. In 1827, the officers of Cohen's congregation were warned that they would be fined if they did not come to services at least once a month. In 1825, times are recorded in New York's metropolitan synagog when only three householders made their appearance. Some Jews came to service but once a year; members were derelict in paying dues; one even ventured to palm off \$15 in counterfeit bills when the collector called on him. New York's frustrated board threatened to read the list of the delinquents publicly at the Sabbath service. In dealing with dues defaulters, some synagog simply bided their time. Thus, in one congregation when a bereaved father turned to the synagog and asked it to bury a child, the leaders blandly suggested that he pay all his past debts as well as the modest burial fee. He paid.⁶⁷

NEGLECT OF THE SABBATH, OF KASHRUT, AND CIRCUMCISION

Some of the challenges facing American Jewry in those early days indicate that pessimistic American attitudes toward religion were affecting Jewry adversely. Some Jews were not interested in teaching their children Hebrew, even though they knew that it was the language in which God spoke to Moses. For many there was no passion for Jewish education; it was enough that their sons could chant the bar mitzvah portion in Hebrew. Some congregations went for years without a professional reader; no qualified rabbi was brought over from Europe, for no need for a talmudic expert was felt here; there was little interest in the study of the standard Hebrew codes. Few, if any, rejected the principle of the immutability and the sanctity of the Sabbath, but for business reasons most Jews violated it in practice. Savannah Jewry made an effort to compel all Jews to close their stores on that day and when a member refused to do so and even kept open on the second day of the Jewish New Year, he was denounced from the pulpit. But, despite his contumacy, he remained a member. Congregations were always eager to help members observe the dietary laws. In 1786 when Lion Jonas, a New York furrier, violated the Sabbath and insulted the parnas and the board, he was fined, denied synagogal honors, and denounced publicly from the reading desk. Years later, in 1809, when he was old and impoverished, the community took him out of an almshouse because he refused to eat forbidden food, and made

sure that he was given kosher victuals. Though he was a good-for-nothing the congregation took care of him because he wanted to live a Jewish life.⁶⁸

Notwithstanding the fact that dietary laws are prescribed in the Bible, many violated them with impunity. Like neglect of the Sabbath, this was a real departure from Old World patterns. Social control, which still operated to a large degree in town, broke down completely when Jews were on the road. A European Christian visiting North America as early as 1748 reported that Jews traveling on business did not keep kosher. Levy Andrew Levy, a Fort Pitt trader, refused to eat bacon but relished barbecued turtle. It was so good it just had to be kosher. Yet he loved Jewish tradition: "For a family to be remote from our [Jewish] society is shocking," he once said. A dear friend writing to Leeser in 1831 said that everybody in Charleston ate forbidden foods and had no qualms about it. In a history of the Jews published in this country in 1840, the author reported that Jews were not religiously observant. Expediency, not the Law, determined the attitude of many Jews towards the most sacred commands.⁶⁹

The refusal of some Jewish sophisticates to circumcise their infant sons brought problems. If the child died was it to be given a Jewish burial? An influential, wealthy elite member was able to bring pressure to bear and induce the minister and synagogal leader to provide interment according to Jewish custom, although it was obvious that the dead did not merit traditional burial. In Savannah, on one occasion, when the congregants were asked to inter the circumcised son of a Christian mother, the members acting as a committee of the whole made their decision not by consulting the codes but by voting. America superseded Judea; a democratic vote, not the rabbinic code, was decisive. The refusal to accept circumcision was apparently so common in Philadelphia that in 1822 the city-wide Hebrew Society for the Visitation of the Sick refused to admit members who had not circumcised their sons. As one might have expected there was no consistency in legislating about the uncircumcised. Referring to the Jews of America, the learned Israel B. Kursheedt said that Jews here were wont to do what was right in their own eyes. Where the Sabbath, circumcision, and intermarriage were concerned, congregations had to make concessions in order to hold their members. They did so reluctantly in New Orleans. In Baltimore, the intermarried were allowed to remain in the congregation, but were denied the franchise.⁷⁰

To be sure, constitutions must not be taken too seriously. The Baltimore congregation numbered among its founders a Bohemian Jewish peddler whose Quaker wife continued to practice her faith. This man was active in the Jewish community. The solution to intermarriage was conversion to Judaism; some congregations went along with petitioners for

admission into the fold though Jewry in general did not encourage proselytization. Every congregation, every husband, every father had to come to grips with this problem, one that has confronted Jews ever since biblical days. Solomon Lyons, a prominent businessman in Philadelphia, had more than one Christian mistress. When one of them bore him a son, he arranged for circumcision, saw to it that the mother was converted, and then married her. He was an observant Jew, an active member of Mikveh Israel, and a generous contributor to Jewish causes. Determined to keep his children Jewish he left specific instructions that they be reared as Jews but a daughter grew up to marry a non-Jew. What was Jacob Mordecai to do when his sons and a daughter began marrying out? Mourn for them as if they were dead? He loved them! Despite the fact that most affiliated Jews were Orthodox, they made their peace with intermarriage, even though the rate of out-marriages was not low. Only on the rarest of occasions did a congregation ask a Jew to divorce his non-Jewish wife, and there is no record of compliance even in these instances.⁷¹

APATHY AND CHANGE

Certainly there was laxity in the observance of many basic Jewish practices. In his sermons, Isaac Leiser dwelt on this subject without letup. Some of his attacks no doubt are the professional jeremiads which characterize all preachers, but, though a discount must be taken, there *was* much indifference—what Leiser called infidelity. There were cultured families whose children, native-born of course, ignored religious prohibitions by traveling on the holidays. These young men and women, completely American, had no desire to conform to ancient Jewish patterns. Jacob Mordecai, himself an ardent Jew, seems somehow to have ignored the Jewish education of his offspring. When Jacob I. Cohen, of Richmond and Philadelphia, contracted a forbidden marriage, he deliberately ignored an express prohibition of the Bible, and the best Jews gave him moral support. They all knew they were violating the Law, but they went ahead anyhow. Yet they were all totally committed to Judaism—of this there can be no doubt—though what they did would never have been tolerated in Germany and Poland among observant Jews. It is evident that there was disregard of age-old observance of laws and customs on the part of many. This permissiveness—really gross neglect—was widespread even among people who deemed themselves good Jews. At Petersburg, Virginia, in 1791, if we are to accept the testimony of a contemporary Jewish woman, the shohet himself bought and ate non-kosher meat; worshippers wore no prayer shawl in the synagogue; the holidays were not celebrated; and no shop was closed on the Sabbath.⁷²

What was it that moved men and women in those days to ignore the religious folkways in violation of biblical, rabbinical, and congregational injunctions? There were several answers and this multiplicity induces historians to believe that they cannot fully account for the derelictions. Social control was not absolute; there was much indifference. When Philip Minis marched into a cafe and shot down a man who had insulted him as a Jew, Slowey Hays intimated that Philip and his sister had not been given a good Jewish training by their parents; their papa and mama were not ardent Jews. There were Israelites—how many we do not know—who rejected Judaism; there were Jewish atheists, freethinkers. When a Jewish infidel was blown up in his chemistry laboratory on a Saturday, it was suggested that God must have punished him for working on the divinely appointed day of rest. Most Jews who neglected the jots and tittles of the Law were not prompted to do so for ideological reasons; their conduct stemmed from neglect. There were others, Deists no doubt, who looked upon the Law as a “human invention,” “unreasonable and obsolete.” One is inclined to believe that those Jews who refused to circumcise their sons, condoned intermarriage, violated the Sabbath, and ignored the dietary laws were moving in the direction of secularism—but they were not necessarily defectors since they were content to remain Jews. When a patrician Jewish woman sent her daughter to a Christian boarding school, her letter of instructions said nothing of religion or prayers. As a friend of Leeser’s once said, Jews are stubborn; they will never convert to Christianity; they are just as stubborn in refusing to be observant.⁷³

Were there in those days Jews eager to maintain Judaism but convinced that it would have to be liberalized? The Marxes and the younger Mordecais of Virginia were liberals. One of the Marx girls was told by an aunt that she had her choice of Sabbaths, Saturday or Sunday. She opted for Sunday, but when she grew up she married a Jew. Ellen Mordecai thought there was too much ceremonial and superstition in Judaism. In her early days, she was quite attached to her Jewish heritage; later, she became an ardent convert to Christianity. As the 1824-1825 religious secession in Charleston demonstrated, a substantial number of liberals called that city home. Many of them nursed Deist ideas. It was inevitable that cultured Jews, associating with Christians of intelligence and learning, would be influenced. The Jew could not escape the environment that enveloped him; many Jews had gone to secular schools patronized by middle-class Christians. For perhaps the first time in Jewish history, they were living together with Gentiles, in close proximity. To a degree, of course, they had no choice; they patterned themselves on their non-Jewish neighbors. Jews were certainly exposed to religious liberalism as it began to manifest itself among the Christians of that day. It is not easy to measure the extent of Jewish religious progressivism in the various towns.

There were Jewish political liberals, Jeffersonians, “Democrats,” but many of these men made a sharp distinction between political and religious liberalism; the two were not deemed tangential. Political left-wingers like Solomon Simson and Benjamin Nones were leaders in their Jewish communities, and synagogues.⁷⁴

SALUTARY NEGLECT

How did religious Jews cope with the many problems that confronted them in their congregations and in their homes? As long as Sephardim were able to maintain the synagogue-community—the only one in town—and enjoy a monopoly of religious privileges, marriages, and burials, they could threaten offenders with fines, court action, public denunciation during the services, refusal of honors, and expulsion. They could and did demand public apologies. The leaders made threats and carried them out, but when multiple synagogue-communities were established in a town, the dissidents and the disaffected could always leave. Now there was another cemetery in town! Fighting indifference and laxity was from now on to be an uphill battle; coercion was no longer a serious option; pushing people would drive them out of the synagogue. As early as 1790, a generation before the rise of a rival synagogue in New York, Shearith Israel fulminated against members who violated the Law, but they were not driven out of the congregation. Even Charleston in 1820 hesitated to take strong measures against those who flaunted their disregard of accepted practices. Individuals and congregations had no choice but to accommodate themselves to their Christian neighbors and to American mores. It was imperative that there be compromise here on a “frontier” 3,000 miles from talmudically trained European rabbinical authorities. Because they were so pitifully small, congregations had to be tolerant if the community was to be held together. The more ardent devotees could not afford the luxury of expelling others. In essence, all communities here resolved their problems of observance by ignoring some laws, traditions, and customs. It was a selective process. Gradually the mikveh was ignored, and women bathed ritually at home. The Jews bent the Law; they made liberal decisions by honoring many traditions in the breach. This pattern of salutary neglect has continued in American life among many traditional Jews down to the present day. Most Israelites of the early nineteenth century wanted to live as Jews; there was enough prejudice in the United States to keep them in line—but not enough to drive them into the synagogue. Practically all of them began sooner or later to realize that accommodation spelled survival.⁷⁵

What held Jews together in an early American community? Despite the indifference on the part of many, the avowed religionists among them

held their own, maintaining their basic institutions till they were reinforced in the late 1830's by observant Central European Jewish newcomers, who then began a new cycle of Jewish religious activity. To repeat; what held Jews together in the early days of the republic? Jews were united by their religion, even if intensity of devotion was not the determining factor. Secularism, as intimated above, was present, but there was no visible body of secularists. There can be no question that, in the minds of most Jews, one could not be a Jew without Judaism; Judaism and the Jewish people were one. In their daily conduct the impact of customary law was always present; it was bred in the bone; Jews could not emancipate themselves from it nor did they want to do so. Next to the Law and its rabbinical interpretations came the institutions, the synagog, the school, the confraternities, the home. These constituted the cement, the binding element. This organic whole of customs, institutions, and mind-set was what determined the conduct and loyalty of Jews.



CHAPTER SEVEN

JUDAISM IN THE UNITED STATE: LEADERSHIP

1776-1840

INTRODUCTION

If American Jews were held together by their religion, who were the leaders who helped them understand and remain loyal to that religion? What part did leadership, lay and “rabbinical,” play in herding Jews together within the ambit of Jewry? The leadership was very important, but it was not vital. There was always a need for someone to handle the administrative apparatus no matter how primitive it was. As the fines imposed on laymen for refusing office make clear, few wanted to be leaders. Responsibility, time, and financial expenditures were involved. But once a man accepted office, he was quite ready and willing to be a boss. The men of substance who helped write constitutions in the larger cities paid lip service to democracy, but in practice tended to be oligarchic—in this respect perpetuating a European pattern. The *parnas* was often resented, but he was the core around which the congregation agglomerated. There were two types of lay leaders: one was the congregational worthy; the other was the man who cut a swath in the general community, possibly a marginal Jew whom the non-Jews respected, so that for local Jews he was a light to the Gentiles. Were these Jewish lay leaders educated Jewishly? It is difficult to generalize. Some European-born *parnasim* were learned; others, who had come out of the American Jewish day schools, had little Jewish knowledge and were marginal Jews not well versed in the traditions of their people. Wealth was not yet a primary requisite for office, though it could not be ignored; generous Harmon Hendricks, who had never served *Shearith Israel* as president for more than two or three years, was always part of the synagog’s power elite. Without Jacob S. Solis, a businessman who was never to become a merchant of substance, there would have been no congregation in the New Orleans of the 1820’s. One suspects that it was always one man, a layman, who prodded his fellow Jews in the new towns to organize, to worship, to build—a Solis in New

Orleans, a Sheftall or a De La Motta in Savannah, a Jonas in Cincinnati. These men were zealous Jews, eager to build a community. But could a man like Dr. De La Motta, who was no pronounced success as a professional, truly serve as a lay leader in Savannah or Charleston? His influence may have been limited, but when there was a religious challenge he met it; he did a job. If a synagog was to be consecrated in Savannah, he assumed leadership. The others in town went along with him. Leadership by default? Leadership, nevertheless.¹

There is reason to believe that Charleston, the leading Jewish community in the country until about 1820, had a number of devoted Jewish laymen. Dr. De La Motta is one example. Not too much is known about the important Charleston community at this time because its early records were destroyed during the Civil War. Leadership in Richmond was largely lay during part of this period, at least until the 1820's. It was Jacob I. Cohen, a merchant, who read the prayer for the government in 1789 when the congregation met to celebrate the first national Thanksgiving day. If there was a hazzan—and this is to be doubted—he was bypassed. When the first synagog built in town was consecrated in 1822, again the honor was entrusted to a layman, Jacob Mordecai. As a lay leader, Mordecai could always consult Israel B. Kursheedt, one of the most erudite Hebrew scholars in the country. Kursheedt had filled his belly with talmudic knowledge in two of Germany's best rabbinical academies. At times, Kursheedt served as a volunteer hazzan. Richmond's outstanding Jew, the attorney Gustavus Adolphus Myers, frequently represented Richmond's Beth Shalome when the Jews were called upon to address their Christian fellow citizens—this, even though he had married a Gentile in 1833, and his was not a Jewish home.²

As in New Orleans, the outstanding families in Baltimore assumed no religious leadership. The old-timers whose roots went back to the eighteenth century looked upon themselves as aristocrats which precluded their uniting with the German newcomers to build a Jewish community; the social distance could not be bridged. A congregation did rise in the late 1820's, but it was built by the Ashkenazic newcomers. Among them were men like the Dyers, John Maximilian and Leon. John M. Dyer, a charter member of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, born in 1729 at Alzey in Rhein-Hessen, had originally been known as Imanuel Gershom Feist, but took the name Philip Haim after the Napoleonic edict of July 20, 1808, was enacted. In the United States, where he immigrated in 1812, he became John Maximilian Dyer, taking the name of a New England Christian who had befriended him. In Baltimore, he became a butcher. When he came to this country, he brought with him his five-year-old son Leon. By 1835, Leon, still a young man in his twenties, had been elected a trustee of the synagog; five years later, he was president.

Leon, a big man physically, had leadership qualities to match. Baltimore soon knew him as one of its outstanding politicians; he served the city as acting mayor for a few days when it was torn by riots, so it is reported. Here was a man always on the move. The 1830's was a decade when young Americans lusted to exhibit their heroism. They had ample opportunity when they were massacred at the Alamo and Goliad.

The year 1836 documents the adventurous activities of Leon Dyer. February, 1836, found him in New Orleans, where he took the oath as the regimental supply officer in the Louisiana Volunteers whose job it was to help crush the Seminoles of Florida. Dyer had enlisted as a private, but as soon as he was appointed quartermaster, he had been commissioned a lieutenant. After a stint of less than four months chasing Indians in Florida, he returned to New Orleans with his regiment and was almost immediately commissioned major in the Army of the Republic of Texas and appointed an aide to General Thomas J. Green. In November of that busy year, he fought a duel with a man who, it seems, had aspersed his Jewish origins. A person like Dyer could not resist the lure of California after gold was discovered. In 1848, he crossed the plains to the Pacific and there, in 1849, helped organize one of the first Jewish congregations in San Francisco; his admirers elected him president; he was a notable. Two years later, he went back to the East. It is patent that a man of this type would not stay long enough anywhere to exercise the qualities of leadership which he obviously possessed. Here was another wandering Jew who went

From place to place but cannot rest
For seeing countries new.³

Philadelphia, as befitted its status, had a number of lay leaders who served the congregation for years. There were Gratzes, a Nathan, Manuel Josephson, Benjamin Nones, Jacob I. Cohen, Lewis Allen, and four Phillipses, all presidents. The presidents were interesting, if not distinguished, men. In a way, the lay leadership in New York City was unique. There was a new president almost every year; no one man could entrench himself; Seixas, related to a number of them, was urbane and worked well with his *parnasim*. Conflicts with the *hazzanim* were few. It is strange that Noah, the darling of the Gentiles who flocked to hear him, was never president. He was the town's *renommé* Jew, trotted out on important occasions to harangue the Gentiles on the virtues of the Chosen People and their divinely revealed religion. One may guess that the congregation's elite was afraid of Noah: he was at times irresponsible; involved as he was in city and state politics, he had a host of enemies; he was aggressive, egoistic. In his case, it is evident, Shearith Israel had decided that discretion was the better of valor.⁴

There were insurmountable barriers to clerical leadership. Congregational leaders, successful businessmen for the most part, would brook no interference from the hazzanim, who were limited to their routine duties of chanting, teaching, marrying, and delivering an occasional address. One may surmise that the presidents, subconsciously at least, looked upon the clergy as potential rivals. In most cases, they had nothing to fear. Not all these chaunters were trained professionals competent to work closely with a congregation. Very few were scholarly, though one or two had read a little in the Latin and Greek classics. More than one of these hazzanim, quondam businessmen, had turned to the ministry for lack of something better to do. They were not of leadership calibre, though on the whole they were far better trained academically than the backwoods evangelical preachers. Unlike these Christian ministers, hazzanim had no "call"; such an emotional experience of a divine inner prompting seems foreign to the Jewish psyche, yet men like Moses L. M. Peixotto and Isaac Leeser were ardent, pious religionists. Good European officials were at first hesitant to come here; ordained rabbis avoided the United States, a land of few Jews where rabbinic scholarship was not valued.

This would begin to change in the late 1830's as emigration picked up and political reaction induced notables to leave Europe. Samuel Myer Isaacs (1804-1878), who came here in 1839 would be one of several competent "ministers" who officiated in this country as rabbis, expanded their role as preachers and publicists, and attained influence. Isaacs was eager to exercise leadership. Born in Holland, he grew up in London, where his father had settled after undergoing economic reverses. There were five sons in the family; four of them were to become ministers. Isaacs taught in some of London's Jewish welfare and educational institutions before coming here to serve Bnai Jeshurun in New York. There he preached in English about once a month; his was the first Ashkenazic congregation in the United States to introduce regular sermons (Leeser had been preaching in Philadelphia since 1830, but his was a Sephardic synagog). In 1840 a year after Isaacs landed, Baltimore elected Abraham Rice its rabbi. Rice was the first "real"—i.e. ordained—rabbi to take a post in this country; it was nearly 200 years after the Jew Solomon Franco landed in Boston at a time when Miles Standish and John Alden were still alive. A real rabbi with a *semikah*, a "diploma" of ordination giving him the authority "to teach and to judge," Rice was learned and pious enough but evinced no qualities of leadership; his following was small. This rabbinical newcomer was oriented to a religiously immutable Europe, whereas his contemporary Samuel Myer Isaacs, embraced the Anglo-Saxon world of culture and challenge.⁵

Jewish New Orleans, an urban frontier community if ever there was one throughout this period, employed lay "rabbis," spiritual guides who

may well have been more distinguished for unconventional ministries than for learning and orthodoxy. In a small community like Savannah, it would be decades before a full-time hazzan was employed; on occasion, the Savannah Jews may have contracted for the services of part-time functionaries. Jacob R. Cohen, who succeeded Seixas in Philadelphia, was a factotum who never fully succeeded in commanding the respect of his people. During the yellow fever epidemic of 1793, he fled the city as did thousands of others. This flight was held against him because he had promised to stay. Put your faith in God, he had told his flock; then he left town. Several hazzanim in Philadelphia and New York and other towns, too, had no other goal than to please their flock. Apparently they were content with their lot. They read and chaunted the prayers, were present at the rites of passage, and seem to have made few enemies. Whatever authority they exercised was very limited; the surviving records testify that they presented no programs to their board. If any of these ministers of the first half century after the adoption of the Federal Constitution hoped to be accepted as leaders, they were doomed to failure. The European and American Jewish tradition of lay domination and oligarchy was too strong. Inevitably, therefore, there would be conflict between lay boards and any minister who aspired to overt leadership in matters religious. Two officiants may well have had hopes that extended beyond the reader's desk; a third was determined to be no mere hireling. The first two were Seixas and Carvalho; the third was Isaac Leeser. Compared to their colonial predecessors, these three represent a new breed in American synagogues.⁶

The Rev. Emanuel Nunes Carvalho (1771-1817), a native of London, was a craftsman who worked in coral, jet, and amber. Influenced by the French Revolution and its English sympathizers, he became a liberal interested in democratic forms of government. Though many others in England also leaned to the left, his political views, it would appear, induced him to leave the kingdom. It was in London, very probably, that he gained some command of Oriental and modern languages; he was an educated man and continued his studies in later years. By 1799, he felt qualified to accept the position of minister in the Barbados congregation, The Scattered Israelites, and probably would have remained there if not for the climate. Yellow fever plagued the Caribbean islands. Leaving Barbados, he moved north to New York, where he taught Spanish and Hebrew to Jews and Gentiles and served as an instructor in Shearith Israel's day school from 1808-1811. Since there was no hope for a congregation of his own in New York—Seixas was still active—he moved on to Charleston, then the best post on the continent. There he was hazzan and schoolmaster till 1815, when he returned north to Philadelphia and served Mikveh Israel until his death. It was there that he published a He-

brew grammar and worked on a Hebrew and Aramaic dictionary, which apparently was not finished; certainly it was not printed. As he had done in Charleston, in Philadelphia, too, he ran a private academy where Jewish as well as general subjects were taught. Like all hazzanim who had a command of English, he was called upon to make an occasional address. In 1816, after the death of Seixas with whom he had worked in New York, he wrote a eulogy, which was printed. The Philadelphians were interested; Seixas had been their minister between 1780 and 1784. Carvalho's well written tribute is prefaced by a quotation from Milton's *Paradise Lost*:

Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified,
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal.⁷

This was the first printed discourse delivered by a Jewish clergyman in Philadelphia. Since the position in Charleston was considered superior to the one in Philadelphia, why did he leave it? Was it the threat of yellow fever, or was there some other reason? While in Charleston, Carvalho had trained a children's choir and then for reasons at present unknown discontinued it; when the board asked him to revive it, he refused. There are no extant minutes; they have long since been destroyed. It is not known what happened, but it does seem that Carvalho was determined to question the authority of the board; the result was censure and a brief suspension. He and his sympathizers appeared at a meeting of the larger executive committee, and when a petition they presented was rejected, a miniature riot ensued in which the hazzan, too, was beaten—if not clubbed. It is a pity that so very little is known of this uprising in which the protesters were referred to by a contemporary as "rabble" and "vagrant Jews."⁸

GERSHOM SEIXAS AS LEADER

In a letter from Charleston to Uncle Naphtali Phillips, of New York, in 1812, Mordecai Noah said that Carvalho should have taken a lesson from Seixas, a man who enjoyed the respect of his congregation and the public at large. In modern American Jewish historical literature, Seixas is praised as a spiritual leader. To what extent does he deserve his reputation? How much influence did he exert on his board, on his congregants, on American Jewry? If he was indeed a leader, how did he demonstrate his leadership? Of one thing there can be no question; this man was an ardent Jew. In 1811, then sixty-six years of age and ill, he traveled north to Canada for thirty-four days on a religious mission; he performed four circumcisions, two on children and two on adults. (One of the adults was forty-one: this can be none other than Ezekiel Hart, who was later twice

elected to the Lower Canada House of Commons, but was refused a seat because he was a Jew. Ezekiel had never been circumcised because he lived in a small Quebec town, Three Rivers, where no mohel [circumciser] was available.) In 1768, Seixas had been appointed hazzan of Shearith Israel at the age of twenty-two. With the exception of the four years in Connecticut exile with his New York friends and the four years as rabbi in Philadelphia at Mikveh Israel, he served Shearith Israel till his death in 1816. An autodidact, he was well read in English literature, including the English Deists. His Hebrew training was received in the local Jewish day school, but he certainly improved himself by constant study and was able to consult the standard rabbinic code, the *Shulhan Arukh* and to write a passable Hebrew—no mean achievement for an American of that generation. He wrote the Hebrew graduation oration which nineteen-year-old Sampson Simson delivered at Columbia College in 1800. When important questions of rabbinic law were raised, Seixas and the board could always consult some learned Jew in town. In 1784, after the War, Seixas returned to New York. As a minister, he received an automatic appointment to the board of Columbia College; the Gentiles recognized him as a clergyman on a par with their own officiants. Even in Philadelphia, where he served an all-American synagogue, he was accorded or assumed the title of rabbi. This was true also of his successor, Jacob R. Cohen.⁹

This New York rabbi was a humanitarian, concerned not only with his own people but also with the needs of the larger community. As a creative social worker, he helped establish a Jewish sick-care and burial society; he labored for years as an educator in the school which Shearith Israel conducted. In response to requests from the government, he delivered a formal address when a public fast or intercessory service was held in the synagogue. On one occasion, for instance, he gave a Thanksgiving address; on another he appealed for funds to support war victims, and he delivered the requisite talk when the Federal Constitution was finally adopted. It is perhaps not to his credit that no one could take offense at anything he said.

His theology? He was traditional without equivocation, a “fundamentalist,” we might say. At no time did he ever compromise his orthodoxy. God had revealed himself to his Chosen People; the Hebrew Bible bears witness to that. It is the privilege of the Jew to bring the only true gospel to the world. Because the Jews have been unfaithful to the divine charge, they are now in exile and will remain rejected until they repent and follow God’s Law. Then and only then will the Holy One Blessed Be He send his Messiah, the Son of David, to lead them in triumph back to the Promised Land. God, at the end of days, will raise up all the dead; the wicked will be punished; the good will live on forever.

This, very briefly, was what he believed, but Seixas was Janus-faced; he embraced not only the past, but also the future; he was a modern man, on whom the Enlightenment, too, had left its mark. In consonance with Judaism and some Protestant thinkers, he believed in a benevolent deity and in the perfectibility of man. Living as he did in a Calvinistic Christian milieu, he quite unsurprisingly flirted at times with such concepts as depravity and original sin; sin was something real for him. He was fully cognizant of the new approaches of the sciences, of the ethical teachings of the Deists, of the demands of reason. In his own traditionalist way, he tried to come to terms with all thinking that threatened Orthodoxy. Because he was at least aware of the problems facing Jewish Orthodoxy, he may be denominated the country's first modern Jewish clergyman.

His rootedness in Anglo-Saxon amenities cannot be questioned, for he could boast of three generations of ancestors in the British colonies. Born into both the Sephardic and Ashkenazic worlds, he enjoyed the best in both—the spiritual and the gastronomic. This man loved food, particularly ma's cooking; his wife's culinary works of art are described glowingly in his letters, her fricassees, her beautifully roasted duck, her sausages and spinach, her stews and potatoes, the halibut and asparagus, the bread fritter, as large as a plate, with Madeira sauce. Maybe he had earned his "rheumatick complaint." In the bosom of his family, he was jocular, charming; his children loved him. Seixas was an exemplary product of the American Jewish melting pot: he was Ashkenazic and Sephardic in ancestry and probably knew as many Yiddish as Spanish-Portuguese words. His mother came of an Ashkenazic family, his schoolmates, teachers, and congregants were overwhelmingly Ashkenazic. Nevertheless, he was a proud Sephardi, too, almost patronizingly tolerant of the German newcomers and contemptuous of those who were uncouth. But he loved and respected his learned son-in-law, the German-born Israel Baer Kursheedt, who had studied at some of the best rabbinic academies in Central Europe. New York's rabbi was certainly modern in his constant insistence on Western decorum and the English vernacular; he was never unconscious of the surrounding Christian environment. Seixas was a fighter for political equality. In Philadelphia, he was a member of the committee which protested the constitutional denial of public office to Pennsylvania's Jewish citizens. This clergyman would not forget that he was a grown man in his fourth decade before his native state of New York emancipated its Jews, the first state in the Union to do so.¹⁰

SEIXAS AS LEADER

But now to the point: what was the character of his local and national leadership? It required years before Seixas began to receive a modicum of

recognition in his own congregation, from his own board. Little note was taken of him during his ministry in the immediate postrevolutionary period, although on his return to New York to take up his work in 1784 it was he whom the parnas designated to address the members and to beg them to conduct themselves decorously. This native son had many friends in the congregation; he was an excellent pastor; many loved and respected him, and this respect was to become veneration as the years passed and his students became members of the congregational board. All this took time. In 1785, just a year after the trek back from Philadelphia, he received only 14 out of the 25 votes cast. Why no reelection by acclamation? In every congregation, there were always members ready to vent their frustrations on the incumbent pastor. The Christians, New York's elite whom he met at Columbia, liked him, and after his death, the Columbia College board commissioned the striking of a portrait medallion to honor his memory. The Latin legend on the rim of the coin reads: "Gershom M. Seixas, Priest of the Hebrew Congregation of New York." The portrait is eloquent testimony to the respect accorded him by his Gentile friends. His status among Gentiles and Jews alike was enviable; he was something of an aristocrat at a time when many of his congregants were immigrants. People admired him for his personal integrity, his graciousness, his insistence on the dignity of his office and his person.¹¹

He was no scholar, no giant intellect, but his contemporaries sensed that he was a gentleman, a man of character. Public opinion, if nothing else, required that New York Jewry have a religious representative, an articulate one; Seixas supplied that need. His position brought him a degree of respect from almost everyone, since Shearith Israel was the oldest congregation in the country. A state law enacted in 1784 equated the Jewish clergyman with Christian ministers; Seixas enjoyed that recognition. Whether the board of the congregation liked it or not, it had to accept that equation. All hazzanim in the United States craved respect. Carvalho, in his eulogy of the New York minister, refers to him not as a hazzan but as a pastor, a reverend. Seixas, one suspects, yearned for more authority, more recognition from his board, yet knew that this was unrealistic. But he was no supine factotum; his relations with his board were not completely harmonious, for he protested more than once that his salary was inadequate. A suggestion he once made that Christians be called into arbitrate the question of emoluments has all the indicium of an implicit threat, but he made no real issue of this matter; he knew that Shearith Israel had budgetary problems. Fully aware of Seixas's influence with the rank and file—and also, of course the power of his extended family—the board found it advisable to walk softly where he was concerned.¹²

In their search for an increase in official status, Seixas and his fellow-hazzanim were never successful. Boards and most members believed that their worship leader was an underling, an employee delegated to read, to do a job which almost any layman could do. American and European traditions of autocratic lay control—certainly among Jews—was deeply rooted. Owing to the built-in safeguards which restricted authority to the board, there was no possibility in this country of real leadership for any hazzan. Limited as it would always be for the minister, leadership could be manifested only through the personality of the incumbent; that is how Seixas's influence increased with the years. After his death, three eulogies were delivered and published; no one could doubt that he was the most respected hazzan of his generation. In no small measure, it was he who laid the foundation in this country for the ultimate emergence of the rabbi as an important officiant, a potential religious communal leader. National leadership? As pastor, reader, and occasional preacher in New York, Seixas himself had no pretensions to national leadership, and he achieved none. America's Jewish communities all knew and admired him as an exemplary figure. Compared to his notable Christian contemporaries, this good man does not loom large; he was not of the calibre of a Francis Asbury, a John Carroll, a Timothy Dwight, a Lyman Beecher, a William Ellery Channing. What, then, if anything, did Seixas achieve? He helped to further a native American orthodoxy, one able to survive and even to prosper on American soil.¹³

ISAAC LEESER

BIOGRAPHY

Time brings perspective; today the historian can affirm: Seixas was a good rabbi; Leeser, a great one. Leeser served as hazzan at Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia from 1829 to 1850. He was far more important than the more attractive Seixas in his effect on American Jewish life. The New York hazzan was a man of the eighteenth-century; Leeser was a man of the nineteenth-century who faced the twentieth. Was Leeser a national Jewish leader? The question must be dwelt with in detail. Who was Leeser? He was a German immigrant, a native of the village of Neuenkirchen in Westphalia. His mother died when he was a child; it was not long before his father and grandmother followed her to the grave. Thus he grew up as an orphan, an unhappy one, it would seem. The fact that he was an orphan was to influence him profoundly throughout life; this aloneness colored his thinking and his behavior. The youngster was fortunate—and this he was only too willing to admit—that people rallied to help him. They saw to it that he received a rather good general education,

including instruction in a high school (gymnasium). A voracious reader, by the time he emigrated he had gained some training in the ancient classics as well as French, and some Spanish (German, of course, was his mother tongue). The eager student had read widely in belles lettres and history. For a German Jew of the early nineteenth century, his was a better than average education. The Westphalian youngster also learned to read some Talmud—not much, to be sure—and could consult the *Shulhan Arukh*, Jewry's most popular code. His German brother-in-law wrote to him in Hebrew, and scholarly men in this country addressed him in the Sacred Tongue. The numerous Hebrew articles which appeared in his magazine, *The Occident*, were apparently all edited by him. Hebrew, said Leeser, is a national tongue; it ties all Jews together.

He was no Jewish scholar as the academicians define the term, but the published catalogue of his library evidences that he had an understanding of the fast developing Science of Judaism, the new critical examination of Jewish history and literature. Yet this innovative approach to tradition, this judgmental evaluative scrutiny, did not move him to the left. Leeser was definitely aware of the Enlightenment literature, but it failed to pull him away from his orthodox moorings. While still young and impressionable, he had come under the—clearly lasting—influence of educated conservatives, both Jews and Catholics. His Jewish teachers were opposed to the new Reform Judaism, which had made its first appearance in his native Westphalia. None of them was an obscurantist; indeed they were modernists in their eagerness to embrace learning. Abraham Sutro, chief rabbi of Muenster and Mark, was wedded to Orthodoxy, but at home in modern disciplines, and it was to Sutro that Leeser dedicated his ten volumes of sermons: “to you it is chiefly owing that I ever ventured to undertake the task of a public teacher.”¹⁴

Like thousands of others, Leeser came to the United States to make his fortune and then return to the Fatherland—and, like most, he, too, remained. Uncle Zalma Rehiné brought the seventeen- or eighteen-year-old youngster to the United States, to Richmond. Rehiné, an old-timer had come here in the early postrevolutionary days, had married a niece of Gershom Seixas, and had become a member of Richmond's Sephardic Beth Shalome. In Richmond, then, the Ashkenazic Leeser was exposed to strong American Sephardic traditions, which appealed to him so much that he became a devoted Sephardi ritually. His strong religious commitments led him to learn the Sephardic ritual and chants, read constantly both in the Jewish and general field, and even serve at times as a voluntary reader in the synagogue. In his studies, he was advised by his uncle and the more learned Jacob Mordecai. For the first four or five years after his arrival in Richmond, he clerked for Uncle Zalma, served briefly in the militia, and played with the thought of studying pharmacy or medicine. Busi-

ness was certainly not his *métier*. Loving the South and its lifestyle he would never become an abolitionist, though he was not pro-slavery; forty years later, when Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court House, Leeser was shocked. It was in 1828 that he read an anti-Jewish article which had appeared in the London *Quarterly Review*; he had probably seen a reprint in New York's *Journal of Commerce*. Angry at this Judeophobic attack on his people and his faith, he published an answer in Richmond's *Constitutional Whig* beginning with January 8, 1829. This was a tour de force for a twenty-two-year-old youngster who had landed but four years earlier. One may surmise that he had been helped by Jacob Mordecai and Baruch H. Judah, librarian of the Richmond Library Association. The *Whig's* Gentile editor, impressed by the young immigrant, had no doubt polished a paragraph or two.

Leeser's articles brought him a degree of local and even national recognition on the part of Jews. It was at this time too, that Philadelphia, looking for a hazzan, invited him to take the job as reader and school-teacher at Mikveh Israel. The salary offered him was quite good, but after his election the young clerical aspirant found that it had been cut; the board was a thrifty lot. Again encouraged by Mordecai and Uncle Zalma, Leeser took the job; he was interested in Jewish culture and education; he was very ambitious; he craved recognition. What the congregation soon found out was that it had hired a very unhappy man. Five years after going to Philadelphia, he was stricken with smallpox, which pitted his face and only reinforced the discomfiture of this awkward, morose, introverted man. Leeser was constantly ill, neurotic, inclined to paranoia. He believed that people were against him—and many were—yet in 1837, after a fire which destroyed some of his printed books, six men in the congregation lent him money to reprint his works. Certainly these congregants wanted to help him. He could be brutally frank, even abrasive in his relations with people, and never forgave an enemy. Celibacy had worn him to the bone. He had little capacity to make friends. There were people who respected and admired him; he was privileged to have a number of intimates, but there is very little evidence that he confided even in them. But he did have a dog and that is a good sign. The person with the least faith in Leeser was Leeser himself; possessed of a relentless inner drive, he was always trying to prove himself. There was no urbanity in this clergyman, no charisma, little ability to establish rapport with human beings, yet—notwithstanding the overwhelming uncertainties within him—he nursed a strong ego. All in all, he was an unheroic hero.¹⁵

LEESER'S WARS OF THE JEWS

From the very beginning, Leeser had trouble with his congregation; his hypersensitivity and quickness to take offense involved him in quarrels

with the board. Since he equated his clerical function with the Christian ministry, he hoped for respect and a degree of independence. The *adjunta* (board) looked upon him as an employee subordinate to its orders—which galled him. Because he had offended some, the board members fought him all the years he served the congregation. They denied him tenure, haggled constantly over salary, insisted on more pastoral calls, asked for improvements in the service, and manifested an indifference to the importance of the sermon. Apparently Leeser was no orator. Requests made by him were ignored; they censured him more than once. Some good souls questioned the wisdom of allowing the hazzan to live in a Christian home; others intimated that he was unduly friendly with his landlady. The board, very businesslike, insisted that he sign a bond for faithful performance of duty. Humiliated and infuriated by their demands, he sniped at them—subtly, to be sure—in his *Occident*. Relations between him and his congregation deteriorated, and he finally resigned in September, 1850. For the next seven years, he was without a pulpit until, in 1857, his friends and admirers founded a Sephardic congregation in Philadelphia and invited him to occupy the pulpit. The name they took is revealing: The True House of God (Beth El Emeth). The new congregation was kind and generous to its sick old hazzan who was happy to have a forum for his views. Leeser never forgave Mikveh Israel, and the congregants never regretted letting him go. They were very content with Sabato Morais, his successor. Morais, a genial, cultured Italian, thought the board autocratic, but worked with it harmoniously; he had no trouble securing the tenure denied Leeser: this is interesting! Simon Wolf, an eminent American communal worker, said that Mikveh Israel had tortured Leeser, that he was a martyr.

What was behind Leeser's feud with the congregation? The quirks of a neurotic? There is much more than this to the quarrels between the two. The ultimate conflict was between "church" and "state," between the clergy and the laity. As far as the present sources indicate, Leeser was the first Jew in this country to fight such a battle in the synagogue publicly, vigorously, and sacrificially. As a minister, he wanted to speak his mind fully in the pulpit; he insisted in vain on the right of the hazzan to appear before the board and congregants and address them on personal matters. Like most clergy, he sought to improve his position; he wanted better pay, a vacation, a long grace period if he were discharged. It was his belief that the shohet and the beadle were, to a degree at least, subject to his authority. With the congregational officiants in mind, there was no doubt where he stood; there could be but one skipper on a ship. Possibly the real underlying source of the contention between Leeser and his opponents was a cultural-religious one. The congregants would in no sense cooperate with him as he strove desperately to initiate new Jewish religious pro-

grams. He was completely frustrated. The board wanted a functionary to read the prayers, officiate at the life cycle ceremonies, and listen respectfully to the dicta of the board and congregants. It did not want a Jewish scholar or a spiritual leader.¹⁶

JEWES AND THEIR THEOLOGY

Leeser was a conforming traditionalist. His system of beliefs was not of his own making; it was the theology of most affiliated Jews, of those who accepted the Hebrew Bible as it had been interpreted by the rabbis throughout the ages. In a formal sense, Jewish religious doctrines were not authoritative; there was no hierarchy to impose belief in such matters. The liturgy included the twelfth-century Maimonidean articles of faith but this credo was but one man's theology. For many, the Maimunist creed was sacrosanct; for a few, it was a point of departure, but if there is a traditional Jewish confession of faith, this is it. Actually, theology was no matter of concern for American Jews; they took their doctrines for granted. They sang the *Yigdal*, a credal poem, without ever reflecting on its meaning, its theology; they were interested in the melody. Jews in the United States rarely argued on matters theological except with missionaries. There was a theological consensus; people would have agreed that a creed was a good thing to have but not to discuss. Then, wherein lay its importance? But this is what the Jews had believed for the past 3,000 years; this is why their ancestors had died at the stake; this is why they erected a barrier between themselves and the Gentiles. Christians believed in a loving divine Trinity, in which Christ played the most prominent role. Believe in Jesus and you will be saved. And the Christianity which in this generation confronted the American Jew? There were different and various streams of Christian thought here, for this was a period of religious ferment. There were evangelicals, liberals and radicals, Deists, rationalists, skeptics; Enlightenment influences were strong in the late eighteenth century and were to continue well into the nineteenth. Though Deism had declined its followers were still numerous. Many Gentiles indifferent to their inherited Christian faith, joined no church. Proportionately, there were certainly more Jews in the synagogue; it was for them an indispensable social institution. Though not a social center, it was always to remain the core institution for Jewish religionists. The advances of science and critical scholarship chipped away at Jewish orthodoxy, but left it unshaken here in America; the synagogue was permissive, tolerant, rarely inquisitorial.

Jews as a body resisted the advances of the Christian theological liberals; just as they ignored, almost contemptuously, any proselytizing tentatives of the evangelicals. Perceptive Jews, both laymen and clerics, how-

ever, were not unconscious of the fact that there was turmoil in the Christian world about them. Reacting to the radicalism of European confessional innovation, a Protestant counterreformation had set in here. Evangelical Christianity was reborn; the Second Great Awakening and the revivals brought thousands back to Christ and the gospels. Sects and communitarian idealists proliferated; faith and piety took on a new life. Not unmindful of the moral implications of the nineteenth century, orthodox Christians began manifesting a humanitarian philanthropic concern for the masses in every region of the world. New evangelical societies, interdenominational and voluntaristic, arose in the United States. There were Sunday schools, home and foreign missions, new seminaries, Bible and tract societies, and dozens of new Christian religious journals. Motivated by religious idealism, Christian organizations set out to help and save a suffering humanity. It was a grand design, an ethical outreach of almost breathtaking proportions.¹⁷

How did the liberal-radicals and the conservative Christian religious movements and societies influence Jews? Individuals, attuned to the best in the Gentile world about them, were affected. Leeser, in his *Instruction in the Mosaic Religion*, still deemed it imperative to wage war with the Deists who had made some inroads into Jewry. The schismatic Jewish Reformed Society founded at Charleston in 1824 was more than adequate evidence that radicalism had affected this cultured southern Jewish community profoundly. Yet, liberal Christian religionists like the Unitarians, the Universalists, and the Transcendentalists seem to have left Jews untouched spiritually, in all likelihood because these Christians had still not emancipated themselves from Christology and consequently could hold no charms for Jews. Protestants stressed the Bible and allowed every individual to interpret it as his mind and prejudices dictated—an invitation to sectarianism which the Jews rejected; they were too small to afford the luxury of atomization; they presented a solid front. The Jews, frowning on freedom of interpretation, stationed themselves to the right of Protestantism; for them the halakah, the Law, provided all answers. Protestants churches emphasized their differences; Jews were quite content to remain loyal to their own collective ethnos and tradition. Gentile communitarianism, with its centrifugality, left them untouched; all Jewry constituted a “community.” Any sectarian hankering Jews had were apparently satisfied by the constant synagogal secessions; these gave free play to Jewish centrifugal impulses. Inconsequential liturgical differences assumed importance; newcomers hastened to establish congregations based on country or region of origin; by 1840, various synagogues had been established in New York in which American-born, or English, or “Polish,” or German Jews played the leading role.

Right-wing Christian orthodoxy may well have confirmed Jews in their own unyielding adherence to traditional doctrines. Jews were exposed to Christian Evangelicalism on all sides. In general, the children of Israel preferred to avoid extremes on both the right and the left. There was very little spiritual ferment among them; revivalism left them cold at best. Mystery, grace, spontaneous emotionalism in prayer—all these were foreign to the American Jewish tradition of rationality, even though manifestations of the inward experience in the form of Hasidism were common in contemporary Eastern Europe. The Jews of the early American republic were not romantics—despite their prayers for the restoration of the ancient homeland; actually they were not looking backward; in a larger sense, their liturgical “Zionism” reflected a sanguine hope for the future; tomorrow will be better than today. American Protestants, in a curious mixture of theology and philanthropy, set out to save all human beings, but Jews were not concerned with all-encompassing humanitarian reforms; their problems were too immediate. Universalism has never been absent from Jewish liturgies—but first things first! Anxious for their own physical survival on this continent, most Jews limited themselves pragmatically to their welfare confraternities.¹⁸

Theology was all important for Protestants, but was no vital factor in the lives of most Jews; it posed no problem for American Jews who remained on the whole steadfastly oblivious of its existence, its challenges, its emotional and intellectual demands. Jews were not really concerned with salvation in the hereafter; they wanted security here within the bosom of their own group—this, though Judaism is a religion, with a theology of its own and, if confronted with the need to define itself doctrinally, could do so. In brief, *what* did American Jews believe? Actually, all traditional Jews of that day subscribed to commonly held Jewish doctrines: There is one God, the creator, unique, incorporeal, beneficent, omniscient, immutable, eternal; he has revealed Himself to mankind through the Torah, the Law, the Teaching to be understood only as interpreted by the rabbis through the ages. This Torah was given to the Chosen People with whom God covenanted at Sinai, and they have been elected by Him and, in His own good time, will be restored to their Promised Land; as of now, having sinned, they are in exile. God gave them free will to do good or evil; they chose evil and broke the covenant; they sinned and are being punished, for God rewards the good and punishes the wicked. When they observe God’s moral and ceremonial injunctions, when they repent, they will be forgiven, the messianic son of David will make his appearance, the Jews will return to the Land of Israel, the dead will rise and the just among them will live on forever in bliss. In essence, this theology is incorporated in the thirteen Maimonidean Articles of Faith, which can be understood as a polemical catechism directed

against Christianity and Islam: God alone (not Jesus) is worthy of worship; God has revealed Himself through Moses and biblical Prophets (not through Jesus or Mohammed); there will never be another Law (pace the New Testament and the Koran); ultimately, the Lord will send His Messiah and he will not be Jesus.¹⁹

THE RESTORATION AND “ZIONISM”

The twelfth of the thirteen Maimonidean articles reads: “I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah.” Did American Jews take seriously the coming of the Messiah and the Restoration? Sentimentally, yes, for Restoration means a reborn people living on their own soil and endowed with power and high status. That is why most American Hebrew congregational names are messianic in character: Jews are the Remnant of Israel who will be saved (Shearith Israel, New York); the Scattered Ones will be returned (Nidhe Israel, Baltimore). The hope of Israel (Mikveh Israel, Philadelphia and Savannah) is that the Dispersed of Judah (Nefut-sot Yehudah, New Orleans) will one day be restored. All traditional Jews in their synagogues prayed daily, as they do today, for a speedy return to Palestine. Was this merely a pious wish, or was it a genuinely political hope to be implemented speedily? With the exception of Mordecai Noah, there is no evidence that Jews of that day in America contemplated any sort of political action to establish a modern state; in that sense, there were no Zionists. Most Jews are likely to have read the Restoration passages and phrases mechanically, though a few did envisage a divine Restoration in their own day. One of these last, Noah, sketched the outlines for a contemporary political return, though the pre-Restoration training colony he proposed to establish in western New York State was certainly not devoid of commercialism. Political events in the United States and Europe from 1783 on stimulated some Jews and Christians to hope for a speedy Restoration through divine intervention; the political cataclysms they were witnessing in the age of the American and French revolutions and Napoleon were construed as the “birth pangs” of the Messiah.²⁰

If America has achieved independence, why not the Jews in Palestine? As early as 1784, a New York cantor, Van Oettingen, prayed that Jews might enjoy their freedom in a Restored Palestine even as the thirteen states have been emancipated. But the text of his petition to God shows that he is thinking in traditional religious, not political, terms; his prayer voices hope for the restoration of the sacrifices in the Jerusalem Temple and for the resurrection of the dead. From the 1790's on, a number of Christians in England and in the United States, too, believed that the millennium was at hand; the Messiah was ready to appear; at any moment, the Jews would be brought back to the land of their fathers.

Brochures and books calculating the speedy coming of the Messiah were reprinted here from the London originals of the 1790's. Seixas followed these messianic speculations carefully; among his papers are some notes of a European rabbi suggesting that the Messiah would make his appearance in 1783. Seixas, stimulated by the prevailing nationalistic sentiment in the North American republic, may have hoped for a speedy return of the Jews, but warned the members of his flock that God would not restore them until there was a moral reformation. Seixas proposed no political action. He was an American patriot; this was his country; the Restoration would have to come about through divine, miraculous action. Again, the Napoleonic wars furthering a version of the revolutionary program in Europe certainly encouraged some to hope for a new Jewish state in Palestine. There were rumors in the 1790's that Napoleon would reestablish the ancient United Kingdom of the Hebrews. In 1806, the emperor assembled a European congeries of Jewish notables and that same year convoked a Grand Sanhedrin on the pattern of the old Sanhedrin, though in this Jewish congress of sorts nothing was said about a Jewish state. Even so, some Jews could not help thinking in terms of a reborn Jewish Palestine. Seixas at the turn of the century and Noah during the first half of the 1800's reflect the messianic or "Zionistic" thinking of American Jewry. Though not untouched by immediate political events and hopes—in Noah's case, especially—their views were essentially traditional: God will restore us. Jews in those two generations, 1776-1840, may have flirted with the thought of a Third Jewish Commonwealth, but they did nothing. And what could they have done? God, after all, would have to carry the outcasts of Israel and the dispersed of Judah on eagles' wings back to the land of the patriarchs and the prophets, as He had promised in Holy Writ (Exod.19:4, Isa. 11:11ff.).²¹

LEESER AND HIS THEOLOGY

As far as the record indicates, Leeser had few if any problems in the congregation on the score of his theology. Undoubtedly, some members of the congregation stood to his left, but they were not vocal. A few may well have shaken their heads in disagreement when he preached against gift giving on Christmas. Was there no Santa Claus? Those in the synagogue who were unhappy with the complete Hebrew liturgy could always stay away; attendance at worship was not compulsory. Leeser's fight for more decorum could hardly have offended anyone. On the whole, he wanted no deviation from the "old paths . . . the good way" (Jer. 6:16). Where did he stand theologically? What was his creed? Like all Jews who prayed in the traditional synagogue, he was in full accord with the teachings of Maimonides as laid down in his thirteen articles of faith. Ac-

tually, wrote Leeser, the Jews have no formal profession of faith; the whole Hebrew Bible is the word of God—and, he admonished the unobservant, if you do not implement God’s teaching as incorporated in your copy of Holy Writ, then burn it! Anyone who denies the Torah will come to a bad end and might even perish on the gallows. God punishes sinners; if there are yellow fever and cholera epidemics, it is because God is angry. Reform Jews who ignore God’s commands . . . are an ungodly lot!²²

Christian theological concepts were never totally absent from the thinking and writing of notable American Jews. Leeser believed in original sin. When Adam transgressed God’s command, he was driven from the garden of Eden; the sin he committed is transmitted to his descendants in every generation. American Jews found it easy to adopt Christian theological phraseology. Seixas spoke of salvation, regeneration, grace; eulogizing the dead Seixas, Naphtali Phillips said that he had returned to the bosom of Abraham; Rebecca Gratz in her will spoke of God’s redeeming love. When Rebecca’s Female Hebrew Benevolent Society made an appeal for funds, it reminded fellow Jews that God loveth a cheerful giver; let us not be weary in well doing—phrases from the Christian gospels, the Epistles to the Corinthians and Galatians (II Corinthians, 9:7, Galatians, 6:9). The good ladies had attended schools where the New Testament was taught and memorized. Leeser made it quite clear that all the laws in the Mosaic Code, the Pentateuch, must be observed. It is immaterial that some of these ordinances cannot be justified rationally; the Jew has no choice; God’s commands must all be obeyed; the moral and the ritual prescriptions are equally important. When the Jews return to the Promised Land, Leeser said, they will reintroduce the biblically stipulated animal sacrifices, but—modern as he was—he rationalized the motivation: sacrifices cannot atone for sin; they are an expression of thanks.²³

When the Restoration dawns, must all Jews go back to the Land of Israel? What of the happy Jews in America? Leeser posed and then answered this question. The Restoration will come, but not every Jew will return. Even so, he said, those who remain behind must nurture the traditions of the Jewish people; Hebrew must be taught; kinship must be stressed. The Diaspora has in no sense been a loss where the Gentiles are concerned; they have been benefited by the Dispersion of the Jews, for the knowledge of God has been spread everywhere. The Jews are called upon to serve as moral examples to all the nations. In essence, Leeser was preaching the “mission” of the Jews. Only the Jews possess God’s Law, the original ethical code, a “Teaching” superior to all others. God has chosen the Jew to be a messenger to the world. This is why the Jews are the Chosen People. They have a mission to mankind:

We are God's chosen race . . . that we
might become . . . the moral reformers of the world.

The world will yet accept this Law as the Jew interprets it. Leeser hoped to see a day when the pulpits of a thousand American synagogues would resound to the eloquence of American-born preachers and writers: "This country, let my readers believe me," he wrote, "is emphatically the one where Israel is to prepare itself for its glorious mission of regenerating mankind." The greatest contribution the Jews have made to humanity and civilization is the Jewish religion. Why then Restoration, Return to Jerusalem? There is no peace on earth; Christianity has never brought rest for mankind. There is no peace anywhere. A messianic redemption is imperative if we are to see an end to wars. This is what Leeser said in the wake of the American Civil War, a catastrophe in which hundreds of thousands died or were maimed.²⁴

As a modern man, Leeser was determined to enjoy the best of the two worlds he knew, the world of miracles and the world of reality. Though committed to a miraculous divine Restoration, he adopted a realistic approach to the problems of Palestine. Disillusioned with the inefficient and wasteful system of dispatching messengers from Palestine to solicit funds for its Jews, Leeser supported his colleagues in the effort to establish a national American collection agency with local branches. National appeals were made in the 1850's and the monies were sent to the English philanthropist Montefiore for disbursement. Leeser, like many other Jews of his day, objected to the doles parcelled out; he saw them as pauperizing the recipients and instead wanted the Jews of the Holy Land to return to the soil, to crafts, to self-supporting effort. This pragmatic attitude explains why he was willing to support Warder Cresson, the Quaker proselyte, who set out to teach farming to Palestinian Jews. The Jewish unemployed and persecuted in the Diaspora, Leeser thought, will stream to an economically viable Palestine. Leeser's mind-set and way of life were conservative—in keeping with the counterreformation evangelicals among whom he lived—but he genuflected also in the direction of the sciences. The Law, written millennia ago, is true; Leeser—and Seixas, too—never questioned it, but both believed that science and religion were not necessarily hostile and could be congruent.²⁵

It was Leeser—much more than the less articulate Seixas—who laid the foundations for an American Jewish Orthodoxy. Unwittingly influenced by his German background, he helped Protestantize Judaism here in the United States. A preaching minister, he looked upon Judaism as a creed, a *Konfession*. Leeser, well read and intelligent, was fully aware of the political, religious, and social philosophies of his non-Jewish contemporaries. Like Seixas, he read what the liberals and radicals wrote, but remained firmly entrenched on the right. He was familiar with Calvinism

and other Protestant concepts and doctrines. As were all Jews, he was exposed to the surrounding Christian religiocultural milieu. His stress on the Bible was not typically Jewish; it is more characteristic of Christian, in particular Protestant, thought. Not Bible but postbiblical writings have been emphasized in rabbinical Judaism for the last 2,000 years. It is not too much to say that both Seixas and Leeser were American Jewish clergymen in a somewhat Protestant mold.

These two men were different from European rabbinic scholars, who interpreted the Bible undeviatingly in talmudic terms. Seixas knew very little Talmud, Leeser not much more. In theory and in practice, both men accepted the rabbinic codes and doctrines without reservation, but each leaned heavily on the Hebrew Bible and held it the basic Jewish book. It is worth noting that they stressed the Bible's ethical rather than its ritual precepts and ceremonies. In this way both leaders furthered an Orthodoxy that would mesh with the European Enlightenment, egalitarianism, and the accepted civilities. Both of them insisted on a worship service of dignity and decorum. Leeser, by 1840, had become the country's outstanding Jewish theologian. Though devout, he was no bigot. Reminiscent of the Christian antebellum gentlemen theologians who preached in the towns and cities, he believed his religion a reasonable one. Leeser reached out to the world; in his catechisms and sermons, he emphasized the dignity of all human beings and spoke of the duties the Jew owed his fellowman. In general, Leeser must be counted a universalist; he had a strong sympathy for proselytes; the mission of the Jew, as he saw it, was to welcome everyone into Judaism. It was wrong to quarrel about theological differences; it was sinful to hate others because they cherished dissimilar beliefs. This Philadelphian preached peace, the love of neighbor, the need to help the poor and the sick; he talked of aiding one's enemy. When Lincoln died Leeser recited the memorial prayer for him, a prayer generally reserved for Jews. Anticipating criticism for memorializing a Christian, the martyred president, Leeser said that all men are created in the image of God and all have a claim on his mercy, even if not Jews.²⁶

ISAAC LEESER, MODERNIST

Leeser was wholly Orthodox and wholly modern. It was his good fortune to have been reared in Westphalia at the time the Jews were emancipated under French occupation. He was accustomed to political equality; and the German reaction after the fall of Napoleon served to confirm him in his love of liberty. Undoubtedly, too, his love of freedom was heightened by his sponsor Sutro who fought for rights and immunities after Prussian rule had been restored. Leeser used two German textbooks as sources for two of his religious works; both authors, Johlson and Kley, were to the left of Leeser. They were no ghetto Jews and he was no ghetto Jew. As a

modern man, he would certainly have frowned on the zealotry of a younger contemporary, the Hungarian rabbi, Hillel Lichtenstein (1815-1891), who was opposed to modern secular education and denounced the new rabbinical seminaries where rabbis were trained to confront the problems of contemporary society. This extremist objected also to the playing of musical instruments and to games like chess and checkers. Lichtenstein had no sympathy for his colleagues in the Austria-Hungarian Empire who fought to remove political disabilities. The Jew is in Exile and must suffer until God is ready to redeem him. One thing the two clergymen did share was an aversion to Reform Judaism. Leeser, however, did want to institute certain reforms in the traditional services; he, like many observant Jews, favored abolition of money offerings during worship. Donations distorted the prayerful mood and lengthened the services, while their requirement from those called to the Torah penalized worshippers and, indirectly, rewarded those who absented themselves.²⁷

In short, Leeser wanted more decorum, more dignity, more reverence. He objected to the old custom of swaying followed by most Jews as they prayed. Unintelligible liturgical poetical compositions (*piyyutim*) could well be omitted. He, like some others, was ready to exclude prayer book passages which were out of harmony with the times; what he had in mind were prayers reflecting medieval persecutions and breathing a desire for revenge. (What would he have thought of the German Holocaust with its millions of victims?) Rationalism was not absent from his teachings, and he attacked superstitions, although he did not stop to define them. There is no reason why a Jew cannot observe the Sabbath and the dietary laws meticulously and yet be a cultured educated person! In his own way, Leeser attempted a symbiosis of science and religion; science, in his view, helps expound the word of God. Jewish beliefs and practices must be founded on reason, said Leeser, and in the same breath maintained that revelation takes precedence over logic. This antinomy apparently posed no problem for him. Leeser's positive approach to the Gentile world in which he lived made it possible for him to admire and respect Christians, to cultivate their friendship. (In his Westphalian days, he had read and studied the New Testament in a Catholic secondary school. This was most unusual.) A man, as he saw it, has no right to quarrel over religion; belief is a matter which concerns the individual and his conscience.²⁸

LEESER, HOME MISSIONARY

In I Corinthians 9:22, Saul of Tarsus said that he was all things to all men; Leeser, a latter-day "missionary," was all things to the Jews, for he functioned as rabbi and hazzan and was also prominent as author, preacher, publicist, apologete, communal worker, educator, and national

leader. He was a true missionary, for he set out to save all American Jews for Judaism. To effect his purpose, he traveled thousands of miles all over the eastern half of the United States. Asbury, the Methodist, is said to have preached about 16,000 sermons and to have traveled 300,000 miles in pre-railroad days—at an annual salary of \$64. The Philadelphia rabbi's record is not comparable, but he was the first effective American Jewish home missionary; American Jewry was well aware of his presence. It seems indisputable that Leeser was influenced by the feverish Protestant religious activity. Important denominations were establishing educational societies; more than twenty-five theological seminaries had been founded by 1840. Leeser's was a day of Christian tracts, publications, and Bible associations. Missionary organizations dedicated to bringing the gospel to American and transoceanic Gentiles, infidels, were now established. Leeser would have liked to help the Chinese Jews and bring them the solace of Jewish tradition.²⁹

LEESER, PREACHER

In his work as a "home" missionary—home means American religious activity in contrast to foreign missions—Leeser emphasized preaching. Preaching, in one form or another, was not new in the synagogue; it is probably as old as the synagogue itself. The Reformers in Germany had emphasized the vernacular sermon ever since the first decade of the nineteenth century in Leeser's native Westphalia. Hortatory addresses had been delivered occasionally in London's Sephardic Bevis Marks since the 1700's; more regular preaching was introduced with the dawn of the nineteenth century. Preaching was not entirely new even in the American synagogue, for under British rule and subsequently under the new American republic, all congregations, Christian and Jewish, were called upon to hold special services of thanksgiving and humiliation, thanksgiving for good harvests and military victory; humiliation, in the face of epidemics and disasters. Eulogies were delivered for deceased rabbis; sermons were preached by laymen and by the clergy when synagogues were dedicated. After the Richmond theatre burnt down on the day following Christmas, 1811, taking dozens of lives, Samuel Mordecai was called upon to memorialize Jews who had perished. Speaking for his auditors in excellent English on January 1, 1812, he voiced their gratitude to God who had spared them. Let them now thank Heaven by living lives of virtue. The only explicitly Jewish note in this brief appeal was Mordecai's assurance to bereaved kin that those who had died were now enjoying eternal bliss in the bosom of Israel. Sermons, lectures, and orations were by no means unusual in the first two decades of the 1800's in the five synagogues. The Reformers in Charleston, influenced by the rebirth of the sermon in Germany, advocated regular preaching in 1824, though there is no evidence

that preaching was a regular part of their services. A year later, in his grandiloquent proclamation calling upon the Jews of the world to establish a colony in New York state, Noah encouraged them to preach in the vernacular. New York's Bnai Jeshurun regaled its members with an occasional religious talk or lecture. Had any objection to preaching been interposed by conservatives, it could have been pointed out that Hamburg's meticulously observant Chief Rabbi, Isaac Bernays, was preaching in German to his followers.³⁰

In general, no regular preaching was known in American Jewish synagogues before the 1840's. Hazzanim were rarely able to preach, and congregations were not ready to listen. Sermons prolonged an already lengthy service; sermons were thought to be Christian or Reformist, hence suspect. In 1850, when Leeser severed his connection with Mikveh Israel, an anonymous pamphleteer attacked him with the claim that he had put too much emphasis on his homily and too little on the service itself. Preaching in that theological age was important to Christians, but not to Jews; the supplications in the venerable prayer book supplied their spiritual wants. They enjoyed rattling off the familiar Hebrew petitions, entreaties, and psalms, familiar to them since their childhood. Leeser had other aims; he was determined to edify his people by using the vernacular. Without education and understanding, without admonition in a language Jews knew, there could be no survival for them. He was almost obsessed with the need to preach. Was this determination to be heard tied up with his personal problems of expression and recognition? The young Leeser preached his first sermon on June 2, 1830, interpolating it toward the end of the service before the final hymn. Later some of his talks were even delivered after the last hymn; they were actually not part of the worship. Many years later Leeser said, almost apologetically, that he had initiated his preaching because friends had asked him to do so. This may be taken with a grain of salt.³¹

Though the board had hired him to chaunt, not to preach, Leeser was determined to talk and was equally insistent that the pulpit be free. He fought for that freedom, but was never successful. There were times he had to submit his manuscript in advance to the trustees. At the most, he never preached more than once a month. He did not believe in preaching every Sabbath; there was "no profit or pleasure" for auditors who were constantly harangued. In his effort to induce the board to make the sermon part of the service, he seems to have had the support of the women. It was not until 1843, thirteen years after his first address, that the congregation agreed to integrate the homily into the ritual. He had kept after his people, pointing out to them that sermons were then being preached in England and in America, in prestigious synagogues. One may venture the opinion that he restructured the American Jewish rabbinate from a schol-

arly-judicial one to a preacher-educator one. How effective was this pioneer? Did he influence other congregations to follow in his footsteps and introduce the sermon? Since he was the first to preach regularly, other hazzanim may have cited his example if they were eager to address their congregants. But only a few were; Samuel M. Isaacs of New York seems to have been the only other American Jewish clergyman who preached regularly before 1840. Rebecca Gratz was impressed by Leeser's preaching, and she was a discriminating judge. No later than the 1850's, in congregations where there was no minister, a layman would occasionally read one of the published sermons of the Philadelphia rabbi. Christians, bred on edificatory literature, bought and read his published works, including his sermons.³²

LEESER, CREATIVE RELIGIOUS WRITER, APOLOGIST, AND PUBLISHER

Not only in his sermons but in almost everything he wrote and published, Leeser never forgot that he was an apologete for traditional Judaism. In talking to his congregants and to other Jews, he dwelt on the importance of their ancient heritage. Judaism was God's chosen religion; the Jews were his darlings. Thus he encouraged his people to believe in themselves and to respect the religion they professed. He was always eager to inculcate in them a degree of pride and to give them knowledge to refute their opponents. With equal zeal he defended his people against the misrepresentations which so often characterized Christian writings about Jews. There is no known report that Leeser ever spoke in a Christian church; thus he could not champion his faith from a Christian pulpit. In his dealings with Christians, he wrote much that was polemical and he attacked Gentiles for their unjust aspersions on his people. Was this type of apologetics necessary in America? Leeser certainly thought so, and he was right. Prejudice against Jews was strong throughout the 1800's. Most Christians were convinced that, unless these infidels turned to Jesus Christ, they would be damned eternally. It was not until the very year of Leeser's death, 1868, that North Carolina opened all elective offices to Jews; it would still be another nine years before all disabilities were removed from Catholics and Jews in New Hampshire. A number of Leeser's works were written deliberately to refute attacks on Jews and Judaism. Whether Leeser ultimately accomplished anything in this realm is moot, but he advocated and pursued a vigorous policy of counteraccusation. In 1844, when Israel Daniel Rupp invited him to write about Judaism, he responded with alacrity. Though in no sense a polemicist by nature, he never failed to let the Gentile world know that the laws of the Hebrew Bible had not been abrogated, that Jesus was not the Messiah, that Jews required no mediator. Defending his people against a common accusation in a day when eighteenth-century physiocratism was still very

much alive, he told his Christian readers that Jews were not averse to agricultural labor; they were interested in what today would be called the social sciences and evinced proficiency, if given the chance. If Jews were disliked, the real reason was envy; persecutions in the past were motivated by the desire to plunder Jewry. The reason the Scattered People had not disappeared was that they could not be destroyed; the God who had dispersed them was the God who preserved them. Were the Jews clannish? What did Gentiles expect? They treat the Jews worse than animals. But Jews were good to one another.³³

It is not easy to distinguish between Leeser the educator and Leeser the apologete. His sermons, his essays, his textbooks, his occasional addresses, all his works were intended to edify, to defend, to educate. His first work, *Instruction to the Mosaic Religion*, was a textbook; his next, *The Jews and the Mosaic Law*, was an apologia, indeed the first such book written in this country by a Jew. This work, a survey of Jewish practices and beliefs, was intended for both Jews and Christians. The important word in these two publications is "Mosaic." Leeser sought to emphasize that Jews followed the law of Moses—not the law of Jesus. The polemical nuance here must be noted. By 1837, he had published three volumes of sermons and addresses and in 1867, shortly before he died, had the pleasure of watching a ten-volume edition of his discourses and occasional talks roll off the presses. These ten volumes remain among antebellum Jewry's most important literary monuments. They are, historically, a priceless source. His Hebrew and English edition of the Sephardic prayer books, six volumes in all, appeared in 1837-1838. It was Leeser's hope that this liturgy would be accepted as the standard American Jewish prayer book. This eager educator published a *Hebrew Reader* in 1838 and hoped to follow up this publication with a Hebrew grammar and a volume of readings in the sacred tongue of his ancestors. He wanted Jewish children to study Hebrew in order to understand the meaning of the prayers that they read in the synagogue. It was his hope that the new generation would be able to read the Hebrew Bible in the original and understand its contents. The *Hebrew Reader* enjoyed scant success; the other books in the proposed series never appeared; parents were content if their sons could read Hebrew mechanically—one is almost tempted to say that, for many Jews, there was an inverse ratio between attachment to Hebrew and the capacity to fathom its meaning.³⁴

In 1839, Leeser produced a second catechism; he called it a *Catechism for Younger Children*. It was a reworking of an earlier German work. Like his *Hebrew Reader*, it was written for the Jewish Sunday School, opened just a year earlier by Rebecca Gratz. Leeser unfortunately lacked the ability to write books for children; it was not in him. He himself realized this deficiency, and no doubt at his suggestion two sisters, Miss Simha Cohen

Peixotto and Mrs. Rachel Pyke, prepared textbooks that were more acceptable. Leeser was there to help them. Rachel's text was a revision of one published by the Protestant American Sunday School Union. No wonder that the Jewish generation was tintured verbally with Protestantism. Simha's book was popular; Sister Rachel's rhymed catechism was also well received by the youngsters. It was easy to memorize:

- Q. What should your wish be when you die?
 A. That God may take me when I die
 to live with him above the sky.³⁵

In 1842, Leeser edited and published Grace Aguilar's *Shema Yisrael: The Spirit of Judaism*. Miss Aguilar, a brilliant London Jew of Sephardic ancestry, was known for her poetry, fiction, and books on religion. After her death at the age of thirty-one in 1847, her family published an eight-volume edition of her writings. Her *Shema Yisrael* touches on God's love for man, the Ten Commandments, and the importance of teaching religion to children. The Philadelphia hazzan pointed out that Miss Aguilar's book was directed in part to women, and he agreed that there was much women could do to hasten the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Philadelphian was pleased with this London Daughter of Israel—so he called her—because she took time to write a Jewish book instead of some secular piece which would have been far more lucrative. But he also voiced his disagreement with her failure to put sufficient emphasis on the teachings of the postbiblical rabbis. For Leeser, the rabbinical interpretations of the Bible were authoritative unless they contradicted the Scriptures and common sense. The historical importance of *Shema Yisrael* lies in the fact that Leeser published and annotated her work here in America from a manuscript sent him by this gifted Englishwoman. It may well have been the first time that American Jews met a cultural challenge which English Jewry had ignored—the first faint intimation of an ultimate American Jewish hegemony.³⁶

The same year, 1842, Leeser sent out a prospectus announcing his intention to publish a Jewish magazine. By 1840, the Anglo-Saxons on this continent had already published 850 religious journals; the Jews had published only one which survived but two years. Leeser wanted to reach out and influence all of American Jewry, not merely the Philadelphians. The Jews of Germany, we know, were publishing excellent journals, among them *Die Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* and *Der Orient*; English Jews were enjoying *The Jewish Chronicle*. Leeser's periodical, the first permanent Jewish magazine in America, was called *The Occident and the American Jewish Advocate*. The title tells a story. The paper was addressed to the Jews in the United States and Canada and the Islands: the western periphery of World Jewry, hence the *Occident*—but Leeser also intended it to

be the Jewish counterpart of the *Christian Journal and Advocate*, the most important Protestant religious paper of that day. The *Occident*, a monthly, was of course religiously oriented; it set out to save American Judaism, to be the advocate for Jewish life, and to further Jewish literature and Jewish values in this country. Leeser wanted Jews to create a literature that would be both Jewish and American; this, too, meant something new.³⁷

Three years later, in 1845, with the aid of a Protestant Episcopal clergyman, Leeser published the first American Hebrew Bible with vowels; three years later, he issued the country's first *Book of Daily Prayers* according to the custom of the German and Polish Jews. Printing this Ashkenazic Hebrew-English work was tantamount to an admission that the Spanish-Portuguese rite he had earlier championed would never become the standard prayer book for American Jews; Ashkenazim, Central and East Europeans, had been arriving in substantial numbers since the late 1830's and far outnumbered the devotees of the Iberian worship style. There was no let-up for Leeser in his religio-cultural work. He kept pushing ahead; every three or four years at the latest a new book of his appeared. In 1850 he translated Joseph Schwarz's *Descriptive Geography and Brief Historical Sketch of Palestine*. Isaac Mayer Wise, in one of his expansive literary moods, claimed that Leeser had admitted to an inability to read unvocalized Hebrew; the translation of the Schwarz book from Hebrew and German proves Wise mistaken. Leeser had an excellent knowledge of biblical Hebrew and a working knowledge of rabbinic Hebrew. (Incidentally, the drawings in the Schwarz book were made by a Jew, probably an American. Graphic artists had begun to come here; as American Jewry increased in numbers, the community attracted technicians and skilled craftsmen from Europe.) In the 1850's Leeser published three notable works: the first, an English translation of Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem*; the second, a translation of the Hebrew Bible; the third, a polemical answer to those who sought to convert Jews.

Mendelssohn's imposing *Jerusalem* was an eloquent plea for freedom of religious expression; the English translation of the Hebrew Bible—what Christians know as the Old Testament—was the first by a Jew to appear in Anglo-Saxon lands; the polemic was published by Leeser in order to give Jews here the data to refute the claims of Christian disputants. Leeser published his translation of the Bible because he wanted to emancipate the Jews from the King James version which he deemed Christological. (In the previous century, Mendelssohn had done the same for German Jewry—in that case, it was Luther's version which seemed too Christological.) For the Philadelphia minister, no book was more important; this he believed in common with the millions of Christians about him, but, like his revered Mendelssohn, Leeser wanted a *Jewish Bible*, one that Jews could read and Christians, too, if they wanted to know what the

Hebrew text actually meant. As Leeser saw it: let the Jews now read their Bible if they want to know what has transpired in the past and what will surely happen in the future. God's will is reflected in his scriptures, Leeser never doubted. In translating the Bible Leeser leaned over backwards to reject many beautiful phrasings of the authorized Protestant version; some of his renditions, alas, are less felicitous and no more accurate.

The anti-Christian polemic which Mikveh Israel's hazzan published in 1853-1854 was entitled *A Series of Letters on the Evidences of Christianity*. The author was an eighteenth-century English merchant, Benjamin Dias Fernandes, the maternal great-grandfather of Grace Aguilar. Manuscript copies of these letters had circulated in this country among Jews during the eighteenth century; some had been published in Solomon H. Jackson's *The Jew*; others appeared over a period of many years in the *Occident* and were now collected and published in book form. Missionaries were always hammering away at the Jews, who had no material to defend themselves or to use in order to go on the offensive; now they were fully armed. Leeser had in mind editing a number of such works in a Jewish Controversial Library, but no other polemic was issued in this particular series. In 1860, however, he did republish a work on the Inquisition which had originally appeared in England in 1709 in Portuguese. The English translation, by Moses Mocatta, a London Reform Jew, dated from 1845; the book itself had been written by David Nieto (d.1728), a London Sephardic rabbi, who published it under a pseudonym, since Jews of the early eighteenth century were still afraid to engage openly in polemics in England. The place of publication had been given falsely as Turin, Italy. Even when Mocatta published his English translation, he distributed it privately; it would be another thirteen years before the first English Jew would be permitted to take his seat in Parliament. English Jewry was still not emancipated. The book in question, edited and reprinted in Philadelphia, was entitled, *The Inquisition and Judaism: A Sermon Address to Jewish Martyrs on the Occasion of an Auto da Fé at Lisbon, 1705, by the Archbishop of Cranganor, etc.* While the victims of this auto da fé were tied to the stake and before they were incinerated, they had to listen to the Archbishop's address—which covers ninety-three printed pages. Nieto's refutation, which follows the Archbishop's sermon, ran to over 120 pages. In his introductory "Note," Leeser said that it was still necessary to supply Jews with arguments when confronted by missionaries and other zealous Christians. English Jewry in Mocatta's time was also plagued by the solicitations of the missionaries; their pertinacity may account for the need to translate this Nieto book and thus make its arsenal of arguments available to English Jews. Ignorant women and youth must be protected against the importunities of the soul snatchers. Inasmuch as the cautious Mocatta had published his book privately, it was not available for purchase in the bookstores.³⁸

Leeser continued to be productive in the 1860's, the last decade of his life. The year the Civil War erupted, he edited a work by one Sarah Harris, *Thoughts Suggested by Bible Texts, etc.*, a series of edificatory sermonettes followed by a prayer of an ethical nature. Three of the many themes treated here are neighborly love, immortality, truth and falsehood. As was his wont, when he saw a good English book, Leeser reprinted it. One questions very much if he ever bothered to seek permission from a copyright holder. Hester Rothschild's English translation of Jonas Ennery's French *Meditation and Prayers* (1859) was edited by Leeser in 1864. It was a religious manual containing prayers for the Sabbaths and weekdays, Holy Day petitions, and meditations for adults and children, for the sick and the dying. Especially interesting is the section which treated of the Mission of Israel: God has given Israel the task of teaching his divine truths to all the peoples of the earth. Hebrew is our national speech, important for it binds us all, but prayers in the vernacular are very much a Jewish tradition, Leeser said. He hoped—and this was also Ennery's intent—that these prayers would be used in the synagog and the home.³⁹

In 1864, Leeser wrote an introduction to the first American edition of Aguilar's *Jewish Faith*, which had first appeared at London in 1846. Another handbook which set out to edify youth in matters touching on religion and morals, it is in the form of a series of letters from an older woman to an adolescent girl, from Inez Villena to Annie Montague. These "Jewish" names are interesting. Leeser said outright that there was a demand for a book of this type. Was there indeed, or had he succeeded in convincing himself that Jews, particularly women, were inclined to the type of piety so prevalent then in Christian circles? Aguilar went out of her way in *Jewish Faith* to emphasize the "Old Testament" origin of the concept of personal immortality. Leeser affirmed her conviction. Modern biblical scholars would very probably disagree with both of them. Miss Aguilar, said Leeser, valued her religious works more than her novels; many modern readers would not share her priorities. Leeser's writings did not sell well, as he admitted. Were religious, moral and ethical works already unfashionable? It is difficult to know the answer. Leeser obviously thought that there was a financial and spiritual market for his wares and hewed persistently to the line he had drawn; American Judaism must be strengthened; he would supply the Jews with a library to answer their needs. That was his determination. Certainly most young ladies preferred love stories to moral meditations but no one in the antebellum period was comparable to Leeser. His vision was all encompassing; when the young Isaac Mayer Wise began to formulate his plans for a new Jewish America in 1849, he was only following in Leeser's footsteps.⁴⁰

LEESER'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

What did Leeser accomplish? What were his goals? He set out deliberately to give spiritual leadership to American Jewry and at the same time create the institutions and the texts that would further American Judaism. The American Jewish community he confronted in 1829 was less than 10,000 strong; it was nominally Orthodox, but there was lack of interest and there was a pronounced degree of assimilation. Analyzing the reason for this indifference, the Philadelphia hazzan attributed it to the love of money, the desire to escape Jewishness, and to pattern oneself on one's Gentile neighbors. It was, he said, a day when unbelief was fashionable. This man set out all alone, as it were, to revivify Jewry, to induce his people to adhere to the practices and beliefs of traditional Judaism. By 1840, the problem had been exacerbated by the arrival of the Germans. It was comforting that they tended to be observant, but they had to be acculturated, Americanized, without diminution of religious loyalties. Leeser was completely and utterly an Americanist; he was a patriot. In Richmond, where he had lived for five years, he was exposed to an Americanism of Jeffersonian hue and seems to have been all but completely de-Germanized. Jews in this country, he taught, must be public-spirited; they must zealously support America because here they enjoy rights denied them in other lands. Leeser himself evinced no sentimental attachment to Germany; he had landed in the United States but five years after anti-Jewish riots swept through the German states. He objected to the importation of German Jewish religious functionaries; the communities here, he believed, had to train their own communal servants. There was no reason to speak German; it was the language of a people who had oppressed the Jews. Retaining the German vernacular would only hinder the fusion of the Jewish natives and immigrants. He had set his mind on Americanizing and, though he did not think of it in such terms, Protestantizing Jewry where the amenities were concerned. He wanted an English sermon, he wanted quiet and decorum in worship. The service itself? It must remain completely in Hebrew. The Hebrew Bible? Instruction in it he saw as all-important.⁴¹

No later than the 1850's, Leeser worked to federate the local Jewish social welfare agencies. As one of Philadelphia's Jewish leaders he helped in the establishment of an orphan asylum, although, like others, he was fully aware of the value of home care for young unfortunates. He worked successfully to help organize a Jewish hospital and, what was no doubt dear to his heart, the fashioning of a local board of Hebrew ministers who set out to supervise shehitah and thus guarantee the integrity of the supply of kosher meat. The Hebrew Education Society knew him as one of its most vigorous protagonists and he rejoiced when in the early 1850's

the Society opened its first all-day communal school. He had been working toward this end since the 1830's. Moses Elias Levy, Jacob S. Solis, and others, too, would have rejoiced to see the opening of a school where Hebrew, Latin, French and German were taught. He was fortunate in living long enough to see the fulfillment of some of his hopes and plans, all made possible by an enlarged Jewry which included some men and women of vision and devotion to Jewish cultural ideals.⁴²

Fully aware of the progress then being made in the European Jewish communities, he insisted on similar standards here in the schools and charitable institutions. His *Occident*, infinitely superior to Jackson's earlier *The Jew*, was an effective journal. It is to his credit that he did not bury his head ostrichlike and ignore the significance of the incoming Central European Jews. As early as 1841, he realized that this new group was destined to play an important role in the life of American Jewry. He lived to see it dominate the American Jewish communities. Before he died, he had established both a national journal to unite Jews and also the country's first Jewish publication society. In the 1860's he had served as president of a B'nai B'rith District Lodge. In Philadelphia, he was among those who had helped create a Jewish Foster Home, though, to be sure, he had quarreled with some of the women who were its founders. Practically every institution in town had been furthered by him—the Young Men's Literary Association, the Palestine Relief Society, and the local federation of charities. On a national scale, he had attempted to establish an overall American Jewish umbrella-type organization, one that would further national congeries in the fields of education, religion, and philanthropy. Though not without misgivings, in 1859 Leeser did support and help create the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, a national civic defense organization based on congregations.⁴³

Surely he derived satisfaction from the knowledge that he was the first Jewish minister in this country to preach regularly, that he had been able to found an academy whose graduates—so he hoped—would compare in education and culture with the urban Protestant clergy, yet be distinguished for their traditionalism and loyalty to the teachings of the rabbi. To achieve his ends, he traveled extensively. Dozens of congregations learned to know him personally as he moved up and down the length of the land—everywhere east of the Mississippi—dedicating synagogues and encouraging men and women in the outlying communities to hold fast to their Jewish way of life. He was a "home missionary" of far-reaching influence. Some of the institutions he fashioned—the magazine, the academy—foundered in the course of time; others were only sketched on the drawing board; but, ultimately, the pattern which he outlined was adopted and implemented. Plans for Jewish culture, religion, education, were pushed persistently for the first time after nearly 200 years of Ameri-

can Jewish settlement. It is Leeser who was the spiritual progenitor of twentieth-century American Jewish Conservatism and Modern Orthodoxy; it is he who was the prototype for Isaac M. Wise, the most successful of the nineteenth-century religious organizers. Wise outdistanced Leeser because of his personality, his charm, his ability, and because of a confluence of favorable demographic and economic circumstances.⁴⁴

ISAAC LEESER: A FAILURE?

In some respects, it is indisputable, Leeser was a failure, for his own congregation finally rejected him and let him resign. His major problem seems to have been that he had little inclination to please others; he simply would not stoop to conquer. True, some of the members were "proud, ignorant and presumptuous." Rebecca Gratz summed up his difficulties in a sentence. "He is the most unselfish person I know . . . but with it all he is so imprudent in expressing opinions." When the congregants balloted on retaining Leeser as their hazzan those who had been hurt by him helped vote him out of office. Trying to change American Jewry was too much for one man; he had to carry the load almost alone. Leeser, however, was undaunted. He strove to create a national Jewish religious school system—no such structural organization has yet taken shape in the United States even today. It would be almost twenty years before Philadelphia Jewry would open a city-wide Jewish all-day school. His Jewish Publication Society died, not because of the fire that destroyed its inventory, but because the few Jews in this country were too busy struggling for a living to allow themselves the luxury of a cultural institution. Patterning himself on the various Protestant denominations which had organized themselves both locally and nationally, he hoped that the Jews, too, would build a powerful synagog union to exercise authority in all matters of religion. To his chagrin, the Board of Delegates chose not to exercise jurisdiction where beliefs, theology, and practice were concerned; the leaders knew that the synagogos which they had brought together would tolerate no infringements on their congregational autonomy. The delegates of the board in 1859, like the American Constitutional Convention of the 1780's, shied away from any type of church establishment; it was too dangerous. Leeser was a centripetalist but the Jewish congregations in this country were not; they invariably insisted—and continue to insist—on autonomy in anything touching doctrine and observance.⁴⁵

Leeser was unsuccessful in his attempt to effect a significant degree of national religious discipline, but it was a bold concept. He failed to realize that what was possible in the smaller compass of an authoritarian German state was altogether impossible in the vast stretches of a permissive Amer-

ica. Leaser, a devotee of the Sephardic ritual, also failed to understand that his sectarian followers at Mikveh Israel would join no national Jewish religious assembly; they knew they would be outvoted by the Ashkenazim whom they disdained socially. This fear of an Ashkenazic takeover can be detected as early as 1730; it may be still older. The new Germans who had begun arriving in the second third of the nineteenth century were never to become Leaser's enthusiastic allies. The Philadelphian was no longer one of them; he had become uncompromisingly an Americanist and a Sephardi. This acculturated Southerner who rarely wrote a German letter forgot—as Isaac M. Wise did not—that the newcomers loved the German language, that it was a persistent part of their German-Jewish way of life. It was no longer possible for him to identify with the newcomers intimately. Leaser had never deviated in his devotion to Orthodoxy, but some of the German immigrants, exposed to American laxity, began drifting away in matters of observance; they maintained only loose ties to the synagogue. Leaser was annoyed and thwarted by the Reformers, who were growing in power and numbers. Five years after his death, these religious liberals played a large role in the creation of a national synagogal union which would prove so effective that it came to serve as the organizational pattern even for the Conservatives and Orthodox of the next generation. It was Leaser's misfortune to be a religious conservative in an age when apathy was widespread and when many Jews found a religious haven in Reform. Leaser did not fail Orthodox American Jewry; the Jews of his generation failed him; they were more interested in identifying themselves with this new land than in adhering to the ancient mores. Thus, though he failed in many things, history has vindicated him; present-day Jewish America is in many respects the child of his imagination and his vision.⁴⁶

LEESER'S LEADERSHIP

Traditional Judaism's sociocultural religious concepts of man's place in the world and his relationship to the deity found their classical exemplification in Isaac Leaser's life, activities, and writings. To understand him is to understand the customary conventional Judaism of this age and to gauge its leadership. Prior to the Civil War, this Philadelphia "rabbi" was the country's most representative exponent of Jewish faith. His culture and beliefs were typical of Jewry's thinking elite. True, his own board and his congregants too, looked askance at him and he finally had to leave. Nevertheless, there can be no question that most Jews in America subscribed to the religious fundamentalism which he preached. The key to Leaser is in his German background, his European academic training, his cultured Orthodox Jewish teachers. He meant to advance his

people and his religion, to defend Jewry and Judaism from defamation. Leeser cannot be compartmentalized very easily. He was active and productive in several disciplines, all of which overlap. The educational cannot be separated from the religious, since in Jewish life the synagogue is a House of Study as well as a House of Prayer and a House of Assembly. The *Occident* made him Jewish America's first successful and influential journalist. Fully aware of the assimilatory, permissive pull of the American environment, he set out to enlighten his people, to keep them Jewish. In this effort, he and Isaac Mayer Wise were one; both were editors and used their papers to achieve their ends. Much that Leeser wrote and said was prompted by his fear of missionaries. Like virtually all American Jews, he tended to exaggerate the threat of conversionism. The apostasy of one Jew could destroy a family. Christian religious overtures were resented by Jews; the Children of Israel were completely insensitive to Christian theology, the offer of salvation through God's son Jesus. They rejected the Christian concept that the Nazarene had died on the cross as a vicarious atonement for the sins of all mankind. Salvation is not of Christ; the very idea was a denigration of the spiritual validity of Judaism.⁴⁷

It has been said that "no prophet is accepted in his own country." There is certainly more than ample evidence that Leeser was not accepted in Philadelphia's Mikveh Israel. Even so, he was nationally recognized in his own day as the living symbol of Jewish Orthodoxy. People respected and venerated him for his achievements. Trying to induce him to come to New Orleans in 1865, the Dispersed of Judah offered him a large salary; Louisville presented him with a silver goblet for his efforts to champion the Jews and their rights; Charleston's Orthodox Remnant of Israel gave him a gold watch and thanked him for his work as a minister, teacher, and editor; Simon Wolf, American Jewry's first Washington lobbyist, dubbed him America's pioneer Israelite; it was Wolf's way of acclaiming him the country's first Jewish leader. Correspondence still extant in the Leeser files in Philadelphia provides eloquent testimony that people from all corners of the land were in constant touch with him. Moses Montefiore, Jewry's international leader, congratulated the Philadelphia Jewish community in 1845 because it was privileged to enjoy the spiritual ministrations of a Leeser. Following a talmudic observation, Orthodox America would have said that God, the Merciful One, always provided a remedy in advance for every disease with which he afflicts humankind. Before the Reform Jews began their attack on tradition in 1824, Leeser had already landed! The Reform-minded Wise, often a bitter opponent of Leeser, admitted that the Philadelphian was Orthodoxy's leading exponent, and this was said at a time when the traditionalists were by far the largest Jewish denomination in the country. It was Leeser who consoli-

dated the forces of those who held to the old ways; he fused them emotionally and thus prepared them to withstand the attacks of the religious left-wingers. Through his writings, his visits, his talks, Leeser created a national community of Jewish sentiment. More than any other antebellum figure, he furthered Judaism. If there was a national Jewish leader then in the United States, it was this man.⁴⁸

SUMMARY: SOME THOUGHTS ON JUDAISM, 1776-1840

THE SYNAGOG AND SURVIVAL

When the Americans broke with the British in 1775, American Jewry was minuscule; by 1840, it numbered about 15,000. Though the Jews had increased sixfold by 1840, they were never an important body in the early American republic, but still remained a relatively obscure group nestling at the bottom of a list of churches, between the Sandemanians and the Rogerene Protestants. The typical Jew, busy in his shop on Front Street or King Street, was not constantly conscious of being Jewish. He was an American citizen of the Jewish persuasion. At most, he reserved a very small proportion of his time for the synagog or for thinking of himself as a Jewish religionist. The native-born Jews were totally acculturated, but even this man, the Jewish businessman who was the complete American, had his Jewish goals. The natives wanted to remain Jewish and adapt their religious practices so that Jewry would survive religiously. There was little fear that Jews and Judaism would not live on; the silent rejection of Jewry by Gentiles was the surest guarantee that Jews would stay Jewish. On the whole, Jews were happy to be with their own; they had a basic institution around which they could agglomerate, the synagog; no community could survive without it. Often the synagog embraced within itself the entire communal apparatus; it offered worship services, a cemetery, and a Jewish school system, such as it was, and it controlled the charities.⁴⁹

In the larger towns individuals clustered around auxiliary religious, philanthropic and educational societies (*hevrot*), where devotion, fellowship, and a strong sense of intimate togetherness were highly developed. All this made for an attachment to Judaism. The synagog maintained many religious folkways; it encouraged the life cycle ceremonies of birth, circumcision, bar mitzvah, marriage, and emphasized constantly the need for kosher food. It worked closely with the home and supported its values. This house of God gave the observant Jew a chance to embrace—if not to study—Judaism, to document his loyalty, to identify with fellow Jews; it gave heart to all who came within the compass of its walls. The synagog was the medium, frequently the only one, through which the

community functioned; it helped integrate newcomers and was the cement that bound all Jews together. Gentiles saw in the synagogue Jewry's most representative symbol. The seventeenth-century Jews, the first to settle here, introduced their Spanish-Portuguese prayer book. Thus a precedent was established; the Sephardic rite became the standard worship style and remained the custom of the country for well over a century. Shearith Israel of New York, the oldest of the synagogues, became the "mother church." Though this synagogue has remained Sephardic to the present day, most of its members have been of Ashkenazic ancestry ever since the second decade of the eighteenth century.

Because congregationalism and denominationalism were tolerated in British North America and in the successor American republic, it was inevitable that Jewish immigrants would ultimately band together according to their own familiar rite and region of origin. Jews from German-speaking lands were already sufficiently numerous to establish their own prayer groups in the late 1700's; there were permanent multiple synagogue communities no later than 1801. The Central Europeans had started coming in large numbers by the late 1830's; by then, the Ashkenazic congregations outnumbered the Sephardic about three to one. The newcomers wanted their own liturgy but the division between the two groups was less ritual than social. The native-born and the Americanized immigrants looked askance at newcomers. Some of the Sephardim even insisted on their own cemeteries. Culturally and socially, the six or seven Sephardic synagogue-communities dominated the American Jewish world during this period; and in American Jewish historiography these decades are known as the Sephardic period. Still, despite the differences between the two groups they did manage to tolerate each other. Both the older settlers and the newcomers were equally exposed to anti-Jewish prejudice; often they all huddled together for comfort. There was a degree of cross-fertilization; Rodeph Shalom, a congregation of Central European immigrants, referred to its board as the "junto" employing the Spanish-Portuguese term; the Sephardim used Yiddish words, so that the synagogue was always known as the "shul." With a steady increase in the numbers of Central Europeans, it was patent that the future lay with the Ashkenazic communities.⁵⁰

To a degree at least, American Jews were held together by their leaders, both lay and clerical. There were exceedingly few lay leaders of national stature but some individuals did enjoy national recognition. Major Noah, the New York layman, was widely known as a journalist, a dramatist, and a litterateur; the Jews in the city called upon him frequently to speak for them in public. In most Sephardic congregations, there was at least one man who served as leader, representing his people in the larger Gentile community. Manuel Josephson did so in Philadelphia, Jacob and

Samuel Mordecai in Richmond, the de la Mottas and others in Charleston and Savannah. The Sheffalls, too, stood out as personages in Georgia's capital city. In Philadelphia, the second generation of Gratzes and other Revolutionary War families, following in the footsteps of their fathers, played a part in synagogal administration. The rise of a militant Protestantism in the early nineteenth century may have had some influence on America's timid Jews. The religious enthusiasm of the nineteenth-century Protestant Awakening may have strengthened the orthodoxy of New York's Seixas. His "leadership" was local; he was respected because of his personality and because of the recognition accorded him by the Gentile community. The much younger Leeser was the only Jewish clergyman in antebellum America who stood out as a leader. He was recognized for his work as a "home missionary," as a writer, journalist, preacher, and educator, and as a man who sought to effect a synthesis of rabbinic tradition and modern secular culture. In a modest way he was establishing the pattern for his successors, the rabbis of the middle and late nineteenth century.

All Jewish communities of the early nineteenth century, with the exception of Charleston's secessionist Reformed Society, were Orthodox. What was this Orthodoxy? What was it not? Certainly it was not the religion of the Georgia frontiersman who wanted his "whisky straight and his politics and religion red hot." It rejected totally the Christian revivalist approach with its ardent emphasis on salvation. Unlike Protestant Christianity, whose adherents read and studied the Bible, Jews did not read or study their Scriptures, and, unlike the non-Jews among whom they lived, were not obsessed with a life beyond this one. It is impossible to conceive of a Jewish girl emulating eleven-year-old Hannah Whitaker, who fashioned a beautiful sampler with this verse:

Religion should our thoughts engage
While youth is in its bloom.
'Twill fit us for declining age
And for the awful tomb.

American Jews of that day were simply not interested in religious speculation; the few intellectuals who wrote and published followed traditional paths despite their magniloquent prose. Observant or not, the typical Jew here was enveloped in an all-encompassing system of institutions, practices, concepts, and biases which offered him a comfortable psychological haven. Christians in their churches sang Luther's great hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," and the Jews, too, made the rafters ring with their magnificent *Yigdal*:

The living God we praise, exult, adore.
He was, he is, he will be ever more.

But the theological congruence is only verbal. The Christians rallied around Jesus; the Jews rallied around one another. A detailed ideology was not at all important in the sanctuary where they gathered together; the synagogue was as much a social hall as it was a religious institution. In that generation—and it may be in every generation since—Judaism meant piety and devotion for only a select few. Rebecca Gratz was among the elect: loving “the laws of my forefathers . . . they embrace all that is good and holy in religion.” When a certain Moses Levy, of Amsterdam, sent a son to America in 1795, he gave him a letter—spiritual food for the road:

Fear and serve God, avoid all evil, feed the poor,
observe the Sabbath, honor your father, remember your
family, be good and kind to all.⁵¹

PROBLEMS

The synagogue had its problems; the churches, too, were not exempt from anxieties and difficulties. There were constant, recurrent depressions; no congregation ever had enough money; the members were frugal; they were not accustomed to giving liberally to religious institutions. Providing kosher meat was a sisyphian task. Even Shearith Israel, the most patrician of synagogues, was mismanaged, as Seixas complained in a letter to his daughter in 1813. During the years when there was but a trickle of Jewish immigrants to the United States, 1789 to 1824, only three new congregations, at the most, were established in this country. Many Jews visited the synagogues during the important Holy Days: formal affiliation was minimal; it is questionable if any congregation, except Beth Elohim of Charleston, had more than seventy-five members. In all America, there were not many more than 1,000 Jewish householders who were registered dues payers. Despite considerable apathy and some defection, Orthodoxy was holding its own. It is probable, though impossible to prove, that the growing membership in the churches impelled some Jews to join synagogues. Christians respected their churches; Jews seeking status may, therefore, have decided to affiliate formally with a Jewish “church.” It was during this period that more room was needed to provide for the new generation of the native-born and the immigrants. The Jews had to build; the old synagogues were no longer large enough. The newcomers—not yet Americanized, their religious loyalty still keen—flocked to the synagogue. Strangers in a strange land, they turned to the synagogue for security. As yet, they had no desire to explore new ways or accept, let alone introduce, new practices. They read their old prayer books and swayed in traditional fashion, contented religiously, as their fathers had been time without end.⁵²

They were untouched by the new waves of theology and philosophy confronting Christians here as well as not a few Jews in Hamburg, Berlin, and Vienna; these immigrants were totally unaware of the new radical religious streams rising in New England. As late as 1840, after all, there was not a single Jewish congregation in Boston. Taking their old beliefs and doctrines for granted, most Jews ignored the new religious currents. There was a widespread revolt in Protestant America against the rigidities of Calvinism; evangelicals—but also Unitarians and Universalists—rejected many traditional Christian doctrines. With the exception of the 1824 breakaway in Charleston, Jews did not revolt against Orthodoxy, their own version of “Calvinism.” There is no evidence that doctrinal schisms were ever contemplated. Jews then and now formed no community of believers; Judaism possessed no sacraments; “sin” remained a noun without connotation. All that a synagog community required of them was attendance at services; that spelled identification. Quarrels in the synagog would never be doctrinal, but invariably personal; most often they arose out of squabbles over administration. Frustrations would be worked out or exacerbated in synagog meetings; the house of God was the communal arena where all Jews met—and fought. Not improbably, to be sure, some educated natives were ideological liberals; these stayed away from the house of God or disaffiliated or left Judaism. There is no way to determine how many were lost. A number of Jews attended services rarely, swallowing small doses of Judaism annually. God’s angry man Leeser berated his congregants during the Ten Days of Penitence in September, 1833. But the objects of his impassioned denunciations, whether present or absent, could not afford to defect and be left stranded, alienated from their fellow Jews. They were always aware that they would never be fully accepted by Christians, even if they apostatized. All important is the fact that synagogos put up few barriers against individuals who had made their compromises with the outside culture; the synagog was of this world, not outside it.

The liturgy was conceptual. Prayer books published in this country provided English translations facing the Hebrew. Did readers study them as they sat in the synagog? There is no way to know the answer. But all the evidence strongly suggests that even the apathetic nursed a basic loyalty to Jewry, if not to Judaism (in the long run did it make any difference?). Jews were held together by a consensus, the consciousness of a common past, a common tradition, awareness of a similar way of life. With their sense of kinship, Jews identified with one another and responded to cries for assistance both here and abroad. Believing in the concept of the Oneness of Jewry they were interested, genuinely so, in the Jews of India and China. Most Jews were loyal, kept so by their wariness of Christian good will. They enjoyed being Jews and managed to survive

very complacently as Jews without effective leadership. Their need for one another and the comforting security of their folkways was all they required. In the final analysis what made for survival? One must first ask who was a Jew in that generation? The ethnic Spanish-Portuguese Jew was, for the most part, long gone.

The *novus* after 1720 was the liturgical Sephardi, an amalgam of Iberian, Central European, and East European. The Spanish-Portuguese settlers had left their impress on the synagogue; its liturgy, its pronunciation of Hebrew, its administration was theirs. Actually an Ashkenazic-Sephardic melting pot had cooked what turned out to be a potpourri of foods, phrases, and intramarriage. Attempts were made in synagogal constitutions to define, if only negatively, who was a Jew, but there was no consensus. It was too dangerous to fix a definition; too many “Jews” would be vulnerable. A precise definition would necessitate the exclusion of some, if not many. There were several Jewish types. Earlier Oliver De Lancey (the second), the son of Phila Franks, was a born “Jew” by rabbinic standards; he was definitely a Christian. At the other end of the spectrum was Isaac Leiser, scrupulously observant of all Jewish religious practices. Between Oliver De Lancey and Isaac Leiser stood thousands of Jews, each one religiously unique. In 1840, most American Jews were not dues-paying synagogue members, yet called themselves Jews, observed some Holy Days, and preferred to associate with Jews. They all nourished a sense of kinship. Conversion? Most of them had no interest whatsoever in Christianity. For even the very ambitious, conversion was a price that only a few would pay. Who, then, was a Jew? A Jew in that generation was a man who called himself a Jew, associated with Jews, and did not too flagrantly flout the accepted body of Jewish practices.⁵³

Jews and Jewry survived in the early American republic. Was it because Jews made changes which brought a new lease of life? No. There were no perceptible modifications in the practices of traditional Judaism. There was more apathy here, there was indifference, too, but one finds no surrender in ideology. Survival may have been helped by the homage paid democracy in the synagogue. Democracy was inevitable here in the smaller congregations; the alternative would have been disastrous, for every male was needed to constitute the minimum religious quorum of ten. In some synagogues, democracy ruled by default; no one wanted to be president. In the larger congregations an elite probably remained in power. There was little dictatorial control anywhere because of the budget; every contributor counted; constitutions were rarely written to concentrate power in the hands of a few; they were administrative instruments. There had been changes, of course, since colonial times. Every congregation now had not only a *parnas*, a president, but also a secretary, a treasurer, and a number of committees. The synagogal apparatus was enlarged. The introduction of

the sermon in the English vernacular was due entirely to Protestant Christian influence. Because Jews never forgot that, here in America, they lived outnumbered a thousand to one in a Protestant Christian world, they were constantly conscious of their neighbors; they talked a great deal about decorum. Some Protestant concerns, however, did not affect them. They were not interested as a body in social reforms, women's rights, temperance, or the abolition of slavery. These were all too controversial for this tiny group of what Christendom defined as infidels; Jews here, on the whole, sought low visibility. The social idealism of the Jews was satisfied with the hazy hope in the ultimate Coming of the Kingdom of Heaven when every man would live at peace under his own vine and fig tree. Because of their lack of interest in creed as such, few Jews moved in the direction of sectarianism; if unhappy, Jews seceded and established new congregations, but remained well within the bounds of religious tradition.

SALUTARY NEGLECT AND RELIGIOUS SURVIVAL

In the final analysis, Judaism here survived religiously because of permissiveness within Jewry. Under American influence, latitudinarianism flourished; tolerance of diversity obviated the resort to rebellion. Compulsion was rare; expulsions from congregations were few. Here in the United States, the salvation of the Jew lay in salutary neglect. Though there were lay leaders in every town, very few were such paragons of religious virtue that they inspired imitation. Lay leaders were not responsible for survival, and the clergy had little authority. Every individual conjured up his own conception of salvation and tailored the Law to his own needs. In matters of religion, Jews here did not have to start anew; they brought Europe to America. Transferring their synagogues across the Atlantic they reconstituted the familiar old religious milieu. There was a difference, however. The challenge of speaking a new language, adjusting to a new economy, subsisting in a new land made for a lesser religiosity, because social controls here were weaker than in Europe. But even those who began drifting away found it very difficult to divorce themselves completely, to cut the ties that bound them to their religion.

In the lives of most Jews, Judaism was the continuum underlying their cognitive and affective lives, even if it was submerged and not apparent. Disregarded it might be, yet it remained a not insignificant factor in their consciousness. Jews were a religious people, although not all Jews were religious. Judaism and the Jew were one; religion was the core and essence of the community. Despite all problems, that generation remained Jewish and flourished, institutionally at least. Synagogues multiplied, cemeteries were purchased, charities were established, schools were opened. The complaints of contemporaries and the cumulative evidence

of the minute books testify eloquently that the decades ending in 1840 were not years of great religious strength or revival. But the fallible historian too often fails to see the forest for the trees. Here are some indisputable facts: during this period, the synagogues in all major communities were rebuilt, at least once. If this is a criterion, then Jews and Judaism were not only surviving, they were prospering. To all intents and purposes, the Sephardim on the coast and in the piedmont dominated American Jewry; by 1840, however, their synagogues were outnumbered; Americanizing themselves, the "Germans" began moving up the social and economic ladder. The new Ashkenazic synagogue was slowly losing its European character; it was influenced by the Sephardim and by established and respected American Protestant religious mores. The new evolving Orthodox Jewish synagogue was well on its way to becoming distinctively American.⁵⁴



By 1840 there were sixteen organized Jewish communities
in the United States.



CHAPTER EIGHT

SOCIAL WELFARE IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

1776-1840

CHARITY IN JEWISH TRADITION

THE CHARITABLE INDIVIDUAL

Leeser was active in Mikveh Israel's Hebrew Society for the Visitation of the Sick and Mutual Assistance. For the Philadelphia minister, religion and charity were inextricably bound together. For all Jews, charity was a mitzvah, a religious command. In tying religion and social welfare into one whole, Leeser was but following biblical and rabbinical mandates. Centuries before the rise of Christianity, Judaism had already emphasized the duty of helping those in need. The Talmud emphasized that every Jew is responsible for his fellow Jew (San. 27b). God, said Leeser, was the source, the inspiration impelling men to moral action. The Philadelphian was particularly concerned with making provision for orphans; he himself had been orphaned when young. Kind people had taken him in, nurtured him, and educated him. In an address, which Seixas made in 1798 he said that helping others in distress is loving our neighbor; it is righteous action. We are stewards in the house of God. The individual Jew was thus called upon by tradition and its expositors to be generous, and many were. It was not easy in that generation to find the way to help others; Jewish newcomers had families to support here and dependent parents abroad. Most immigrants—and there were many—found themselves in a constant struggle to secure a foothold economically. Nevertheless some of them made an effort to aid others who were impoverished.¹

Individuals did more than give alms; they gave service to the sick, the dying, the dead; they gave of themselves. Some volunteered to investigate the real needs of those seeking help from the synagogue or a welfare society. Many left legacies to congregations and to pious associations, especially to the burial collegia whose ministrations they would ultimately require. A

substantial number of Charleston wills contained legacies for Jewish institutions; six of them left money to the local burial fraternity, the Hebrew Benevolent Society, in the first quarter century of its existence. When the will of the young Solomon Hart was probated in 1805 it was found that he had bequeathed one-half of his estate to the congregation and the other half to the local burial society. He had also enjoined his executor to see that his circumcision instruments were buried with him; he was a mohel (circumciser). (Did he expect to continue his professional activities in the World to Come? If so, he disagreed with a fellow Jew, Jesus, who had once said that “in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage”) (Math. 22:30). During the Revolution some of New York’s Jewish exiles who had taken refuge in nearby Connecticut were ravaged by the raids of the Loyalist Governor, William Tryon. This was particularly true of those who had sought shelter in Norwalk. When their distress came to the attention of Aaron Lopez, of Newport, he sent them money and supplies. Throughout the years, many stricken by misfortune appealed to him for aid. Turning to Lopez, the impoverished widow Hannah Louzada addressed him as a father of the poor when she asked him to give her something to pay for the rent and her medical bill. A number of the refugees fleeing from the invading troops found refuge in the hospitable home of Aaron Cardozo of Wilton.²

When the synagogue was built in wartime Philadelphia in 1782, over sixty Jews, many of them refugees, made contributions to the building fund. Some of the contributors bought lottery tickets and assigned their hoped-for prizes to Mikveh Israel, and when the synagogue was dedicated special blessings were invoked for them. In the late 1780’s Mr. Shimelah (Little Simon), of Montreal—whoever he may have been—decided to leave for London by way of New York. Not having any money, he appealed to the quondam merchant-shipper Moses Myers who helped him raise the necessary funds to purchase passage on a fast packet, the *Speedwell*. He boarded the vessel and said goodbye. Everyone was happy; Myers had earned a mitzvah which would stand him in good stead on the Day of Judgment. The next morning Shimelah was still in New York. When the captain of the vessel would not let him don his phylacteries at his morning prayers, he left the vessel forthwith. The New Yorkers reclaimed the passage money and shipped Shimelah back to Montreal. Michael Hart, of Easton, fed prisoners whose American captors had put them on a bread-and-water diet; Harmon Hendricks, the Sephardi, gave money to Ashkenazic Anshe Chesed so that it might buy a Scroll of the Law. Dr. Isaac Hays served the Hebrew Society for the Visitation of the Sick, probably gratis. The Touro brothers, Abraham and Judah, were nationally recognized as philanthropists. Judah had even given money to aid persecuted Christians in Jerusalem, missionaries, whose professed aim was

to convert Jews! Obviously Judah was obeying the New Testament injunction of loving one's "enemies" (the psychohistorian might have given this generosity a different interpretation). During the 1832 cholera epidemic, William Warner, a member of Shearith Israel, volunteered to nurse the sick and bury the dead. Theodore Seixas interested himself in seeking out a profligate young Gentile, a drunkard, in order to bring him back to his mother who worked as a nurse in a New York family. Writing to Leeser about this unfortunate young man, Seixas termed it an affair of humanity.³

CONGREGATIONAL CHARITY

In the main, it was the congregation, not the individual, which provided for the needs of the poor and the distressed. All the congregations in the United States engaged in good works (*obras pias*) from the earliest days down into the twentieth century. In this, of course, they were not unique; Christian churches, too, looked after the poor in their respective parishes. Indeed the synagog in the colonies and the early republic was the sole Jewish welfare agency till the early 1780's. The congregation had no choice but to assume the charitable burden, a time hallowed custom brought over from Europe. All forms of synagogal help in North America were patterned on European prototypes which in turn were rooted in medieval tradition and Middle Eastern practice dating back to pre-Christian times. The close relation between the congregation and its welfare function is startlingly documented by the fact that the general treasury was frequently denominated the *sedakah*, the common Hebrew term for charity. The congregational charters in Savannah (1791) and New Orleans (1828) state specifically that the synagoges were not only to provide for worship but also to educate the children and relieve the unfortunate. (Similarly the children of the poor were educated at congregational expense). Typical is the entry of the Charleston Minute Book for 1838: Mr. H. Cohen, sick and impoverished, was given two cords of wood to provide him with heat and fuel for his store. Whom did the congregation help? The local poor, itinerants, immigrants, captives, bond servants, imprisoned debtors, those in temporary straits.⁴

In essence Jews had been taught for centuries through precept, prayers, and example, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, redeem the captives, educate the orphans, bury the dead. Their own were aided first; then came others, the local non-congregational poor as well as American Jewish congregations and institutions in distant towns. A substantial proportion of congregational funds was employed for welfare and humanitarian purposes but congregations when importuned by individuals, institutions, and foreign communities, did not always see fit to make a grant. The depressions limited their means and forced them frequently to

say no even to the worthy. When the *sedakah* was empty, however, the *adjunta* encouraged generous individuals to give of their private means. The parnas of the congregation was always permitted to make a modest grant without prior consultation; only when larger amounts were sought did the board have to be consulted. The investigatory procedure varied. On the whole, intensive inquiries were not made. Indeed it was practically impossible to check the bona fides of itinerants; the absence of any form of rapid communication made such investigations impossible or impractical. Boards frequently said no, because they were not impressed by the appeal or the cause. Often indeed when approached by an itinerant, they manifested their impatience and speeded the parting guest on his way, but they never questioned the principle that people in need must be helped.⁵

And the source of funds for congregational alms and grants? The basic source of course was the *sedakah*, the synagogal treasury, which was fortified by offerings made when men were called to the Torah. Charity boxes were hung in the sanctuary or circulated at funerals, weddings, and circumcision feasts. There were legacies and long-time charitable loans like the ones made by Abraham Touro to Shearith Israel. On special occasions, when there was a disastrous fire or an epidemic or an enemy invasion, the hazzan would make an appeal from the reading desk in the form of a hortatory address. Whenever there was a call for relief, preference was nearly always accorded to middle-class people in reduced circumstances. Help was given in kind, rarely in cash, for it was commonly believed that the poverty stricken could not husband their resources. Only too often there was little sympathy or understanding for the plight of the perennially poor.⁶

American Jewry was in no hurry to establish institutions to shelter the impoverished, the sick, orphans, helpless widows, invalids, or the aged. European Jewry had been maintaining hospices since the Middle Ages in Spain, since the early modern centuries in Central Europe. There is an intimation that wartime Jewry in Philadelphia did have a hospice but the evidence is not convincing. The sick and itinerant were boarded out, given medicine, and doctored. Frequently, as in Philadelphia, Jewish eleemosynary organizations subscribed to the general hospitals and dispensaries and sent their sick to them for treatment. Throughout this period individuals talked of establishing a poorhouse for Jews that would serve also as a hospital. In 1816 Rachel Pinto of New York, a most generous woman, made an unsuccessful attempt to establish such a haven for the poor and the unfortunate of her people. The Jewish leaders, wisely, felt that there was no need to set up such an institution; it was much cheaper to board the poor and the sick or to provide them with doles. Normally Jews hesitated to send one of their own to the city or county poorhouse, de facto Christian institutions whose clients would have to eat

forbidden food and be exposed to the solicitations of ardent Christians eager to save Jewish souls. In a number of instances, however, the Jewish community did nothing to rescue Jews from the poorhouse—particularly if the inmates were men whom the community had rejected for one reason or another.⁷

Pensions were given to congregational employees, their widows, and to older persons, both men and women, who were in good standing in the community. Each case was examined on its merits. In addition to a monetary allowance, suppliants were given fuel, unleavened bread on Passover, medical care and, God help us, proper burial. A Mrs. Grace Levy of New York who had come on hard times was given £60 a year (1811). Martha Lazarus was supported by the New York congregation for almost seven years at a cost of about \$1,500, a very substantial sum. In 1800, the Charleston Jewish community, then at the height of its prosperity, expended over 18 percent of its income for charity. The care of immigrants was always troublesome for most Jews who chose to come here were men and women of little or no means. Making provision for newcomers has been a major problem in this country down to the present day. After a long miserable voyage the immigrants landed sick and impoverished; they needed help. If the season was inclement, they were clothed anew. A woman coming in from Jamaica reported that her husband had been swept into the ocean; she was at once given board and black garments for mourning. Émigrés from France, when that country was shattered by revolution, were succored if in need.⁸

The care of newcomers became a communal problem in the 1820's when the trickle of immigrants increased; the trickle had become a stream by 1837 during the post-Jackson depression. The care of newcomers then became a real challenge to congregational leaders, especially in New York City, the chief port of debarkation. In one respect colonial and early republican Jewish America was unique. There were no dowry grant societies nor any organization founded to redeem captives. This is unusual, for organizations dedicated to these purposes were common in Europe and there were dowry groups in Dutch Curaçao. Why then were there no dowry societies in the United States? The reason may well be that women were at a premium in these "frontier" communities. Although there were no groups to ransom prisoners, the Jewish communities stepped into the breach when faced with the problem of helping bondservants. When two Jews, indentured servants, landed in Philadelphia in 1795 as the Day of Atonement was approaching, the community hastened to their rescue: Let them observe the Day of Atonement as free men. A subscription list was passed around and the men were redeemed. A woman was taken out of jail; in all probability she had been in prison for debt since Jews shied away from helping criminals. People who came from abroad soliciting

help for the enslaved in their communities were listened to sympathetically. In 1825 the Rev. Judah Corcos, a Turkish subject, came to this country seeking funds to ransom his family from Greek corsairs. Major Noah rose in Shearith Israel during services and made an appeal for the unfortunate family. A relatively large sum was raised and the father then set sail for Charleston where he hoped to secure additional funds.⁹

A distinction must be made between immigrants and transients. Immigrants came to stay; most transients were moving about and had no intention of settling. Some of them were probably professional beggars. Early America received its share of travelers from Europe, Palestine, South America, and the Islands. Typical, in a way, is the case of Jacob Musqueto who in 1768 had to make a trip of at least 1,000 miles from Saint Eustatius to New York in order to catch a ship for Barbados which was only a few hundred miles from Saint Eustatius. While in town he was of course supported by New York Jewry. There was no regular traffic from his island to Barbados but there were ships that sailed from New York to Barbados; the longest way round is the shortest way home. New York proceeded to dispatch Musqueto to Philadelphia, where Michael Gratz was asked to raise the money to send him back to the West Indies. Jews in the West Indies may have sent him on to New York to get rid of him rather than support him; the New Yorkers and the Philadelphians were equally ready to ship him on to Barbados rather than provide for his needs indefinitely. That was the appropriate social welfare technique in that generation. When Mr. Jacob Abbo made his appearance in New York with a map leading to two of the Lost Ten Tribes, the congregation gave him enough money to get him out of town; obviously it was not impressed by his map or his quest for his brethren who had "disappeared" more than 2,000 years ago. In 1808 an Isaac Levy arrived asking for help. He told his hosts here that he had been captured by a French privateer as he was going from Jamaica to Haiti. He had been imprisoned in Cartagena and later in Cuba, but finally managed to reach New York where the congregation made provision for him. He requested Shearith Israel to send him back to Jamaica. The story may even have been true despite its picaresque details. The congregation's point of view was simple; all Jews in need must be helped; even men suspected of being imposters were assisted.¹⁰

HEVROT, PIOUS ASSOCIATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Beginning with the Revolution more and more of the social-welfare work in most towns was taken over by confraternities (*hevrot*). Such reli-

gious associations were not unique, not characteristic of Jews alone; Christian churches leaned heavily on affiliated charity societies. When first established, most *hevrot*, if not all, were an integral part of a synagogue, its welfare arm charged with the care of the poor, the sick, and the burial of the dead. Quite a number of these organizations were mutual-aid agencies concerned with the needs of their members. If there was but one congregation in town, the synagogue, the charities, and the community were integrated into one whole. When was the *hevrah* established? There may have been one in New York in 1758, a sick-care and burial group, but there is no conclusive evidence. The first society established in this country—as far as the records reveal—was the Immigrants' Aid founded in Philadelphia no later than 1783. The city on the Delaware was then full of Jewish refugees from Newport, New York, Charleston, and Savannah which were occupied by the British. This semi-autonomous organization advanced funds to the exiles and expected them to make repayment. Most of its clients were responsible shopkeepers and merchants. From then on charity societies began to make their appearance in all towns where Jews were found, as far west as the Mississippi. In Columbia, South Carolina, Louisville, Cleveland, and Richmond, the Ashkenazic *hevrah* preceded the establishment of a formal Jewish synagogue-community; each confraternity was, in effect, a proto-congregation.¹¹

By 1800 the Central European Jewish newcomers were beginning to manifest their ethnic disparateness in all the cisallegheeny communities. By 1840 American Jewry had increased at least 600 percent; practically all the immigrants were of non-Iberian stock. In 1802 Philadelphia gave birth to the Hebrew German Society (Rodeph Shalom)—notice the emphasis on “German.” Rodeph Shalom, as we have seen, was a sick-care and burial society that served also as a miniature congregation. It was not a mutual-aid organization; it made no monetary grants. By 1812 it had become a full-fledged chartered congregation though it continued to offer sick care and burial privileges. The following year Sephardic Mikveh Israel encouraged the establishment of the Hebrew Society for the Visitation of the Sick and Mutual Assistance (*Hevrah shel Bikkur Holim u-Gemilat Hasadim*). Its first president was the German-born Jacob I. Cohen, a Revolutionary War veteran, a Richmond and Philadelphia merchant, and an activist in the Jewish community of both towns. The Sephardic mutual-aid society first limited admission to members of Mikveh Israel. Later when its initiates achieved a degree of affluence it helped non-members; the *Hevrah* tended to become a general Jewish relief society. This was in the 1820's; in the next decade it came to the aid of those stricken by the cholera.¹²

Hevrot in the early days of the republic were usually religiously conservative; they were deeply rooted in the old tradition. (The modern

“religious” *hevrot* [*havurot*] of the late twentieth century are frequently radical in their sympathies, although not all of them to be sure. The left-wingers rejected older practices and were often shockingly innovative; they wanted to be Jews but on their own terms). The 1813 Philadelphia *hevrah* tolerated no one who had married out or had refused to practice circumcision. Annual religious meetings were held on the eve of Pentecost and Hoshana Rabbah where religious anthologies were read—if not studied—and the fraternity climaxed its religiocultural vigil with a substantial communal dinner; the banquet was something of an agape, a love feast. In order to give the members a chance to socialize and to gossip, meetings of the pious associations usually started after the time fixed for assembly. The society secured hospital privileges in a local dispensary and provided grave watchers to scare away body snatchers. By 1830, facing competition from the local Germans and their *hevrah*, the Mikveh Israel society opened its roster to newcomers and accepted as members individuals who were not affiliated with the Sephardic congregation. Here we have an aspect of the communalization of the charities. There is an 1829 constitution of a *hevrah* bearing the same name as the original 1813 society. The president was the well-known Hyman Polock who in 1835 was also president of the original Mikveh Israel fraternity. The two constitutions reflect so many differences that one suspects a secession, with the rival *hevrah* becoming established and then the two finally reuniting.¹³

A decade after it was chartered, Rodeph Shalom established a sick-care and burial society of its own, the United Hebrew Beneficent Society. Though sponsored by the “Germans,” it was from its very beginning open to all Jews and was not a mutual-aid organization. The word “United” is important; it hoped to unite, to appeal to all Jews in town; later, it was willing to include any Pennsylvanian. This was indeed a communal society, in intent at least. Members were offered the choice of either the Ashkenazic or the Sephardic ritual in their moments of sorrow. The fraternity talked also of educating the children of the poor and apprenticing them to masters who would permit them to observe the Sabbath and the Holy Days. But these were only pious wishes. By 1837, this *hevrah* included members from Virginia and Alabama. It is difficult to determine why these out-of-state Jews joined, unless they were motivated solely by the desire to help a Jewish organization financially. One of the Philadelphia members in 1837 was a Michel H. De Young, the father of Michel Harry De Young, the founder and editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle*.¹⁴

The oldest burial and general relief society in the country had been organized in Charleston as early as 1784, just as the city—and its Jews, too—began reaching out commercially and culturally. The prevailing epidemics—usually yellow fever—made it imperative that the Jews fashion

a society to cope with the problem. In later years, as the group grew in power, it severed itself formally from the local synagogue, employed a staff physician, a Gentile, and in 1838 took the unusual step of inserting an advertisement in the *Courier* stating that it was ready and willing to aid sick Jews. In 1801, seventeen years after the Hebrew Benevolent Society came into being, the eager Charlestonians established a *hevrah* to look after orphans. The first Jewish society of this genre in the country, it set out to provide for orphans and their impoverished widowed mothers. There was even talk of offering advanced education to gifted children. The official name of the new organization was the Society for the Relief of Orphans and Children of Indigent Parents. The *hevrah*'s name, borrowed from Caribbean, London, and Amsterdam forerunners, was *Abi Yetomin u-Bne Ebyonin* [sic] ("Father to the Orphans and Impoverished Children"). The families of the children were given grants; the youngsters were not housed in an asylum, although there were very brief periods in the ante-bellum years when the orphans, those without any parents, were given institutional care. The society had acquired a beautiful building by 1833, but still it preferred to board the children; it was cheaper that way. It did run a charity school; one of the teachers was Isaac Harby. In all probability, both Hebrew and secular subjects were taught. There is a tradition that Judah P. Benjamin attended this school; though he was no orphan, his family was certainly poor and might well have availed itself of the opportunity to give its gifted son free schooling. About the year 1810, nine children were supported by this *hevrah*.¹⁵

A year or so after the Hebrew Benevolent Society's establishment in Charleston—possibly earlier—a similar organization with the same name was created in New York. This was a mutual-aid burial *hevrah* and may well have been initiated by Shearith Israel's Ashkenazim, who were reaching out for "community." In the course of time this *hevrah*, too, like most confraternities, began to help non-members. It was a successful organization with many subscribers. The initiation fee and the dues were quite substantial; the members were able to hire a physician, own their own hearse and boast of a surplus in the treasury. It is, therefore, very difficult to understand why by 1790 the *hevrah* had ceased to exist. One suspects that if this was an Ashkenazic organization, Shearith Israel's elite may have become frightened; it was always apprehensive that the Ashkenazim would attempt to take control of the synagogue. For the next few years New York's congregation seems not to have enjoyed the services of a burial society. The year 1798 was to witness a severe yellow fever epidemic in the city; 2,000 people are said to have been stricken, among them a number of Jews. Many fled from the city to escape the ravages of the plague; Rabbi Seixas remained behind and established a new welfare organization, the Society for Charity and Secret Giving (*Kalfe Zedakah*

u-Mattan ba-Sether). The members dedicated themselves to the care of the sick, the dying, and the helpless. In setting up this pious association, Seixas evidenced leadership at a crucial moment in the life of the community. Maybe this was possible then because the lay leaders had left the city. The Society for Charity was not a burial organization; it was a relief agency which made annual appeals for funds. As its name indicates, it pledged itself not to reveal the identity of its clients. In 1805, in a communication projecting the future of the Kalfé Zedakah, the officers made the statement that a day would come when New York City would shelter the largest Jewish community in the country. This was said when Charleston's Jewry was still preeminent. The society faded away about the year 1816, just about the time that Seixas died. Was he its mainstay during the eighteen years of its existence?¹⁶

The imperative need for a burial organization brought about the re-birth of the old Hebrew Benevolent Society. It was now known as Hased Va-Amet, the Society for Love and Truth—or, more correctly, the Society of True Love—and is still in existence. Why true love? Because true love is evidenced when people confer a kindness upon a dead person, who cannot repay the courtesy! The name was not an uncommon one, for ever since 1726 there was a Curaçao association bearing the same designation. The semi-autonomous New York society was to serve as a communal agency till at least 1825 when its rival, Bnai Jeshurun, appeared on the scene. In 1827, the Society of True Love published its own burial and mourning compendium. Like most other *hevrot*, Hased Va-Amet, too, did not withhold help when it was desperately needed and sent money to aid yellow fever victims in New Orleans without regard to the religious affiliation of the sufferers. As yet, however, there was no charity society in New York, although one may assume that the slack was taken up by the Society of True Love and by the congregation itself. Something had to be done, inasmuch as new immigrants were constantly landing and often turned for relief to the Jewish community.¹⁷

In 1822, the 1785 Hebrew Benevolent Society was again reconstituted, and with the same name. Here again, so it is thought, Shearith Israel members of Ashkenazic ancestry took the initiative in fashioning the new organization. Essentially, it seems to have been a burial society. There is an old tradition—and it may well be true—that when a Revolutionary War veteran, a Jew, was reported to be lying destitute in a local hospital, a group of Jews raised money to provide for his needs and when he died, buried him. With the surplus on hand, the group started the new Hebrew Benevolent Society. The Hebrew name of this congeries was Meshivat Nefesh, "Restoration of the Soul," again not an uncommon name, which occurs in Savannah and in European cities. It may well be that, while serving as an arm of Shearith Israel, it engaged in general re-

lief; after all, the Society of True Love was always available for burials. When the founders of Bnai Jeshurun seceded, the new Hebrew Benevolent Society allied itself with them and engaged primarily in welfare work. A year later, in 1826, Bnai Jeshurun welcomed into its midst the Hebrew Mutual Beneficent Society, a sick-care and burial organization, New York Jewry's first mutual-aid association, at first limited to members of Bnai Jeshurun, but subsequently open to all Jews. Less than a century later, there were about 1,000 such organizations in the city, most of them *landmanschaften*, "hometown" societies.¹⁸

In the late 1820's, New York's Spanish-Portuguese congregation established the Society for the Education of Poor Children and the Relief of Indigent Persons of the Jewish Religion. As its name indicates, it was created to provide, primarily, for widows and orphans; the young were to be educated. At the first anniversary meeting, the public was invited to listen to an oration by Myer Moses. A collection was taken up, and a goodly sum raised. The orator of the day was a son of the Myer Moses remembered in Charleston for his good works during the Revolution; Moses, Sr. had stretched forth a helping hand to prisoners and the wounded. Two of his grandsons were to become notable South Carolinians; one was Isaac Harby, the litterateur and religious reformer; the other, Franklin J. Moses, became a chief justice of the state supreme court in postbellum days. Myer Moses, the son, had distinguished himself in Charleston as a militia officer, state legislator, and communal servant before moving north to New York, where he speedily made a place for himself as an orator and politician.¹⁹

Shearith Israel's new relief society seems to have been a prestigious organization, for some of New York's notables addressed it annually; one of its outstanding members was the banker Joseph L. Joseph. One wonders why it was established in the first place, for after a year's existence it could boast of but two orphans who were helped and they were dispatched to a Christian Free School where, it would seem, no tuition was charged and where in all probability, they were exposed to Christian doctrine. The conduct of the society aroused the ire of that ardent Jew Solomon H. Jackson and when the trustees published a report of their accomplishments he denounced them publicly for sending two youngsters to a Christian school. Jackson entreated New York Jewry to accept no gifts from Christians. One impoverished family was helped and urged to get out of trade. Leave the marts of commerce and turn to crafts? What good would that do, said Jackson. Jewish boys apprenticed to Gentile artisans would have to work on the Sabbath, and even if they did learn a craft Jews would refuse to patronize them. Jews, Jackson insisted, are all in trade; this new society has no *raison d'être*; there are no Jewish paupers. If Jackson was right—and surely he was—why then was this charity created

by New York's Jewish elite? It was an age of humanitarian reform; philanthropic activity was in style.²⁰

Anshe Chesed, the Men of Loving Kindness, established in 1828, soon became the town's predominant German Jewish congregation. By 1841 this synagog had at least two mutual-aid and eleemosynary institutions, possibly as many as four. The immigrants struggling to survive needed organizations that would guarantee them a dole if they ran into trouble; the late 1830's were grim at best. It was just at this time, 1839–1840, when the depression was wreaking havoc, that Shearith Israel established the Hebrew Assistance Society. This organization had a job to do and apparently did it well. Undoubtedly it set out to compete with its rival at Bnai Jeshurun, the Hebrew Benevolent Society. In 1829 Shearith Israel's Society for the Education of Poor Children and Relief of Indigent Persons of the Jewish Persuasion had not five clients all told; in its first year the new Hebrew Assistance Society had to provide for at least 80 applicants to whom it gave relief; it then spent \$660 for clothing, food, and fuel. It was aided by a junior auxiliary, probably young unmarried girls, who, like the Christians around them, were turning to social work. When fund-raising banquets were held in the early 1840's by the Hebrew Assistance Society, women were present in a gallery curtained off where they could see but not be seen. "Their faces were only partially exposed." Large sums were raised at the annual dinner where notable Christians spoke and told the Jews what good people they were, especially "the female portion." Anyone paying \$3 annual dues was admitted to the organization. It was very successful financially and in a few years was able to make a large loan to Shearith Israel for synagogal repairs. With all its apparent success this society was not long-lived and seems to have quickly passed out of existence.²¹

Around the year 1787 Savannah fashioned a sick-care and burial society. It was imperative that there be an organization to help the dying and prepare bodies ritually for burial. Richmond, in Virginia, organized its first *hevrah* in 1790 shortly after the congregation came into being. Apparently the new confraternity was an immigrants' aid society, for it called itself Ezrat Orhim, the same name the earlier Philadelphia society had borne. Isaiah Isaacs, a Virginia Jewish pioneer, was the first president of the Richmond society. Richmond's Immigrant Aid was a general relief society and of course took care of the sick; it was in no sense a burial *hevrah* though it was ready to help when there was a death in a family. Relief was given first to persons of "gentlemanly character"; others had to wait their turn, especially strangers and those of "doubtful character." Obviously in this Immigrant Aid organization humble strangers were not preferred clients. By 1839 Central Europeans of recent vintage were numerous enough to create a society of their own. Calling itself Ahavat Is-

rael, the Love of Israel, it was in effect a landsmanshaft that provided relief, religious services, and the comfort that came through sociability.²²

German immigrants, always eager to stand on their own two feet, erected self-help societies as speedily as possible; they had their pride. No later than 1833, and possibly a year earlier, Baltimore's immigrant Jews created a mutual-benefit sick-care and burial society, formally named the United Hebrew Benevolent Society. This organization is probably identified with the "Irish Hevrah," the Irish Society. Why Irish? No one seems to know. It was the first relief organization of the new immigrant congregation, the Scattered Israelites. The *hevrah* offered monetary benefits, hospitalization in a local dispensary, burial, and the prospect of free Hebrew classes for children. Undoubtedly, the new group was influenced by Rodeph Shalom's United Hebrew Beneficent Society, inasmuch as the Baltimoreans, too, offered mourning families the option of a Sephardic or Ashkenazic ritual. Its constitution was published in both German and English; the newcomers from Central Europe were making their presence felt. Seven years later, a new *hevrah* made its appearance, another mutual-aid society, one called the German Hebrew Charity Society. The members, it is likely, were very recent immigrant arrivals who were not made welcome in the original German and English United Hebrew Benevolent Society. The latter *hevrah*, after seven-eight years, was completely acculturated and thus unacceptable to the more recent German newcomers. In 1840, the Baltimore Hebrew and English Academic Association made its bow. The pretentious name notwithstanding, it was just another mutual-aid society. Within the space of three years, this Maryland community had witnessed the founding of three self-help associations. Baltimore Jewry was growing; newcomers needed help. Let it not be forgotten that the 1837 depression continued till 1843.²³

In 1828, four years after the Sons of Israel, B'nai Israel, congregation was established in Cincinnati, the members sponsored a mutual-aid and sick-care and burial society. Patterning itself, so it would seem, on its Philadelphia forerunner, it called itself the Hebrew Beneficent Society. In 1838, it had 53 members; in 1860, 200 members. Within a few years it was functioning as the Cincinnati Jewish community's relief and welfare arm, with its own cemetery and physician; in later years, it even offered loans to members, though it was not a free loan society; a modest rate of interest was charged on all monies borrowed. Like other *hevrot*, the Hebrew Beneficent Society conducted a bibulous banquet, but finally stopped serving liquor, probably because members under the influence were prompt to tell others what they really thought of them. In 1838, the charter and bylaws were published both in German and English. Provision had to be made for the Central Europeans, if the society was to recruit new members. During this same decade burial confraternities were

also established in Louisville and St. Louis (1834-1835). It is not improbable, too, that the Jews of Natchez, on the Mississippi, set up a burial society at this time (1838). In new communities, the burial confraternity was for obvious reasons often the first Jewish organization in town; epidemics of yellow fever and cholera were not uncommon. *Hevrot* abounded and on the whole prospered because they offered sociability and material benefits to newly arriving immigrants.²⁴

American Jews believed, in principle at least, that every Jew in distress had to be helped. Every Jew meant any Jew anywhere in the world; thus congregations responded to frantic appeals of coreligionists in North Africa, Persia, and of course Palestine. By 1832-1833, relief for Jews in the Holy Land was organized in North America on a continental scale through the Society for the Offerings of the Sanctuary (*Hevrat Terumat ha-Kodesh*). This was an international organization with headquarters in Amsterdam and a very active group in London; a branch had also been established in New York. In a number of other towns, an outstanding member of the community seems to have been co-opted to raise funds. This was certainly true in Charleston, where substantial sums were collected in the 1830's to aid the impoverished Jews of the Ottoman-ruled Holy Land. The *Hevrat Terumat ha-Kodesh* was the forerunner of the twentieth-century United Israel Appeal, which has dispatched hundreds of millions of dollars to the State of Israel for charitable and cultural purposes. In those early days, however, foreign aid was exceptional and minimal; the prime efforts in alms giving were directed at home to transients, immigrants, and the local poor.²⁵

WOMEN'S CHARITIES

Self-centered Jewish males thought of the *hevrot* as men's societies, and most of them were. Yet some of the burden of taking care of the sick and the transients fell to the lot of women in the homes where these people were lodged, fed, and nursed. What is the origin of women's societies? To a degree, but only to a minor degree, American Jewish women's associations were influenced by somewhat similar groups in Europe. In the seventeenth century, borrowing a phrase from talmudic literature *nashim zadkaniyyot*, Righteous Women, the Jews of Europe established female societies to serve as auxiliaries for the male burial organizations. Not improbably these women's religious guilds had also been influenced by the Christian women about them who had been doing similar religious work. Well organized Jewish female burial associations were found in Amsterdam in the 1700's. Berlin in the middle years of that century had a women's society that not only nursed the sick, cared for the dying, and sewed shrouds, but also offered general relief. Women were always needed to provide for the ritual cleansing of the female dead.

An attempt in 1830 to establish a women's auxiliary for Shearith Israel's True Love society was unsuccessful. It was not until the 1840's that such a burial association was brought into being. The first Jewish women's society in the United States was organized at Philadelphia in 1819. The year 1819 was a bad depression year; people went hungry. There is no indication that the Pennsylvania women were influenced by any similar Jewish association in Europe. One can hardly doubt that they patterned themselves deliberately on the nondenominational Female Association for the Relief of Women and Children in Reduced Circumstances, a Gentile society which had been established in 1800 and had quite a number of Jewish members, impressed no doubt by its prime goal of helping the poor. Rebecca Gratz was one of the founders of this society and one of its most active and influential members. She raised funds for its soup house, which provided broth for the poor at two cents a quart. She served as its secretary; indeed she was probably the country's most notable Jewish female social worker and in later years helped organize a women's sewing society, a charity fuel association, a foster home, and the first Jewish Sunday School. The Jewish Sunday School organization was concerned with educating Philadelphia's Jewish children, particularly those who came from humble homes.²⁶

The Female Hebrew Benevolent Society was a general charity providing clothes, relief, sick-care, nursing, and access to a hospital. Its goals were communal; it was ready to aid poor Jews without regard to their synagogal affiliation. A doctor was recruited, and an effort made to find employment for seamstresses in need of work. The society was supported by annual dues and gifts from individuals and congregations. Apparently it was popular, for members were enrolled from a number of Southern states and the West Indies. Clients were assured that recipients of help would be guaranteed secrecy—most important since the society preferred to help respectable middle-class people who had come upon hard times. Influenced very much by the standards of contemporary Christian relief associations, these Philadelphia Jewish women sought to aid families of some social standing. Poverty itself did not justify relief; they helped those who were "frugal, industrious, and grateful," but they did pay lip service to the basic Jewish principle of charity; the poor, the transients, must be helped. In aiding the impoverished the society gave fuel and groceries, but little or no cash. The annual expenditures were small; recipients of aid in the early days could be counted upon the fingers of one hand. The society tried to save money; it expended a mere fraction of the capital it had accumulated. Apparently it was saving its money for a rainy day; it enjoyed having a surplus in the treasury.²⁷

With the 1819 Philadelphia society as a model, the Jewish women in New York established a similar association the following year and gave it

the same name. It is worth noting that the New York Jewish female charity was established two years before the male Hebrew Benevolent Society began taking an interest in the slums of the city. In 1830, in an address praising these women for their work, Dr. Daniel L. M. Peixotto lauded the delicate sex: they “do not disdain to tread the filthy alleys of the crowded city to enter the miserable and noisome hovels of the wretched poor.” In 1837, Baltimore’s Jewesses were asked to sew shrouds by the local sick-care and burial *hevrah*. The economic distress which brought ruin to thousands in the panic year of 1837 impelled Jewish women in Cincinnati, Philadelphia, and New York to establish welfare organizations. By 1838, the women of Cincinnati’s Children of Israel had created the Hebrew Ladies’ Benevolent Society whose special interest was assistance to impoverished widows and orphans. Just a few years later, in the early 1840’s, the recently arrived Central European women set up a relief association of their own, the German Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society. The newcomers wanted to be with their own; Jewish immigrants always looked askance at acculturated Jews. Here in the United States social disparities quickly developed.²⁸

A Jewish women’s society founded at Philadelphia in the depression year 1838 called itself the Ladies Hebrew Sewing Society. Louisa B. Hart, first Directress, was a well-known social worker, intelligent and benevolent. Her cousin, Confederate Army Major Raphael Jacob Moses, said that, though unattractive and bizarre in her style of dress, she was highly respected for her preeminent qualities as a cultured and charitable leader. Her sewing society was primarily interested in providing warm clothes for the poor; heating facilities were very inadequate in early nineteenth-century America, and fuel was costly. In one year—it was in the early 1840’s—this organization distributed 400 garments to the poor and looked after several dozen children. Some of the funds for their charities came not only from dues and donations, but also from the proceeds of an annual charity ball. It is obvious that, by 1840, Philadelphia Jewry was beginning to build a series of women’s philanthropic organizations.²⁹

One New York women’s society set up in 1838 was quite different from most others. This new body, which came out of Shearith Israel, was patterned on the Jewish Sunday School Society in Philadelphia. It called itself the Association for the Moral and Religious Instruction of Children of the Jewish Faith, but because many of the youngsters were poor, the Association did more than teach them; it provided some of them with clothes. The unmarried girls in the Association formed a group of their own, a Dorcas society, a women’s organization which sewed garments for the poor. The name and goals were taken from Christian tradition; the new Testament records that in the first century the Jewess Dorcas, Tabitha, the gazelle, full of good works and almsdeeds, sewed garments for

the poor in Jaffa near present-day Tel Aviv; when she died, St. Peter resurrected her (Acts 9:36-43). Much of the money needed for this New York organization was raised at an annual meeting where prominent Jews were called on to make an appeal for funds. At the Purim assembly in 1840, when Major Noah spoke, the monies collected were used to buy shoes for poor children. The establishment of Jewish women's societies was prompted by depression needs. Undoubtedly the Jewish women took note of the welfare agencies male Jews had set up and also of the numerous groups Christian women were founding. Unlike Gentile women, however, Jewesses created no societies devoted to social reform in the realms of slavery, temperance, and the like. The need to help Jewish immigrants, who were constantly arriving, compelled the men and the women to take care of their own first. Were the women self-conscious as they set out to build societies? Probably.³⁰

HEVROT: STRUCTURE, SUPPORT, ORIGINS

The pious associations had a president, secretary, treasurer, and board, sometimes called managers. The Richmond Jewish Immigrants' Aid had a parliamentarian, called an advocate. Most *hevrot* had no paid officers, though a few employed a beadle or messenger, who on occasion served as a dues collector. Committees, too, were appointed to concern themselves with the sick, with burials, with apprenticeships, and with the investigation of prospective clients. The New York Hebrew Assistance Society had women members, but they were not permitted to vote in person, only by proxy. These female associates, acting as an investigating body, checked those who petitioned for aid; the men were too busy in their shops and stores. Small sums were handed out at the discretion of the president; when substantial sums were required, an investigation was first made and then the board as a whole took action. As a rule, boards met weekly; the *hevrah* as a body usually assembled formally only once a year on the anniversary of its founding or on the seventh day of Adar, the traditional birthday and deathday of Moses, usually a fast-feast day. When a *hevrah* assembled to celebrate its anniversary, the meeting usually ended with a festive meal. Concerned as most of the societies were with death, they rejoiced when they met together once again and celebrated their reunion by feasting; they were glad to be alive. *Hevrot* never lost an opportunity to eat.³¹

Support for the societies came from initiation fees, dues, and annual and life memberships, as well as donations from Jews and from Christians, too. Since most *hevrot* were affiliated with a synagogue, offerings were made during the services for the benefit of the confraternity. Fines were also a source of income, and inasmuch as most of these societies had a surplus in their treasuries, this reserve capital was lent out at interest. Addi-

tional help came from the organizations which planned the Purim Ball; substantial sums were then collected for philanthropic purposes. It was not unusual for marginal Jews who did not wish to affiliate with a congregation to make a contribution to a confraternity. Thus, Philip Speyer, later to be recognized as one of New York's distinguished bankers, became a member of the local Hebrew Assistance Society in the early 1840's, though he was not interested in Judaism. August Belmont refused to join any of the Jewish societies, but gave liberally when called upon by an organization which he deemed worthy. Unlike Speyer and Belmont, Benjamin Nathan was active both in the charities and in Shearith Israel. This New Yorker, a power on the stock exchange, gave liberally of his time and money to the synagog and the pious associations. He served Shearith Israel as president, helped found Jews' Hospital in New York, and presided over the destinies of the Hebrew Assistance Society for four years. When he was murdered in 1870, the New York Stock Exchange offered a reward of \$10,000; the assassin was never apprehended.³²

Clearly, since the Revolution the Jews had been ready to carry on their charities through special agencies. Prior to that time, the congregation itself had acted as a committee of the whole when charitable problems arose. Americans saw the advisability of adopting European social-welfare forms of organization; the names of the new American Jewish agencies were borrowed from London and Amsterdam. Philanthropically, American Jewry was, in a sense, an extension of the older European societies and institutions. This is not to imply that the Jewish communities here were not influenced also by non-Jewish American welfare associations. Private Christian eleemosynary societies had functioned here as early as the seventeenth century. British America's Gentiles had established charitable congeries on a craft or ethnic or sociocultural basis; individual Jews in colonial days joined these nondenominational groups. Mordecai Noah in 1817 addressed a Fourth of July mass meeting which included a number of craft societies. Though acculturated Jews belonged to some of these fraternal associations, Jewish newcomers, still unfamiliar with English, would be happier with their own; they were not sure what sort of reception would be accorded them in a Gentile organization.³³

Colonial American Jews had created no auxiliary societies to handle their burials and charities because they were so few in number that each community served in itself as a pious association. The change occurred during the Revolution when refugees flocked to Philadelphia and some needed help. After the war's end, newcomers arrived from Europe, and they, too, required assistance. Moreover, this was a day when Gentile societies began to abound. The decade of the 1780's was difficult for congregations; they were trying to stay afloat, while their leaders were struggling in a postwar decline to make a living. There were five bad years,

1784-1788. By the 1790's, congregations began establishing welfare associations to provide for the local poor, the new arrivals, and the perennial transients. A committee—that is to say, a mini-society—could do a much better job than a harassed president. It was more efficient.

It is manifest that congregations would want to encourage or tolerate auxiliaries, but what did the individual gain by joining a charitable fraternity? Men of culture, versed in the teachings of the Enlightenment, were prompted by humanitarian considerations to help others. In an enlightened age, said Dr. Peixotto in 1830, associations are founded to relieve distress, prevent crime, redeem the idle, and educate the masses; this is the age of benevolence. Others joined a *hevrah* because they could give free rein to their personality in a small intimate group. They believed that here, more than in the congregation, there would be democracy, freedom, latitude for the individual. The ego could express itself; there was more togetherness. Jews as individuals resented any authority which restricted their freedom of action. This individualism, this reaching out, was, in fact, a reaction to the frustrations they constantly had to face as Jews in an overwhelmingly Gentile society. Though the auxiliaries were ostensibly pious associations, Jews who were less than ardent in their faith might well join them, because the ultimate goals were philanthropic. In a sense, the synagogue was now beginning to lose its former position as the dynamic center of all Jewish life in America. The *hevrah* offered more social life, more fraternization, more intimacy. Even within Sephardic Shearith Israel, culturally disparate Ashkenazim had begun as early as the 1780's to forge their own subgroups; finally, in 1825, almost half a century later, fortified by the arrival of immigrants, they seceded successfully. In a way, the new Ashkenazic conventicles were what later waves of East European immigrants would know as *landsmanshaften*. The synagogue was restrictive because of its liturgical and worship customs; charitable societies were less limiting. The immigrants who arrived during these early decades of the nineteenth century had left behind a Metternichean Europe with its coercive and cramping Jewish community; here they found an answer to the need for security, not only in the voluntaristic, independent synagogue, but also in the new, receptive, self-governing philanthropic enclaves. Given a plethora of rival organizations, all of them unscientific in approaching social problems, a degree of welfare inefficiency was inevitable, but a whole world of emotional and social satisfaction was available nonetheless.³⁴

Yet beyond these reasons for creating and joining *hevrot*, the decisive motivation for the individual may have been economic. Dues and other charges levied by congregations were at times too expensive, especially for newcomers. It was more advantageous to belong to one organization, the *hevrah*. With the rise of multiple synagogues in all the large towns, Jews

could afford to ignore the implicit threat of the unitary synagog community which insisted on affiliation. Preferable was belonging to a confraternity which functioned at the same time as a mutual-aid organization. American religious volunteerism permitted the individual to make this choice. If economic self-interest was determinative, the newcomer hastened to join a mutual-aid organization. The individual who held membership in a congregation was never unaware of the fact that if, God forbid, he came upon evil days, the congregation would always make some provision for him. However the mutual-aid society as such was more appealing; the grants which it made were not charity. One paid dues, received benefits when needed, and at the same time retained self-respect. In addition to the religious benefits offered in such an organization—and they are not to be underestimated—the sick received cash grants, a species of unemployment insurance. Death benefits for funeral expenses and cash for the surviving widow and children were very important. Today the sums received seem pitifully small, but in the antebellum decades they were very helpful in tiding the family over a bad period.³⁵

THE CONFRATERNITY: AUTONOMY, SECULARIZATION, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AND GOALS

The creation of a *hevrah* implied abdication of authority by a synagog, a danger congregations quickly realized. At first, some insisted that those who joined an auxiliary organization must also become or remain members of the congregation. Money offerings for the *hevrot* in synagog services were at times subject to a limitation—in essence a form of restriction and of financial surveillance. The tendency to remove charities from congregational control may have been influenced by the American constitutional concept of separation of church and state. In classical Judaism, to be sure, such a distinction between religion and the secular world is not known; Jewish tradition has invariably insisted on ecclesiastical—i.e., synagogal—control of philanthropy. At best, or at worst, the *hevrot* were no more than semi-autonomous despite the fact that they had their own corps of officers, funds, and regulations, but synagogal control was gradually relaxed. Beginning in 1822, the Rodeph Shalom charity society reached out to the larger Jewish community and became, in effect, a practically autonomous organization in relation to its founding parent. Inasmuch as religious bias was very much a personal matter, some *hevrot* did not require their members to affiliate with a synagog, though it would be a mistake to interpret this as hostility to religion.

Was there, before 1840, a charity or a confraternity completely independent of a synagog or devoid of strong religious influence? Probably not a single one. Did reaching out to the Jewish community as a whole

indicate a move in the direction of secularism? The answer is still no; there were no secular private charities during this period. Communalization is not tantamount to secularization nor is specialization in welfare work to be confused with secularization. Many individuals were apathetic religionists; some, in essence secularists, were willing to join a Jewish charity, while rejecting synagog membership for themselves, but—and this is important—the newly created fraternities were basically sympathetic to religion. Most of the immigrants, of course, were not educated, and were uninfluenced by the intellectual criteria of the Enlightenment, Deism, skepticism, and the scientific method. Early nineteenth-century Jews, many of them recent arrivals, were too close to the Jewish religious outlook of their Old World homelands to break with the synagog here despite their refusal to affiliate. Their apathy, if it existed, was merely neglect, not rejection of religion as such. Even the few Jewish intellectuals and political liberals were not thoroughgoing secularists; many, if not most, were synagogal members; some were active in the synagog as officers. The charities were dominated by religionists; all of these enterprises, it would seem, enjoyed good relations with the synagogs. To be sure, the degree of a synagog's closeness to a society varied, but it was never absent. It is true, too, that the congregation gradually ceased to be the sole center of philanthropic activity as some of its work was taken over by special agencies. The point to be borne in mind is that delegating functions—decentralization, one might say—does not constitute secularization or dejudaization. The synagog remained the central Jewish religious institution in every town, and at no time during this period did it divorce itself completely from philanthropic work.³⁶

In some towns, indeed, the first Jewish institution established was the charity society rather than the synagog, but what this indicates is not secularization but the pressing and immediate need for mutual aid in a pioneering community. Before long, this charity society began to assume the character of a congregation. Such associations had from the very first been proto-synagogs and had not failed to conduct religious services for bereaved Jews. It is not improbable that in some of the *hevrot*, such as the immigrant aid societies, secularism may have been inadvertently furthered, since these organizations were not religious in intent, even though their good works were rooted in religious sanctions. Individuals inclined toward secularism, yet wishing to identify ethnically as Jews could do so more easily in a philanthropic than in a synagogal setting. Still, that would have been on the whole unintentional. Social welfare, divorced from Judaism, would have been revolutionary and would have marked a break with the faith; there is no indication of such a departure at this time. The first overtly secular Jewish philanthropy in the United States made its appearance in New York in 1841, it called itself the New

Israelite Sick-Benefit and Burial Society and, after all, how secular could its burial function have been?³⁷

The Jewish agencies engaged in social welfare were the congregations, the confraternities, and the various societies concerned with education and the relief of impoverished children. What did these organizations do for those in need? Isaac M. Wise, who landed in New York in 1846, said that there were two philanthropic agencies and a number of decaying pious associations. He was rather taken aback to discover that there was no Jewish hospital in the country, nor any adequate provision made for widows and orphans. But Wise's evaluation was unduly harsh. Before the late 1830's—when the German immigration began in earnest—the Jewish population in the United States had been small. There was no inordinate amount of poverty and people in need were probably helped. The charitable system that had existed since colonial days prevailed; the poor were given food, clothing, fuel, and matzos for Passover. Transients were passed on to the nearest community or shipped to a distant port if the client so desired. There was no hospital and no need for one. The sick and old were subsidized or boarded out. Those unable to help themselves were given nursing care. Small loans, interest-free, had been made in the eighteenth century; in the early nineteenth century, more substantial loans were offered by the *hevrot*, and interest was charged. Members who borrowed from the charities were no doubt glad to pay the interest; they had little or no collateral, and the banks could be expected to deny them credit.³⁸

Provision seems to have been made for orphans, too. They were not housed in institutions, but were nearly always boarded out in private homes. The care of orphans was tied up with education and apprenticeship. In those days when public schools were little better than pauper schools, the education of Jewish children was a matter of concern for congregations. Children of the poor could not afford the tuition for tutors or for good private schooling. Children were given a Jewish education—such as it was—by the synagog-community or a *hevrah*; the tuition bill at some humble private school was also picked up. A number of orphans may have been sent to the public schools, inadequate though they were. The aged were given a dole—a pension, as it were. Debtors, on occasion, were helped to leave jail; indentured servants were redeemed, though Jewry did not make a practice of it. Immigrant aid was the prime and constant problem for the congregations and the communities. A great many newcomers needed help, at least temporarily; the problem became acute when there was an economic depression or a sudden upsurge in the number of newcomers. French émigrés had to be taken care of in the 1790's; refugees from St. Domingo landed in Charleston after the servile revolts.³⁹

Efforts were made to provide work for the unemployed, although here, as in other areas, there were no organized systematic attempts to help the poor help themselves. When the charity societies ran out of money, they refused to go into debt to help people in need; they simply ceased to function as philanthropic organizations. No one can doubt that some claimants for help did take advantage of the competing Jewish agencies—which does not necessarily mean that the men and women who sought aid were malingerers or frauds; they needed all the help they could get. Conceivably an individual in distress might turn to a congregation, to a *hevrah*, to his own mutual-aid society, and even to a non-sectarian Gentile organization in which he was enrolled. He was often entitled to multiple benefits by virtue of the dues he had paid.⁴⁰

It happened more than once that a Jew in the poorhouse turned to the community leaders and besought them to provide him with kosher food. The congregation had no choice but to help a man adhering to a Jewish way of life. Typical of these derelicts, and apparently there was a number, was Lyon Jonas, a furrier. Born in Poland, he emigrated to London and then crossed the ocean to New York. During the Revolutionary War period, he remained in the city under the British and continued in the fur business both as a wholesaler and retailer. In 1786, he feuded with the leaders of Shearith Israel; he was a flagrant violator of the Sabbath. Two decades later, he had come down in the world and been reduced to the status of a derelict. The congregation sent him to the local almshouse and paid his way. After a time, he refused to remain there—the food was not kosher—moved on to Philadelphia, where his son lived, and then once again came back to New York. The impatient congregation finally gave him a substantial sum on his promise to settle permanently in Baltimore. In less than two years, he was back in New York, where the congregation continued to support him. Seemingly, he spent his last days in an almshouse and died there in February, 1817; Shearith Israel saw to it that he was given a Jewish burial. How many other Jews in those days ended their lives as paupers?⁴¹

In the decades of the early republic, local congregations turned for aid to one another when they built anew. The congregations and the fraternities provided family relief and immigrant aid for the distressed. Transients were helped—particularly if they asked for a grant to leave town. Some of these wanderers were certainly professional beggars living off the bounty of the congregations and the charities in the different towns of their peregrinations. In general, the problems of relief facing American Jewry in those days are similar to those confronting welfare agencies today. The author of the biblical book of Deuteronomy was right: “the poor shall never cease out of the land” (Deut. 15:11).

Were Jews satisfied with their charities? In order to answer this query, it is necessary to ask first what were their goals and what did they hope to accomplish. Their prime goal was to help Jews in need. It is true, however, that ambivalence characterized their conduct, a perhaps unconscious conflict in their approach to giving. English law and tradition made poverty almost a crime; the poor were viewed most unsympathetically. This harsh attitude to the impoverished is reflected in some of the congregational and charity society constitutions and in the annual report of the *hevrot*. By contrast, Judaism has maintained that all the impoverished must be helped and does not condemn them because they are poor. This ambivalence in the Jewry of that day manifested itself in the preferential treatment accorded clients of middle-class provenance; in practice, all Jewish suppliants, even professional beggars, schnorrers, were given aid. In the final analysis, poverty was not deemed a crime. Helping unfortunates strengthened the faith; bestowal of alms fortified the religious loyalties of the donor and the recipient alike. Liturgical differences and disparate European backgrounds may have kept Jews apart, but deeds of lovingkindness, *gemilut hasadim*, made them one. Communal societies united Jews and overrode congregational particularism. Since most Jews were essentially members of the same extended middle class, those in authority did not hesitate to respond to appeals from suppliants. It was a mitzvah to help a fellow Jew; observance of this divine injunction brought a double reward; "charity (righteousness) delivereth from death" (Proverbs, 10:2) and guarantees the generous a share in the world to come.

The ultimate imperative which prompted Jews to avoid the secular charities and to take care of their own was a very realistic one. Jews like other members of a "church" were not expected to turn to the state for help. In medieval tradition, it was the churches and allied institutions which took care of the poor; the Jews, too, had always done so in Europe. When the first Jews, impoverished, arrived at New Amsterdam in 1654, they appealed for relief, and not in vain, to the Dutch church. Stuyvesant was indignant; he expected the Jews, like other sects, to make provision for their own sick and helpless. In this instance, the governor was clearly unfair; he knew that these newcomers, fleeing from the Portuguese in Brazil, had been despoiled by a privateer and robbed of many of their possessions. Jews in this country have always feared that if they sent their poor to public welfare institutions, the Christians would turn against them despite the fact that Jews, like others, were taxpayers. Jews then were certainly apprehensive lest they incur the ill will of their "hosts." What was equally true was that Jews had no desire to expose their poor to church indoctrination in any form. They believed also, and with justice, that public charity institutions did not want Jews. Municipal, county, and

state eleemosynary agencies were pleased when Jews did not resort to them; this policy of the Jews lessened the financial burden on the general community. Jews were quite willing to submit to what was in effect double taxation. They believed—and rightly—that Jews in a poorhouse could not observe the Sabbath properly; there would be no kosher food. What was worse, they would be constantly exposed to conversionists: the almshouses were still strongly Christian; the Christian evangelical spirit and approach prevailed in those public establishments, and Christians, like Jews, deemed spiritual therapy as effective as medical care. Jesus saves! If a Jew, God forbid, died in an almshouse there would be no Jewish prayers and no proper burial. The Jews knew that they could and would take better care, spiritually and physically, of their needy; there is little doubt that Jewish standards of support and concern were higher than those which characterized the poorhouse.

If Jews did not look after their own, the impoverished in desperation might well turn to a life of crime or to the embrace of Christian missionaries! Making a virtue of necessity, Jews bragged that they provided for their own poor. Speaking at the annual assembly of a New York Jewish charity, Dr. Peixotto said that “the proudest *badge* of any sect is, and should be that none of its members are dependent on the public eleemosynary institutions.” The next decade found Leiser repeating this boast, and when the Philadelphia minister and communal leader died, a eulogist, Simon Wolf, assured his audience that there were no Jews in the poorhouse, no Jewish beggars in the streets, and exceedingly few of the Chosen People in the jails of the country. To a degree, of course, Wolf’s statement was true in the first half of the nineteenth century. In general, Jews were pleased with what they were doing for the poor. Their chief concern was immediate relief. Personally, emotionally, Jews enjoyed helping the needy; it gave them a good feeling. As far as the known records report, there was little thought of rehabilitating the impoverished. The rational “scientific” approach to the problem of poverty was not to be studied seriously until the decade before the Civil War.⁴²

SOCIAL REFORM AND THE DEPRESSIONS

Comparatively still a miniscule group in 1840, American Jews were too busy solving their own welfare problems to play a role in reforming the larger society around them. Numerous Christian reformers in this generation were set on fighting the evils that threatened the whole of American society. Churches were often dedicated to social amelioration, to the abolition of slavery, capital punishment, prostitution, dueling, gambling, and alcoholism. They pleaded for medical care for the sick, for the establishment of hospitals, and for institutional care for orphans, the old, the

insane, and the blind. They were fully aware that juvenile delinquency was a serious problem, and many Gentiles were sympathetic to the demands of women for more rights in almost every sphere of life. Jewry as a body turned away from social reforms; reformers were on the whole unpopular; Jews, both native-born and immigrants, sought low visibility. All Jews lived under the shadow—the memory—of European discriminatory laws, and, in 1840, at least four states of the Union persisted, in law, in looking upon Jews as second-class citizens. Jews were apprehensive and cautious. There were among them many humanitarians who manumitted their “servants,” but even these were not abolitionists. By and large, the *hevrot* were providing care for Jews comparable to what Gentile reformers envisaged for society as a whole. Jews had no sense of guilt; let the Christians practice Christianity and take care of their own. This suggests a certain detachment from the larger American society, a lack of understanding of the social problems confronting the country as a whole.⁴³

Jewish congregations and communities fought shy of the major social reforms which so engrossed the attention and distinguished the activities of not a few Protestant churches in the early national period. Jews had yet to develop a philosophy—to say nothing of programs—of social justice. It would be another eighty years before a Jewish organization like the Central Conference of American Rabbis, founded in the late 1880's, would seriously address itself to the problems of America's new industrial society. But it was not only a diffidence inspired by Jewish historical experience which governed here; in addition, constantly facing the challenge of surviving from one depression to another, Jews could not afford what they considered the luxury of supporting social reforms. Social reformers in this country were spurred on by the suffering induced by the panic of 1837. The depression which began that year happened to coincide with the first perceptible surge of Jewish emigration from the German lands. Three hundred Jews, it is estimated, arrived in New York that year, and some of them were soon out of work. The tiny Jewish congregations and welfare organizations had to cope with a heavy charity load; new relief congeries for men and women were now formed in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Cincinnati. Leeser, in this fateful year, made an impassioned appeal on behalf of the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society of Philadelphia. Generosity, he assured his hearers, offered the Jews spiritual dividends; charity blessed the giver as much as the receiver. You can purchase eternal bliss by temporal sacrifice. God loves widows, orphans, and strangers! In New York, a number of Jews thought that the answer to the depression lay in a subsistence agricultural colony in Ulster County and established the utopian village of Sholem or Sholam—which faded away quickly enough when the depression passed and a measure of prosperity returned. Farming? It had been nearly 2,000 years since the Jews as a collectivity had been an agricultural and pastoral people.⁴⁴

In a way, the panic of 1837 marked a watershed in American Jewish social welfare. In towns where there was more than one charity-dispensing organization, the Jews found it necessary to combine their resources and to think in communal terms. Needs would have to be resolved not by separate societies and institutions, but by the community as a whole. The town or communal approach to the problem of relief was never forgotten by those American Jews whose roots went back to the anterevolutionary days when the concept of a total community was regnant. Charity workers in the 1820's were constantly reaching out to the community as a whole. When a Jew in Philadelphia deserted his little children, a member of the Ashkenazic United Hebrew Beneficent Society wrote to the Sephardim of Mikveh Israel inviting it and its charity affiliates to join in a common effort to help the children and thus keep them out of the hands of the missionaries.

When the economic impact of the Jackson-Van Buren depression was felt by American Jews, they were fully aware that welfare needs demanded federation not atomization. A joint committee from New York's Anshe Chesed and Bnai Jeshurun met together in 1837 and proposed that the leaders of the city's welfare societies conduct a common campaign to secure clothing, food, and cash for the suffering unemployed. One of the committee's suggestions was that the poor be shipped to other towns. This was the philosophy of "removal," really an evasion of responsibility and a return to the colonial tradition of shipping the poor to the nearest Jewish community. ("Removal" was an especially popular and recommended approach when the East European Jews began descending upon New York in the years 1880-1920.) The committee urged the newcomers to learn a craft and appealed to the local Jewry to patronize Jewish artisans. The year 1837 also witnessed an unsuccessful effort to unite the synagogues of New York in a common effort to bury impoverished strangers. From the 1830's on, no decade would pass without an attempt to federate the charities. There were many marked successes.⁴⁵

A SUMMARY

In the days of the early republic, as in the preceding colonial decades, the synagogue did not fail to take care of its poor. Jews looked askance at public welfare institutions, because they were Christian in spirit and conduct. With the arrival of newcomers in numbers and the developing need to assist them, a desire arose for a more efficient administration of the charities. It is not improbable that a sense of alienation impelled the newcomers to seek more togetherness. Though the congregation as such never ceased to dole out alms, there was now a wish to establish confraternities to provide for the needs of the immigrants. The mutual-aid aspect of

these societies attracted the immigrants; this type of insurance was all they could afford, but it was imperative that they secure it. Owing to such factors as liturgical particularism on the part of some, religious apathy on the part of others, a preference for ethnic rather than religious identification, and the inability of many individuals to pay dues to more than one association, these *hevrot* began to emancipate themselves from congregational control. Still it bears repetition: no truly secular Jewish charities took shape in the United States during this early national period. It is doubtful, too, whether even one *hevrah* before 1840 did not maintain some ties to a congregation.

Was the actual social service rendered in revolutionary and postrevolutionary days different in nature and intent from what had prevailed in earlier periods? There were no perceptible differences. With the exception of an occasional paid beadle or dues collector, the confraternity welfare workers were all volunteers. The actual social work done was carried on by these businessmen who had a sense of duty, of obligation to the community. Nathan Hart, of Charleston, is typical. This man, one of the city's prominent citizens, was active in politics during the Nullification controversy. As a Jew, he served Congregation Beth Elohim as president, and when the break came with the Reformers, aligned himself with the Orthodox. A staunch traditionalist, he objected to organ playing not only on the Sabbath but at any religious service. Hart's firm conviction that money must not be handled on the Sabbath disallowed any collection for a communal Gentile charity on that sacred day, though he did encourage a collection for such a charity when there were no religious services; indeed, he helped raise a very substantial sum. As president of Beth Elohim, he encouraged the giving of charity by the congregation and, though not wealthy, gave liberally of his own funds. He visited the sick and served actively in the local burial confraternity, the Hebrew Benevolent Society, whose presidency he held.⁴⁶

All in all, that generation knew no excessive number of Jewish charity societies, for the communities were small and congregations handled many of the welfare cases. In all likelihood, too, there was no compelling need for new *hevrot* prior to the late 1830's, because the number of impoverished families was still relatively small. By 1840, New York with its estimated 7,000 Jews had about 10 such organizations. The new towns west of the tidewater were satisfied with one pious association, or at the most two. Was there anything unique about these groups? Not perceptibly so, though no two were quite alike. Originally, each association was established to meet specific needs—to provide for immigrants or orphans, to care for the sick and to bury the dead, to supply fuel or matzos, to educate and clothe the children of the poor. Ultimately, to be sure, all were similar in that they became multipurpose eleemosynary institutions. Even

the mutual-aid societies, which limited their benefits to their own membership, tended to help others in distress. Most of the confraternities were willing on occasion to aid other Jewish institutions in need; they sent money to suffering Jews in other towns, and were generous to Christian organizations which turned to them. Though these confraternities never lost sight of their original purpose, they did extend their philanthropic horizons.

Women now became active in charity work. In some towns they reached out tentatively and began to help the men. More significant is the fact that women's societies developed in Philadelphia, New York, and Cincinnati. Women may have engaged informally in social service during the colonial period, but the sources are silent on this subject. One of the reasons that the women began to busy themselves with good works in the early nineteenth century was that the men now turned to them and urged them to do the actual footwork. Why now and not in the eighteenth century? Any answer would be a guess, but this much is known: the Gentile women had now begun to organize themselves; the Jewesses, members of a comfortable middle class, could do no less. Some Jewish women were not content merely to do housework; a few were active in business. They wanted to occupy and express themselves. Jewish women were living in an age when Gentile women began to unite and find themselves by working in the charities; some of these Christian women—not many—dedicated themselves to social reform, to temperance, to the abolition of slavery, and to the quest for women's rights. A few Jewish women were "feminists" only in their desire to be somebody, to let their personalities flower; they were generally in no degree assertive except in their humanitarian urge to help others, especially fellow Jews.

At first glance, the *hevrot* as a phenomenon would seem to be centrifugal in nature, a threat to communal unity. Actually, these societies strengthened a community by helping Jews of disparate tendencies to identify as Jews in an emotionally satisfying fashion. Thus immigrants remained loyal despite the shock of coming to terms with a new land and an overpowering milieu. In the course of time, the *hevrot* expanded their admission policies and extended their benefactions to the larger Jewish community; they became true communal agencies. In colonial and postrevolutionary days, up to about 1800, a monolithic Sephardic community had controlled worship, education, and philanthropy, but, with the appearance of multiple congregations, the unitary synagog-community ceased to exist. Some of the congregational *hevrot* which now came into being evolved after decades into communal agencies and thus became instruments of unification. Ultimately, in the late twentieth century, the local federation of charities became the primary institution reconstituting after a fashion the unity which had once prevailed on a religious basis in

the eighteenth century. There was this difference of course; the new cement in the twentieth century was no longer religion; it was charity and ethos. Back in the early 1800's, however, every *hevrah* was a highly appealing mini-Jewry offering the seeker security, peace, companionship and friendship.⁴⁷



CHAPTER NINE

JEWISH EDUCATION AND CULTURE, 1776-1840

INTRODUCTION: CHARITY AND EDUCATION

Communal Jewish education, as it might be called, during the early days of the American republic must be seen as an aspect of social welfare. Parents, in accordance with Jewish tradition and custom, were expected to assume full responsibility for the instruction of their young. Only when they had no means did the congregation-community take over. On the whole, this was an obligation which Jewry did not shirk. By the 1820's, societies had been organized in Philadelphia and New York with the joint purpose of relieving the unfortunate and educating the indigent. But long before that, as early as 1801, enterprising Charlestonians had already established a Hebrew Orphan Society to aid penniless mothers and educate their young. The Society had a school of its own where secular studies and, probably, Hebrew were taught. In 1828, even booming New Orleans, in its first synagogal statute, piously referred to the need of relieving the unfortunate and establishing schools. This genuflection in the direction of education betrayed the interests of the constitution's author, Jacob S. Solis, who had already tried in vain to establish an academy in the North. That same year of 1828, New York set up a Society for the Education of Orphan Children and Relief of Indigent Persons of the Jewish Persuasion (*Hinuk Nearim ve-Ezrat Evyonim*).¹ Rebecca Gratz pointed out, in her first annual report of the work done by her new Sunday School, that some of the children were clothed by a sewing society with which the school was allied.²

AMERICAN JEWISH LITERATURE, 1776-1840

SERMONS

Efforts were constantly made to provide schooling for the poor, but what of the non-poor? That obligation, as we have said, fell upon the shoulders

of the parents. Pursuing this subject further, what provision, if any, was made for the education of the average Jew, for his children, for adults? Was that generation conscious of the problems, of the needs? Actually, American Jewry was always exposed to indoctrinational influences of which it was hardly aware. Being Jewish was as natural as breathing; it was life. There was the home; there were the magical Hebrew prayers in the synagogue. It was immaterial that for most Jews the words meant nothing; intellectual cognition was simply not deemed imperative. The home rituals and the congregational services constituted the core, the source, of Jewish culture, education, loyalties. Yet beyond these there was a literature, books which Jews imported or even wrote themselves. Judah Monis, a Christianized Jew, printed his Hebrew grammar at Harvard in 1735, but there is no evidence that unbaptized Jews ever used this “essay” on the “Primitive Tongue.” More than a hundred years passed after the first Jewish refugees landed in New Amsterdam before a Jew—a clergyman, as it happens—published a Jewish work in New York City: a militant Hebrew prayer thanking God for driving the French out of Canada, but ending with a plea for peace, tranquillity, and prosperity. Composed in 1760, the prayer was accompanied by an English translation, which was also read at the service of Thanksgiving. The writer of the prayer was the New York hazzan, the Rev. Dr. Joseph Yesurun Pinto, whose doctoral degree was honorary and self-conferred. (Coming events cast their shadow; generations later every hazzan with a frock coat automatically became a “doctor.”)

The Friend to Truth who made the translation may well have been Isaac Pinto, a scholarly linguist, who had published a Sephardic English prayer book for the Sabbath and High Holy Days in 1766; four years earlier, a different High Holy Day prayer book had already appeared, with no author’s or editor’s name attached. These two Jewish liturgical works are probably the first English translations of the prayer books issued by confessing Jews. They were not employed in the service, but are patent evidence of the desire of worshippers to follow the ritual intelligently. Several years later, in 1773, on Pentecost, the Venerable Hocham, the Learned Rabbi Haijm Isaac Karigal, preached in Spanish to a large and distinguished audience in Newport’s beautiful synagogue. Only a few Iberian refugees were able to follow his discourse; the Ashkenazic majority and the Christians present could feast their eyes on his beautiful motley garb. The magisterial works of the first-century Jewish historian Josephus were also made available that year. Most Jewish intellectuals owned copies of the works of that ancient writer, although it is a question how many Jews read them; many probably looked upon the *Wars* and the *Antiquities* as Gentile literature since they had not been written in Hebrew.³

Much of the Jewish literature which Jews here wrote was called forth by the synagog and its needs. Beginning in 1805, the New York Jewish community and others, too, undertook to publish a variety of administrative documents, synagogal constitutions, rules, regulations, and special liturgies. After the Germans arrived in the late 1830's, congregational leaders were compelled to employ the German language if they were to keep in touch with their followers. The constitution of the young Baltimore congregation carried a German subtitle in 1840. No later than 1825, the societies for social welfare, Palestine relief, and education began printing their constitutions, notices, and annual reports. These documents are important, invaluable historical sources, which reflect the culture and life of the Jewish communities; they help the student trace the Americanization process, the advances of democracy—Jeffersonianism, if you will—in the synagog assemblies, for they reflect not only the duties and the obligations but also the privileges and immunities of the members. As literature, sermons are more insightful than constitutions. The contemporary religious culture is best reflected, not in the unchanging age-old liturgies, but in dedication orations, catechisms, textbooks, theological works, formal apologiae, in the first periodical to make its appearance (briefly in the 1820's), and in homiletical discourses. Sermons are important; they stimulate people to think, to reflect. Judaism is often best understood through its preachers; they are "leaders," often people of culture, steeped in secular studies.⁴

American Jewish ministers were concerned about the survival of Jewry, especially of the youth, in a permissive American world. This is why they insisted on intelligible Jewish instruction in the vernacular. In planning for the future, in challenging the assimilatory environment, they were conscious of the problem which had bedeviled diaspora Jews for two millennia. They had to harmonize the goals of the exclusive, ethnic Jew and the all-encompassing humanitarian protestations of Judaism. The leaders never failed to emphasize the universal and the ethical, even while justifying Jewish religious separatism. When articulate laymen spoke at synagog consecrations and other occasions of thanksgiving—where Christians were invariably present—they stressed the cosmopolitan aspects of their faith. Over the decades, the sermon slowly, gradually became a prime educational instrument. Rebecca Gratz listened carefully to Leeser when he preached.⁵

The first synagogal leader to put some emphasis on preaching seems to have been the native-born Gershom Seixas, though it is questionable whether he preached more than once or twice a year. His first published homily appeared in print in 1789; it was meant to honor a day of thanksgiving and prayer in conformity with the proclamation of the president. In his second published discourse which appeared in 1798, the hazzan

prayed for peace at the time of the undeclared war with France. He called for peace, for unity at home, for love of neighbor, “and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks” (Micah 4:3). In 1803, on the occasion of a thanksgiving service after an epidemic of the prevailing fever, he called on the members of Shearith Israel to make good use of an educational endowment which had just been established; the children must become an ornament to society. When Seixas died in 1816, he in turn became the subject of three eulogies. All three speakers had an Anglo-Saxon background; one was a native of England; two were of American birth. Religious addresses in English became more frequent by the 1820’s. The Protestant environment would not be denied. Even New York’s Rev. Moses L. M. Peixotto, whose native tongues were Dutch and Ladino, essayed an occasional talk in English. Some cantors were not able to preach; synagogal and other public addresses were then made by educated laymen. Jacob Mordecai (1762–1838), an autodidact who had read widely, delivered the address in 1822, when Beth Shalome of Richmond was dedicated. In this discourse, written in excellent English, he admonished his Jewish auditors to repent of their manifold transgressions, if they hoped for restoration. This was a call for a moral reformation. When they return to God, they will be restored to their ancient homeland and usher in an age of great national glory. It was a call to Jews to be Jews, yet it was also an address “most liberal and catholic in its spirit.” He told his audience of Jews and Gentiles that the whole human family, however diversified, believed in the One God: “The creator of the universe is not the God of a sect.” In 1825, the rebels in Shearith Israel, on the verge of seceding, were talking of addresses in the vernacular.⁶

That same year, the leftist Charleston Reformers, led by Isaac Harby and Abraham Moise, were also pushing hard for English sermons, necessary to edify the young and to gratify the old. Frightened by the pro-vernacular stress of the reformist rebels in their midst, Beth Elohim’s notables saw to it that the constitution of 1836 required the hazzan to preach every Sabbath. Whether the new rabbi Gustavus Poznanski complied is not known. He probably did; he had strong liberal leanings at that time. In 1830, Daniel L. M. Peixotto, the “rabbi’s” son, addressed New York’s Society for Orphan Children and the Relief of Indigent Persons of the Jewish Persuasion. His was a brilliant talk, for Peixotto had enjoyed an excellent education. A physician, Peixotto appealed to his listeners to diffuse knowledge and dispense charity among the ignorant and the indigent. Bnai Jeshurun in New York went out of its way in 1839 to hire a reader who was also a preacher; this was an important educational and acculturational step. Samuel Myer Isaacs (1804–1878), the Dutch-English hazzan who was then elected, thus became America’s first preacher in an Ashkenazic context, following in the footsteps of Leeser, the country’s

first clergyman to employ the sermon as a Sephardi educational medium. By 1841, Louis Salomons (Salomon), a man of learning and dignity, was lecturing in German to his flock in Philadelphia's Rodeph Shalom.⁷

Jewish women began writing poetry no later than the early nineteenth century. Gershom Seixas's sister Grace Nathan wrote poems which reflected sensitivity and imagination though none of them saw print prior to 1980. Were they expressive of Jewishness? No, if judged by specific Jewish references; yes, if any piece of writing is Jewish when written by a Jew. Penina Moïse (1797-1880) has always been acclaimed as the outstanding Jewish bard of her day, yet very few of her verses have any specific Jewish content. She may have composed 200 hymns; practically all of them could have been sung with equal gusto by pious Protestants, yet she was an ardent committed Jew. *Fancy's Sketch Book*, the first collection of her writings, was published at Charleston in 1833. Seven years later, when the Jews in Damascus were tortured on the false charge of using Christian blood in their Passover ceremonies, she wrote her "Lines on the Persecution of the Jews of Damascus." Shortly thereafter she composed a poem commemorating the building of Charleston's new synagogue. Decades earlier, in 1819, the anti-Jewish Hep! Hep! riots raging throughout Germany had inspired her to invite the victims to sail for these shores:

If thou art one of that oppressed race,
Whose pilgrimage from Palestine we trace,
Brave the Atlantic—Hope's broad anchor weigh,
A Western sun will gild our future days.⁸

LITURGIES

Liturgically, the nineteenth-century American synagogue was no vacuum. The hymns of Penina Moïse became an integral part of the liturgical expression cultivated in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Reform synagogues. (Over a dozen of her hymns were still included in the revised *Union Hymnal* of 1940.) A Philadelphia Jew, E. Roget, adapted a favorite Italian air of F. G. Bertoni for one of the traditional synagogal hymns. Another liturgical manifestation of the day was the Holy Day calendar. It was imperative that Jews, especially those in the villages, know the dates of the Jewish festivals. Passover and the High Holy Days were of particular importance, since it was then that men and women from the hinterland would trek to the big towns. The calendars published at this time covered many years, inasmuch as the purchase of a new calendar annually would have been a luxury for that thrifty generation. Prayer books were also indispensable. Many Jews until the 1820's certainly enjoyed using the numerous Hebrew-English works of David Levi, of London (d.1799/1801),

a humble craftsman who turned author, publisher, compiler, and apologist. American Jews purchased his dictionary, as well as his grammar, Pentateuch, and Passover ritual (Haggadah), but above all they welcomed his massive six-volume Sephardic-English prayer book which began appearing in 1789 and on which the later Sephardic American translations of Solomon H. Jackson (1826) and Isaac Leeser (1837) both leaned. Jackson, in his edition, omitted a prayer for the medieval martyrs; what he took to be the liberalism of contemporary society assured him that those murderous days had passed—this he declared nearly 120 years before the German Holocaust. As had been true of the eighteenth-century New York English liturgical translations, the English versions were rarely used in worship, but were meant to serve the curious and the intelligent who wished to ponder the meaning of the Hebrew prayers—an aim not always easily achieved. The intellectual Rebecca Mordecai, for one, was offended by the poor English translations; others, too, were certainly not edified by renderings which, on occasion, were hardly intelligible.

APOLOGETICS AND POLEMICS

Almost the only way antebellum American Jews exhibited significant cultural creativity was through their apologetic and polemical writings. They were harassed by frequent attacks in newspapers and magazines of the day and also in the sermons of Christian preachers. The decades of the early nineteenth century witnessed a religious rejuvenescence of the articulate Christian devout, who now often turned their attention to the Jews. It was not that most of these writers cherished any true love for the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but the persistence of the infidel Jews was a challenge to Christianity, a reflection on the validity of Christian faith and a testimony to its evangelical failure. Though conscious of the inadequacies of traditional Judaism, cultured modernist Jews like Isaac Harby deeply resented the denigration of their people and their religion by the pious and unenlightened followers of the gentle Jesus. Harby's well-stocked library contained Deist and anti-Christian works, attacks on the Inquisition, and the skeptical writings of Voltaire. Shakespeare's portrayal of Shylock annoyed Harby who saw the bard catering to the prejudices of a dark age. Though Harby's published analysis of *The Merchant of Venice* was not intended as an apology, it was one in fact. There is a certain unnatural ferocity in the character of Shylock, he wrote; Shakespeare's sole object in making the Jew a heartless usurer was to satisfy the malignant passions of his contemporaries. There is nothing redeeming in the portrayal of Shylock. The very plot is absurd. Harby resented a critic's statement that it was only proper that the Jew should be limned as a villain. Actually, as Harby pointed out, the villain in the original story was a Christian; the victim was the Jew.¹⁰

Like Harby, Rachel Mordecai—she later married Aaron Lazarus, of Wilmington, North Carolina—resented negative stereotypes of Jews; she was a proud woman and such judgments reflected on her. Maria Edgeworth, the popular English author of moral tales, had presented the Jew as avaricious and unprincipled in her writings. Apparently influenced by the justice of Rachel's reproaches, Miss Edgeworth wrote a novel in which she portrayed a Jewess of fine character, Berenice Montenero, who was to marry a Christian. (Rachel may well have been the model for Berenice.) In the denouement, Miss Edgeworth solved the problem of the Christian-Jewish love story handily: Berenice had actually been born a Christian! The Christian could marry a Christian. Rachel objected to this solution to the problem of intermarriage as a surrender to prejudice. Like Rebecca Gratz and the Gentile critic Mrs. Sarah Hall, Rachel probably believed that the lovers should have parted because of their religious convictions. It is interesting to note that Rachel on her deathbed became a convert to Christianity. A number of the women in the Mordecai family were spiritually unhappy; coping with the Christian environment was evidently too much for them.¹¹

Not seldom theological apologetics turned into polemics as the Jews rallied to defend themselves. Actually it is very difficult to distinguish between apologetics and polemics. Leeser was the exception; he was never belligerent in attack. His first volume of sermons, published in 1837, appeared under the pacific title: *Discourses Argumentative and Devotional on the Subject of the Jewish Religion*. Though there were liberal Christians who were not unsympathetic to Jews, most Christians looked askance at them. Hence Jews, constantly on the defensive, were given to reading and publishing apologetic and polemical works. Eager for ammunition against opponents, Jews of that generation read the published Protestant attacks on the Spanish Inquisition, which had imprisoned and tortured so many of their fellow Jews, and relished the writings of the Deists, who were assailing the very principles upon which Christianity was built. It is true that the Deists were opposed to revealed religion and also rejected the Old Testament, but at least they attacked the New Testament with equal vehemence! The Jews were interested in any book that questioned or denied the authority of the Gospels. It became evident on close analysis that, though Jews were a heterogeneous lot, they were all in agreement in asserting the superiority of Judaism. Aware that the Federal Constitution held all religions equal before the law, the bold ones among them did not hesitate to express themselves freely in theological disputes with Christians. To be sure most Jews were securely ensconced on the right theologically, but there were always liberals and radicals among them. Charles T. C. Cohen, of New York, a chemist, was a well-known atheist. Most Jews, realizing that de facto this was a Christian country, were content to

remain apologists; they did not lean too heavily on the first article of the Bill of Rights. If they did engage in polemics, they did so cautiously. They knew the limits of tolerance.¹²

Only rarely did Jews themselves publish anti-Christian literature. The actual publishers were frequently non-Jews appealing primarily to Gentiles who were not in sympathy with orthodox Christianity. One such apologia appeared with a Hebrew title. In 1791, *Emet ve-Emunah*, “Reason and Faith” (really Truth and Faith), was printed by F. Bailey in Philadelphia; the 1804 Richmond edition did have a Jewish publisher, a local shohet and shopkeeper named Marcus Levy, who had once been fined ten shillings and costs for keeping his store open on Sunday and selling to blacks and others. The book was ascribed to a pseudonymous Rabba Henriquis, but the actual author was Rabbi Joshua Hezekiah de Cordova (d. 1797), a scholarly Jamaican clergyman who was also a Hebrew poet. This work, written to refute Deists and freethinkers, had appeared in Jamaica originally in 1788 at a time when the Jewish community there was probably larger than any in the United States. Levy, in a preface to his edition, set out to appeal to the enlightened citizens of Virginia who in those Jeffersonian days were moving to the left. Radicals and philosophers, said Levy, undermined a reverence for the Supreme Being and His justice and thus imperiled the foundations of civil society. Rabbi de Cordova defended revelation and the superiority of the Jewish law, though he was quick to admit that both Christianity and Islam also taught love and kindness. Judaism commanded its followers to love not only one another but the stranger as well. It is the Jewish law which has enabled Jews to survive the great empires of antiquity. The continued existence of the Jews and God’s intervention on their behalf supply the veriest proof that He exists. All men of all faiths who travel to meet God will arrive at the same goal, no matter what road they follow!¹³

Deism had a following in post-Revolutionary America. Individual Jews, liberal religionists, were in sympathy with its philosophy; others, traditional in their beliefs, were interested in Deism only because it served their polemical purposes. Thus the Deistic works seem to have been eagerly purchased by Jews who read works like *The Grounds of Christianity Examined by Comparing the New Testament with the Old* (1813), the anti-Christian work of George Bethune English, a New England writer and subsequent adventurer. An apologia of this time that Jews probably bought and read was Philip Lefanu’s translation of Abbé Antoine Gué-née’s *Letters of Certain Jews to Monsieur Voltaire, Containing an Apology for Their Own People and for the Old Testament, etc.* The 1795 Philadelphia edition reprinted the 1777 Dublin translation. The book was primarily a defense of the Hebrew Bible, which Voltaire had attacked. Both the French and the American works included letters of a distinguished European pub-

licist, Isaac de Pinto (not to be confused with the American of the same name), who defended Jews against the aspersions of Voltaire in his article on the Jews in the *Dictionnaire Philosophique*. It is very probable that Marcus Elcan (d. 1808) included the Lefanu volume in his substantial library. Elcan, a Richmond merchant, was the first president of the local congregation, established in the late 1780's. He did own a number of the works of David Levi, the most widely-read of Jewish apologists. In his *Succinct Account of the Rites and Ceremonies of the Jews*, Levi described Jewish religious practices and discussed the concepts of predestination, freewill, and resurrection. Christians, especially, were very much interested in these doctrines which are among the fundamentals of Christian theology. The Jews, said Levi, are not unfriendly to Christians, for Judaism maintains that humane Christians will also be "saved." The traditional rabbinic citation that righteous Gentiles have a share in the world to come recurs in nearly all the apologetic works of this period. The list of books in Elcan's library also included Levi's *Dissertations on the Prophecies of the Old Testament*, a volume in which Levi refuted the arguments of Christian theologians that the Hebrew Bible foretold the coming of Jesus as the promised Messiah.¹⁴

In the 1790's, the Jews were most eager to use Levi's apologias, for there were no Jews here courageous or learned enough to enter the lists against the missionaries. It was Levi who defended the Jews against the importunings of the Rev. Joseph Priestley, the English Unitarian clergyman and scientist—Priestley, a political and religious liberal and no Judeophobe, was a formidable opponent. After the publication of Priestley's *Letters to the Jews Inviting Them to an Amicable Discussion of the Evidences of Christianity* in 1787, the Anglo-Jewish apologist tackled the problems of Jesus as Messiah, his crucifixion by the Jews, the authority of the Mosaic code, and the Jewish exile as punishment. Levi's rejoinders are found in all Jewish apologies; many of his arguments go back to medieval Jewish writers. In 1794, Benjamin Gomez, the New York stationer and bookseller, published Priestley's *Letters* and Levi's answers in a one-volume work. What prompted Gomez to undertake publication of the book? Obviously because he believed that there was a market for such a work. Thousands in the late eighteenth century may have rejected religion in its evangelical form, but there were many more who were interested in religion. The French Revolution induced people to reexamine their traditional religious beliefs. Anti-biblical literature was widely read. As a Jew, Gomez probably hoped that his publication would help Jews to find ready answers; even more probably he wanted a book the Gentiles, too, would read, and indeed Jefferson was one of the book's many readers. It is worthy of note that Gomez retained David Levi's citation of Jeremiah 14:14 on the title page: "The prophets [Jesus and the apostles] prophesy lies in

my name.” Levi in England had printed this verse in Hebrew, which few could read; Gomez in America translated it into English, which all could read!

Priestley wanted the Jews to convert to his brand of Unitarianism and to acknowledge the divine messianic mission of Jesus. Saint John to the contrary (John 4:22), salvation belongs to Jesus. If the Jews have suffered God’s displeasure, it is because they have rejected the Galilean. They must accept him, though if they so desire they may remain on the periphery of Christendom as a distinct socioethnic sabbatarian church. (Dr. Priestley’s suggestion has something in common with the platform of the late twentieth-century “Jews for Jesus.”) Conversion to Christianity, Priestley said, would be followed by the restoration of the Jews to their Promised Land. Judaism was of divine origin. Priestley’s sincere sympathy for Jews is frequently reflected in his writings and remains evident in a book which he wrote after he left England to settle in Pennsylvania, his *Comparison of the Institutions of Moses with Those of the Hindoos and Other Ancient Nations*. Hoping that American Jewry would also read this new work of his, he turned to an acquaintance, Simon Levi, of Philadelphia, and asked him to further its sale.¹⁵

In his two-volume *Age of Reason*, Thomas Paine, then in Paris, severely criticized the Old Testament, its heroes, and its theology. The Old Testament, he wrote, is not an authentic work; it is not the word of God; it is not a moral book, and its pages are stained with the murder and the blood of innocent men, women, and children. In answer to Paine’s attacks and the antibiblical fulminations of others, David Levi wrote *A Defence of the Old Testament* in 1797, reprinted that same year by Naphtali Judah. As in his refutation of Dr. Priestley, Levi, here, too, maintained that the Hebrew prophecies—not the Christian interpretations—are true. The Mosaic Law is the only valid one; all the Christian claims for Jesus are unacceptable and are to be rejected. Like the Gomez publication, this Judah reprint was certainly intended for the Christian market, since Christians, too, had a stake in maintaining the authenticity and the validity of the Old Testament. The Jewish Sacred Scriptures were as much Christian as they were Jewish; they were an integral part of Christian religious literature.¹⁶

The very thought of abandoning Judaism and embracing Christianity frightened most Jews, whether the idea was proposed by liberals like Priestley or by the “fundamentalists” of that day. The conversion of but one member of a family threatened the peace and unity of the family as a whole. Conversion was looked upon as cultural genocide. Apologetics, therefore, was very important as an instrumentality to defend the Jew from extinction. Thus in 1816 when Joseph Samuel Levi Frey (1771–1850), an aggressive Jewish-Christian missionary, came to the United

States, the Jews were very disturbed. That same year, an anti-missionary non-Jew republished an attack on Frey in New York. The *Kol Yaakov*, *Koul Jacob* (Voice of Jacob) had been written by Jacob Nikelsburger, a German Jew living in England; in 1814, he also attacked Frey and the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews. It remained for the immigrant Nikelsburger to answer Frey's claims that Jesus was the long expected Messiah. Are we to assume that no English Jew of that day held himself capable of refuting Frey? It is far more likely that English Jewry, still politically disabled, deemed discretion in all confessional matters the better part of valor.¹⁷

It was a Christian who republished Nikelsburger's anti-Frey booklet, and it was another Christian, writing under the pseudonym of "Tobit," who attacked Frey for his conversionist activities and publications. The exact title of this new book was: *Tobit's Letters to Levi, or, A Reply to the Narrative of Joseph Samuel C. F. Frey* (1816). By calling Frey Levi, "Tobit" set out to imply that Frey was still a Jew and not a sincere Christian. It is not easy to determine what prompted "Tobit"—or the American publisher of *Koul Jacob*—to assail Frey. "Tobit" was no Deist; he cherished the values of both the Old and the New Testament. Castigating Frey as a demagogue, he denied his integrity and questioned whether a bad Jew could become a good Christian. There were Christians in London, whence Frey had come, who had denounced him as a man of little moral worth. The Jews, "Tobit" implied, needed no Frey to lower their moral niveau. There were no profligates, no murderers among them; they counted no prostitutes among their women. The Jews here in the United States are proud, affluent, able, successful; they number men of morality, wisdom, talent. There is no reason why a Jew will not one day become President of the United States. There were some Gentiles whose real motive in challenging the conversionists was to attack the basic documents of Christianity. "Tobit" was certainly not of this group. He was probably one of many committed Christians who had rejected missions to the Jews on principle. Such Christians were no doubt readers of an American edition of the *Letter of Moses Mendelssohn to Deacon Lavater*—the Berlin Jew's answer to Johann Kaspar Lavater, a Zurich preacher who wanted to convert the German Jewish Socrates. It was Lavater who had challenged Mendelssohn in 1769 either to refute a French cleric's work on Christianity or accept it and be baptized. Mendelssohn had answered Lavater cautiously in 1770.¹⁸

Mendelssohn's apologia had been couched in courteous terms—necessarily; eighteenth-century Frederician Prussia would have left him no choice. American religious apologists, both Christians and Jews, were at times less moderate. As suggested above, the Christian anti-conversionists were not a homogeneous lot, but this much the Gentile freethinkers and

the committed Christians did have in common: they distrusted evangelical soul-savers who claimed to have the only truth. The liberals believed that, in matters of religion, all had a right to find their own way to heaven. Tolerance in the realm of faith and belief was the least one could accord fellow Americans. Jews, in particular, were bitter about the missionaries. They had been under the impression that America was a free country where they would be spared the seductive or intimidating religious advances so characteristic of their old European homelands. The missionary surge stimulated an anti-conversionist counter-response. Calling himself "An Israelite" in 1820, one anti-missionary writer, published a polemic entitled *Israel Vindicated, Being a Refutation of the Calumnies Propagated Respecting the Jewish Nation in Which the Objects and Views of the American Society for Ameliorating the Condition of the Jews, are Investigated*. Originally the title carried the additional clause: "and Reasons Assigned for Rejecting the Christian Religion." That sentence was deleted when the publisher went to press. Even in free America, writers and printers were fearful lest polemics be damned as blasphemy.¹⁹

Israel Vindicated is very probably the work of a Gentile New York journalist, George Houston. Not necessarily a philosemite, he was an immigrant, a Deist, who had once served a jail term in England for his radical views. The publisher was also an English newcomer to these shores, Abraham Collins, a Jew. Collins may have encouraged Houston to write *Israel Vindicated*, indeed may well have supplied him with some of his material. Collins, well educated, had studied Hebrew and had traveled on the Continent before coming to America. In later years, he was an active member of Bnai Jeshurun. Coming from England where Jews were still without any political rights he became an ardent American patriot. Even England which the cleric John Oxlee says is the country of choice for Jews, cannot compete with America. Until the Jews can recover their ancient rights and dominions and take their rank among the governments of the earth, *this* is their chosen country.²⁰

In all probability there were ancillary reasons for the writing of *Israel Vindicated*, assuming that Collins was more than a passive publisher. The year 1819 had witnessed the anti-Jewish Hep! Hep! riots in Germany. Jews were sensitized to discrimination, to encroachments, both here and abroad. In a sense, this book was a plea on behalf of real equality for Jews in an America at least six of whose original thirteen states as late as 1820 had not yet completely emancipated their Jewish citizens. The book itself followed the pattern which Montesquieu had employed in his *Lettres Persanes*, the strategy of letters as a literary device whereby make-believe people correspond. In the same fashion, two American Jews, one in New York and the other in Philadelphia, wrote to each other and discussed Jewish problems of the day. They proved—at least to their own satisfac-

tion—that Jesus was not divine, that he was not the Messiah; he may never have existed. The Gospels? They may not even be authentic. If it is a sin to be a commercial speculator and to neglect the crafts, then blame the Christians, who have left the Jews no other alternative. Judaism believes in the worship of the Deity and universal benevolence toward man. The goal of the author of *Israel Vindicated* was to do away with anything that impeded social relationships between Jews and Gentiles. The Jew insists on absolute equality; he objects to an established church, no matter what form it assumes. Jews will not submit to defamation. The book's bold approach and its unabashed criticisms of Christianity's beginnings were denounced as calumnies by some Christians of that day. A number of well-established Jews, frightened by the critical candor of *Israel Vindicated*, hastened to assure their non-Jewish friends that they had not sponsored the new book, that Jesus and Christianity were to be lauded for their moral teachings. Three years later *Israel Vindicated* was republished in London, the first American "Jewish" book to gain recognition abroad.

In 1823, the year that *Israel Vindicated* crossed the ocean, Collins himself published *The Voice of Israel*, a brochure in which he expounded his views on Christianity and its founder, views re-echoing those expressed by Houston and *Israel Vindicated*. Collins now appeared clearly as a militant Deist, strongly anti-church, anti-Catholic, anti-Protestant. He was very much at home in the New Testament; the Golden Rule he recognized as Jewish and the Lord's Prayer also. Like all other Jewish apologists and polemicists of his day, he denied all the claims made for the supernatural Jesus: the Nazarene was an observant Jew, a Galilian artisan. The stories in the Gospels are all lies, and a great lie is as easily told as a little one. The other-worldly maxims of Christianity are an "outrage to human nature and to common sense." Christianity is at odds with nature and reason. Collins was atypical as a Jew who was both a loyal religionist and an aggressive Deist. Apparently it was no problem for him to resolve this antinomy. Twenty years after the appearance of *The Voice of Israel*, Collins reprinted a substantial brochure of the English rector John Oxlee, who had come out strongly "on the inexpediency and the futility of any attempts to convert the Jews to the Christian faith." About a third of this work contains material inserted by Collins, whose original purpose was to convince American Protestants that they were wasting their time attempting to convert the Jewish masses. This was also Oxlee's view, although the pastor hoped that ultimately the Jews would come to Jesus—but still remain Jews. Like Priestley, Oxlee, too, believed in "Jews for Jesus." Collins admitted that some Jews had converted here in the United States, but they were not good people. The ministers would do better to make Christians out of their own flock. Judaism, said the apologist, had been divinely revealed; its morality is as pure as the sun. "We never ar-

raign the faith of others—let none then, arraign our faith. . . . The religion of the Jew requires no defence; it speaks for itself; it is the religion of nature—the religion of reason and philosophy.”²¹

The literary vintage of the year 1823 was a good one for the Jews. It was then that the Baltimore branch of the American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews reprinted an address of an English conversionist, the Rev. George Stanley Faber, who had been publishing missionary tracts for years. New York newspapers picked up the Baltimore pamphlet much to the annoyance of Solomon Henry Jackson, who sat down at once and issued a counterblast: *Examination and Answer to a Sermon Delivered by the Rev. George Stanley Faber*. Like Faber, Jackson, too, marshaled his proof-texts from the Hebrew Bible. That source could not be wrong; it was divinely inspired. Christianity, wrote Jackson, has no validity. Ultimately all Christians—by then circumcised, not baptized—will stream to Jerusalem to accept the truth from a restored Jewry and “the only true religion.”²²

The very same year that Jackson wrote his answer to Faber he published America’s first Jewish periodical, *The Jew*. It was a monthly, and its title page reads: “A Defence of Judaism Against All Adversaries and Particularly Against the Insidious Attacks of *Israel’s Advocate*.” The latter was a missionary newspaper closely allied to the American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews. Thus, this first American Jewish magazine made its appearance to repel the advances of persistent conversionists. (Seven years later the first Catholic newspaper was published to defend the Mother Church from the attacks of her enemies.) On the title page of Jackson’s paper also appeared the following quotation from Psalm 119:42, “And I will answer the blasphemers of Thy Word.” The fact that to translate the Hebrew *horfi*, he used the word “blasphemers” points up his polemical approach (Leeser preferred “the one that reproacheth me.”)

The arguments and proof texts that Jackson employed are certainly not new; there were no new literary weapons in the armory of Jewish apologists. What *is* new, in a way, is the aggressive spirit which distinguished Jackson. He was resentful that even the Unitarians and the Deists did not spare the Children of Israel. Actually, Jackson’s *The Jew* was no newspaper but a series of tracts written in answer to attacks on Jewish doctrine. The editor reprinted Moses Mendelssohn’s answer to Lavater and for the first time published the letters of Benjamin Dias Fernandes. The Dias apologias in defence of Judaism were to assume a classic stature. The text Jackson used was from a manuscript in the possession of Sampson Simson, the New York philanthropist. Isaac Leeser, years later, issued a more complete collection of the letters with the avowed purpose of giving the Jews material to ward off conversionists and missionaries. The only news items Jackson included in his periodical were detailed reports

on the Jews of China and those living along the Malabar Coast of India. The paper lasted for two years before it ceased publication. It may well be that it elicited no support from Jews. It is possible after all that Jews did not yet consider the despised conversionists a real threat.²³

By the 1820's, Jews began to make their appearance in the daily press in letters to the editor, letters in which they not only defended themselves but carried the war into the camp of the Christians. Thus, a Jew writing under the pseudonym of "Levi" ingenuously informed the Christian readers of George Houston's *Deistic Correspondent* that everything they believed was false, that the Mosaic Code alone was divinely inspired. The Ten Commandments of the ancient Hebrews would answer all the religious needs of *The Correspondent's* readers. A year later, in 1828, another writer, employing the same name "Levi," published a letter defending Judaism in *The Correspondent*. This "Levi" wrote that Jesus had attacked the religious conduct of individual Jews, but not the faith itself. The letterwriter manifested a more than cursory knowledge of the contemporary critical literature on the New Testament. He was very probably a Gentile, since few, if any, American Jews in that decade were at home in the scholarly work dealing with Christian origins.²⁴

In 1837, Jackson printed David Davies' *The Philosophy of the Hebrews and of the Hebrew Scriptures*. Davies was an immigrant Jew who had in all likelihood come from Holland or England. He was obviously at home in the original Hebrew text. His work, written in 1836, was dedicated to Solomon Herschel, Chief Rabbi of the German Jews (the Ashkenazim) in London. It appears to be a series of lectures delivered on a Saturday afternoon in New York City. At Bnai Jeshurun? The Hebrew Bible is God's handiwork; the Mosaic writings had already been exploited by the early Greek philosophers. The Jews, of course, are among the great philosophers of history; the Bible is a scientific work; religion and science are not in conflict; biblical cosmogony is Newtonian; the earth does indeed revolve around the sun. The deluge of Genesis is no myth, but is proven by the marine deposits on the peaks of the highest mountains. King Solomon was one of the greatest of the natural philosophers. Judaism will never disappear, for God has sworn to preserve his Chosen People. Because men have free will they can choose between good and evil, and because the Jews have chosen evil, because they have not observed His Law, God has seen fit to punish them—but in no wise have the Jews been chastened because they rejected Jesus! Prejudice and anti-Jewish laws are disappearing; we are now enjoying freedom. "Let us bury in oblivion the acts of those who are merely the instruments of torture in the hands of divine power." Jews must further their education; only through this means can we understand the great truths of religion and justice. God is the source of all knowledge; through knowledge we acquire wisdom, and with wisdom

come peace and happiness. The more general education there is on the earth, the more tolerance there will be. Jews must acquire learning and develop industry and enterprise, if they are to be accepted by the peoples of the earth. We must not condemn others if their opinions do not square with ours. Thus far Davies. Like other forward-looking Jews of his day, he hoped that the congregation would appoint a religious leader able to explain the beauties of Judaism, at least to the enlightened. (This was written shortly before the English preacher Samuel Myer Isaacs was brought to Bnai Jeshurun in 1839.)²⁵

Davies came to grips with science. Like other American intellectuals, he was moving towards a scientific theology which integrated the best in contemporary knowledge with the eternal biblical verities. Dr. Jonas Horwitz, another American Jew, when faced with the same challenge gave a different answer. About the year 1839, Horwitz published *A Defence of the Cosmogony of Moses, Being Ist. a Vindication from the Attacks of Geologists, etc.* The title tells the the story. Horwitz, a German Jew who had come to this country in the early 1800's, studied medicine and in 1815 wrote his doctoral dissertation on colic. Before he became a physician he made a living teaching Hebrew, primarily to Christian clergymen. There is no question, as to his competence: he was a linguist, a competent Hebraist, and had learned to write a good English letter.²⁶

Christian ministers in America had been interested in the Hebrew text of the Bible ever since the days of the Pilgrim Fathers. Clergymen were supposed to know the Old Testament in the original, though very few actually did. Monis's 1735 *Grammar of the Hebrew Tongue* had been prepared primarily for the Christian ministerial students of Harvard. Christian scholars continued to publish Hebrew grammars. Before 1812, numerous different works on the Holy Tongue had already been printed in the colonies and in the new republic. There is no reason to doubt that the grammars which Jews would publish later were written primarily for the Gentile market. During the second decade of the nineteenth century, when more people began to concern themselves with the Christian religion, there was a heightened interest in publishing a Hebrew Bible. The war with England in 1812 raised prices on imported books, and in 1813 Horwitz issued a prospectus seeking subscriptions for a two-volume unvocalized Hebrew Bible which he proposed to publish. He had no difficulty securing sponsors, including the president of Columbia College. The edition, a costly one, was certainly not intended for the handful of Jews in this country. Horwitz knew that Jews were rarely readers of the Hebrew or the English Bible. It is true that in the course of the liturgical year the Pentateuch was read in the synagog as part of the service, but few Jews had more than a faint intimation of what the reader was chanting unless they followed the English translation in David Levi's version. Ap-

parently the competition proved too much for Horwitz, who never went ahead with his prospective Bible. It did appear, however, in 1814 under different sponsorship and it was beautiful, one of the most attractive versions of the Holy Scriptures ever to have rolled off the presses.

Possibly Horwitz ceased to concern himself with editing a Hebrew Bible because he had begun to study medicine. By 1816 he was in Cincinnati, an itinerant physician, but he sank no roots there. His scare advertisement that he would save the town from an epidemic was very much resented by local physicians. He moved on. Hearing that Jefferson was hoping to establish a college in Charlottesville, Virginia, Horwitz applied for a job teaching German and the Oriental languages, but did not receive the appointment, even though he succeeded in enlisting the aid of Thomas Cooper, of the University of Pennsylvania. Cooper was a scholar, a lawyer, a scientist, a Unitarian, and a political liberal. Dr. Horwitz was not turned down because he was a Jew; there was no Judeophobia in the episode. David Isaacs, of Charlottesville, a merchant, was a contributor to the proposed new college. Had the Jews of this country been willing, Jefferson would gladly have inaugurated a department of Jewish studies. The idea was not new; Rhode Island College had made such a proposal as early as 1770 and had even received a gift from a Jewish indigo shipper in Charlestown, South Carolina. Horwitz continued to teach Hebrew, and probably practiced medicine in Philadelphia until 1830 when he moved on to Baltimore.

It was in that city that he published his *Defence of the Cosmogony of Moses*. Believing that the Bible was God's word, he did not believe, as did the good evolutionary geologists, in harmonizing religion and science. In this respect, he differed with Thomas Cooper, who was convinced that there was no need to reconcile the traditional account of creation and modern geological science. This conviction enraged the clergy, who set out, in vain, to remove him from the position he occupied at the time, the presidency of South Carolina College. It would seem that Dr. Horwitz practiced medicine in Baltimore, but there is no evidence that he was competent or successful. His father-in-law did not think much of him or of his wife, for he cut off Mrs. Horwitz with a shilling. During the Mexican War, Horwitz served as surgeon of a local volunteer group of soldiers, many of them Jews, but his regiment—if such it was—never saw active service. Few men can be unsuccessful in all things. Horwitz could console himself that he was the founder of a most distinguished family. Jonathan Phineas Horwitz, his son, was to head the Navy medical corps after the Civil War. Indeed, he had functioned as its head before his appointment as Chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery. Jonathan's children who had married out and who, it would appear, lived as Christians, buried him in the local Episcopal cemetery though there is no available evidence that Horwitz had ever become a Christian.²⁷

Horwitz's *Defence* may well fall into the realm of apologetics. On behalf of Christians and Jews alike, he had set out to repel the new scientists. The motive that prompted Nathaniel Levin and a Charleston associate to reprint an English translation of the sermons of Gotthold Salomon was apologetic in nature, too. The book was *Twelve Sermons Delivered in the New Temple of the Israelites at Hamburg*. (The Hamburg temple in Germany was a liberal Jewish synagog, one of the first in Europe.) An English translation had been made of the sermons at London in 1839 by Anna Maria Goldsmid, the daughter of Sir Isaac Lyon Goldsmid, the Anglo-Jewish emancipator and religious liberal. The American reprint appeared two years later. Both editions were intended, not only to edify Jews, but also to interest and attract non-Jews. It was Levin's hope that these sermons would remove unjust prejudices against the Jew and would present "the lofty character of the Israelite in its true colors." A book of this sort would help the Jews put their best foot forward.²⁸

THE NEW PEDAGOGY, NEW SPIRITUAL APPROACHES

To summarize, the works produced by American Jews, between 1776 and 1840 were not distinguished for their originality. The new literature included liturgies, an occasional letter to the press, and an anti-missionary periodical. At first, most of the books read and used by Jews came from England; by the 1790's, almost imperceptibly, Jews had begun to emancipate themselves from London imports and to reprint for themselves a few works of Jewish interest; by the 1820's, Jews were not only reprinting but publishing new original brochures and pamphlets. The market? As apologists, the Jews had Christians primarily in mind, though they were never loath to provide Jewish disputants with ammunition for the fray. The appearance of missionary societies and of an anti-Judaistic literature stimulated the Jews to efforts in their own defense; an apologetic literature was now created. Resenting the attacks directed against them and their faith, the Jews rose to defend themselves. They were not resigned to prejudice or disabilities. From 1829 on the apologies which had been published were reinforced by the works of Isaac Leeser, the most original, most pragmatic writer of the period.

Compared with the creative literary and organizational activities of American churches, coeval Jewish accomplishments seem of no great moment, but there were always individual Jews of secular culture—and of Hebraic and Judaic education, too—who sought to deepen Jewish knowledge, to further Jewish loyalties in others. Whether on the left or the right religiously, they were open to new ideas, new trends, new emphases; they were reaching out to the world around them. Eager to survive as Jews, they wanted equally to bring all Jews, both the native-born

and the immigrants, fully into the modern age. This desire is reflected in diverse educational proposals. The sociocultural projects that now surfaced reflected the views, different preconceptions, and ambitions of the individuals who proposed them. The age was one of significant change—especially in Europe, where the French Revolution evoked respect for the worth, if not the sanctity, of the individual and his personality. It was a time of educational ferment, of Deism, materialism, confrontation with religion, and often of a consequent move to the right or to the left, spiritually, culturally, politically.

Not the least of all these concerns was a new attitude toward children. Among the men who profoundly influenced the education of the new generation were Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Fellenberg, all of whom rejected formalism: the child was all important; facts to be learned were secondary. The child must be showered with love and understanding. Memorization was not education; flogging could be brutal. Children must be permitted to be themselves. These European educational pioneers were also interested in a return to the soil; they were convinced of the ennobling character of labor, of the values inherent in the arts. They preached the gospel of morality and ethics. The drive for education here in the United States came into being at the very time Christians in this country were evincing a further concern for religion. America witnessed the rise of numerous denominational schools, church academies, and colleges. It was an age of revivalism, of home and foreign missions, of Bible, conversionist and tract societies. Millions of Bibles and religious leaflets were printed and distributed. The country's miniscule Jewish intelligentsia, cognizant of all that was going on in non-Jewish society, was to a very modest degree influenced by the new educational outlook and the radical communitarianism in the air. The academic phase of the evangelical euphoria appealed to Jews; the religious enthusiasm disturbed them. They were attracted to Europe's innovative political and socioeconomic experiments, some of which were tied up with the new pedagogy. The views of Claude Henri Saint-Simon, the social reformer, and of François Marie Charles Fourier, the protagonist of communes, were known to most cultured Americans. Utopian agricultural enclaves and religious colonies began to make their appearance here. There was even an attempt to establish a Jewish commune during the years 1818-1821.

In confronting the imaginative innovations of the early nineteenth century, there was no consensus among the handful of concerned American Jews. A few nourished the hope for better, more modern schools for children, schools in a rural setting where they would be trained in crafts and farming. They were to go back to the soil, to avoid commerce. Radicals among them wanted to break with rabbinical Judaism, to resuscitate the biblical faith of old through new emphasis on universalism. At the

outset, let it be said, there was little or no prospect for success in any of these areas of thought and proposed social change, but—and this must also be said—individuals were reaching out, seeking. This handful was thinking furiously of the problems of Jewish spiritual, cultural survival, and advancement here in the United States. For them, this was the only land of freedom in the Atlantic basin. Whether conservative or radical, thoughtful, committed Jews realized that they were faced with acculturation and assimilation. They had to come to terms with a different, an unprecedented world that was challenging them economically, culturally, socially, spiritually. The problem of surviving in this tolerant American Christian world was real. In this struggle to help Jews, two rivulets of thought—they cannot be properly described as broad streams—now rose to the surface. The one was concerned with colonization, a colonization largely, though not exclusively, motivated by political and economic goals; the other directed its attention to cooperative living, to close settlement where sociocultural and religious changes were envisaged. The colonization aspect will be treated in another part of this work. Even Mordecai M. Noah, colonizer par excellence, also spoke of Jewish schools in his proposed colony, of education, of faith and morality, of sermons in English. And this was years before Leeser began to preach regularly. If the Jew was to be regenerated, it was here in the United States that the work had to be done. Thus Noah in 1820.²⁹

UTOPIAN ENCLAVE?

Moses Elias Levy (ca. 1781-1854) exemplifies the second school of thought; he is the most interesting and the most radical cultural and spiritual entrepreneur of this period. In him, the educational motif is dominant. Though he is not an important Jewish leader—perhaps he is not to be considered a leader at all—he is worthy of this biographical vignette. A native Moroccan who had lived in Gibraltar and then moved on to England and St. Thomas in the Danish Virgin Islands about the year 1800, Moses Elias Levy was a merchant, a lumber dealer, a land developer, and a commercial agent for the Spanish in Cuba. One way or another this brilliant autodidact acquired a good English education. His first visit to the United States must have been in 1818, when he was about thirty-six years of age. By then he had purchased tracts of land in Florida from the Spanish and had begun to recruit colonists. Subsequently, he became an American citizen. Completely devoted to Jewry and to Judaism, Levy had for years nursed far-reaching plans to regenerate the Jewish people practically all of whom were suffering civic oppression in his day. Politically inspired by the new freedoms that came with the French Revolution, he was religiously in no sense a traditional Jew, but he was part Deist and part reli-

gious reformer. He was very much influenced by what he knew of Israel Jacobson, the German lay founder of Reform Judaism, a banker and civil rights leader, who had set out to establish an industrial and agricultural school for Jews in the Rhineland. The institution was opened, but local restrictions rendered it impossible for industrial and agricultural courses to be introduced.

Levy, however, was determined to refashion the Jewish people—and this visionary had all the makings of a pseudo-Messiah. Had he been born 200 years earlier, he would have settled in Palestine in a conventicle of mystics or he would have died at the stake in Spain or Portugal. In a way, Levy, too, was an evangelist looking for disciples. Initially he hoped that his son David (1810-1886) would become his chief apostle, but this was not to be. He sent David to Norfolk to be with the Myerses, whom he instructed to secure a good tutor, preferably a liberal Unitarian clergyman, for the boy. There was no need for the youngster to observe the Jewish ceremonies, but he was expected to rest on the Sabbath and to eat no pork. After David grew up, he was a sore disappointment to his father. He had no interest in saving the Jewish people and preferred to become a lawyer—and the elder Levy detested lawyers! As David Levy Yulee, the young man went into politics, served in Congress as a Florida representative and United States senator, married a Christian, and lived as one.

Levy disclosed his hopes for American Jewry during the years 1818-1821. In a letter dated November 1, 1818, to his friend Samuel Myers, Levy wrote: the essence and spirit of our religion is important; we must understand the Bible. The basic concept of the Law of Moses is "To Love God in our fellow-creatures and our fellow-creatures in God." Love of God will unite our immortal souls to our Father in Heaven in the world to come. It is incumbent upon the Jews to teach love through their exemplary lives; to accomplish this, it is necessary to do away with all rabbinic interpretations of the Bible. In a spirit akin to that of the medieval Karaites, he insisted that the Bible is for Jews the basic source of Judaism. Sin? Sin is the turning against God and his fellow-creatures. Atonement is achieved through reform. Prayer? Prayer is praise of God and the call to live the moral life. We must educate our children. "The children belong to the community, not to the parents." The boys are to be taught Hebrew, secular subjects, agriculture, the sciences, the use of arms for defense, trades, music, the fine arts. Girls, too, are included in his educational plans. No books were to be used in the school and colony he had in mind. Every man in the settlement is to own five acres of land; Jews must return to the soil, and in 1818, it bears remembering, most Americans still lived in rural regions. The form of government to be supported is the republican, not the monarchical. To effectuate his goals, Levy proposed to raise a fund of \$50,000 for the purpose of educating children. The young-

sters his commune would seek to rear must manifest talent; they need not be overly religious. Levy proposed to visit Jacobson in Germany and to interest him in the American project. The German Reformer had broken with tradition. His chief instruments were religious reform and the establishment of a school. It is obvious in Levy's letter that Rousseau, Fourier, Pestalozzi, Fellenberg and Jacobson were, one might say, peeping over his shoulder.¹⁰

Finally, after some three and a half years, a plan was published in May, 1821, issued by a group that called itself "The Hebrew Society of New York." (Levy, like most of his compatriots, preferred the nouns "Hebrew" and "Israelite" to "Jew.") The new organization was to be a national one with cells of four men each in the different towns. A national executive elected by the cells was to establish a school in a rural setting to implement the curriculum outlined by the founder. As the published statement made clear, the basic hope of the Society was to further a universal love of mankind, to teach religion in its purity. The final circular distributed was a compromise. Levy could not afford to antagonize his associates—who all told, could have been counted on the fingers of his two hands. The academy which was to open its doors to Jewish youth was, after all, no radical departure from the conventional. The allies he had won were interested solely in raising the intellectual plane of American Jewry through the establishment of a good Jewish school. The curriculum was to embrace general studies and Hebrew as well as practical lessons in agriculture and horticulture. Religion, morality, patriotism, and the universal love of mankind were to be stressed. The "Institution" was to be financed by the cells. The school itself would bear the name *Chenuch*, which the founders translated as "Probationary," though "training" is closer to the intent of the Hebrew.

Cells were established in New York and Norfolk, where the Myerses formed the core. They were close to Levy, if only because their great merchant-shipping firm was then bankrupt and indebted to the rich Floridian. An effort to organize a group in Baltimore did not succeed, though Levy was very eager to co-opt other Southerners, especially since Charleston still sheltered the country's largest Jewish community. The Richmond Jews were kept au courant. Samuel Myers had probably tried to enlist the aid of his father-in-law, Joseph Marx, the banker, but Marx would have nothing to do with Levy's project. He was opposed to segregating Jews in a commune of their own, which he felt would only invite prejudice; there was already too much anti-Jewish sentiment in America. This outstanding citizen of Virginia seemed to imply that the preponderance of unacculturated immigrants aroused Gentiles to view them with a jaundiced eye. Looking at the Jewish newcomers, the old-timers were apprehensive; some of the affluent tended to forget that they themselves had

once been immigrants. Nevertheless, Marx, who himself had come from Germany, believed that, with the rise of a new generation of native-born Americans, Judeophobic prejudice would decline. Marx indeed had ideas of his own: since, as he assumed, Jews could not economically survive two days of rest—Saturday and Sunday—let Sunday become the new Jewish Sabbath. Jews, he mused, must stay Jewish, yet at the same time become one with the larger American body politic.³¹

As for Levy, American Jewish notables might well disagree with much that he proposed, but they could not ignore him entirely, even as a century later they would have to accord a hearing to the left wing religious radical Isaac Wolfe Bernheim of Kentucky, who, anti-Zionist that he was, proposed in 1918 the founding of the Reformed Church of American Israelites to be composed of 100 percent Americans. Though Charleston remained unmoved by Levy, it is surely significant that only three years later the Reformed Society of Israelites came into being there. Both Levy and the Charlestonians were influenced by the German Reform Movement, which was then pioneering an attempt at a synthesis of Judaism and Western culture. All of Levy's associates were in agreement with him on the larger issues: the condition of all Jews everywhere has to be "ameliorated"; Judaism must be preserved; the American Jew is called upon "to promote the continuity of our religion"—the men whom Levy had approached were attracted by the spirit of the Law as well as its letter.³²

It is difficult to document any lasting value that emerged from Levy's spiritual adventure, although he surely did influence a number of his contemporaries. His proposal remains notable in American Jewish history as the first attempt to rally Jewry as a body behind an institute designed to serve as a national center for Jewish culture. This challenge to influence American Jews spiritually and to further them educationally was accepted in 1841 by Leeser, in 1848 by Isaac M. Wise, and in 1873-1875 by the Jews living in the Mississippi basin when they called into being the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Hebrew Union College. Levy's plans died stillborn with the publication of his "Circular," but he himself never surrendered his hopes. He had dreamt for many years of helping his people, and there is some evidence that, as early as 1816, even before he came to the United States, he had thought of bringing European Jews to this country. Years later—in 1825—he again set out to invite Jews here, to his Florida holdings. That same year Mordecai M. Noah announced the establishment of a colony in western New York State. Levy, then in London on a visit, wrote Isaac L. Goldsmid, the financier, expressing a desire to settle Jews in a Florida colony where they could live according to the precepts of the Bible. There Jews would be regenerated, reeducated religiously; there they could blossom as an exem-

plary ideal group, fulfilling God's promise to Abraham that "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him" (Gen. 18:18). The implication of Levy's letter is clear: the Jews have a mission to the world. How different were the Jews with their "mission" from Christian conversionists who offered the Jews and all the peoples the only true faith?

In 1828, Levy was back again in London assuring his Christian friends that the Israelites were interested in helping all mankind. Implicit in his declaration was the reminder that Jews were still politically disabled in the kingdom. The late 1820's was a period which found the Jews and Catholics of England struggling for emancipation; the era of reform in Great Britain was about to be inaugurated. Levy took part in this political struggle of English Jewry, though his interest and his hopes were primarily spiritual. In pursuit of his goals, he met in February, 1828, with the Philo-Judean Society at London's Free Mason's Hall. The Philo-Judeans were a group bent on helping Jews, to whom they felt indebted for the Bible: the Jews are our neighbors; the days of persecution are over; mistreatment must be countered by all who believe in revelation; we must raise Jews from the sad state into which our fathers have plunged them. This, the group believed, was owed to humanity; atonement had to be made. Conversion? After the Jews were restored to Jerusalem, there was always the possibility that they would embrace Christ Jesus. Thus far the Philo-Judeans. And Levy? Once the Christians had stopped oppressing Jews, the day would draw nigh when Jews and Gentiles would share a common faith. Conversion? Christians, Levy told the Philo-Judeans, would never succeed in this effort! Then Levy went on to enlarge upon his own program. He spoke of circulating biblical tracts among the Jews, of establishing all-day and Sabbath schools, of furthering women's organizations, of succoring the sick and of removing disabilities in every land in which such prejudice persisted.³³

Levy made it unequivocally clear in one of his writings that his humanitarian and spiritual program as a Jew could be summed up in verses 1 through 10 of Deuteronomy 30: Love God, obey his laws, and he will restore his people to the Promised Land where they will enjoy prosperity forever after. The theme in all his unpublished papers never varies; Love God and your fellowman. Actually, he was writing a book on the subject *The Nature of Man*. Some of his thoughts achieved printed form, for he spoke of distributing pamphlets to the Free Masons. His humanistic longings were not limited to Jews alone. In 1828, before England emancipated her slaves in the colonies, he advocated the abolition of human bondage; as a social reformer of sorts, Levy spoke out for free schools and for salutary changes in judicial procedure. He protested against the prevalence of poverty and praised the institution of the Mosaic jubilee when the dispossessed were restored to their ancestral holdings. The older he be-

came, the more he became a “seeker.” Like many Americans he turned to spiritualism and clairvoyance and was in touch with the visionary proselyte Warder Cresson, who as a Jew in Jerusalem called himself Michael Boaz Israel. Is Levy to be deemed emotionally disturbed? From the vantage point of the late twentieth century, that is beyond determining. There is every reason to believe that the apostasy of his children, their rejection of his singular notions, certainly must have been responsible in part for the estrangement between him and his sons.³⁴

Levy's influence was obvious in the “Circular” which Jacob S. Solis (1780-1829) published during the 1820's to seek subscriptions for a Jewish academy. The term “Circular” and the word “meliorating” occur in both pronouncements. The fact that Levy and Solis both used a form of the verb “meliorate” strongly suggests that they had one eye cocked on Frey and his national missionary group which set out to “meliorate” the (religious) condition of the Jews, their refusal to honor Jesus as the Christ. Solis was fully aware that the board of the conversionist society had leased a large farm in Harrison, Westchester County—at his very doorstep, as it were. Very probably also, he was mindful that the Jews of England had established Free Schools to meet the threat of similar institutions already set up by London conversionists. Solis himself, an observant Jew and a devoted communal worker, had come from England at the age of twenty-three; he married into the Hays family of Westchester County, carried on a business in Wilmington, Delaware, and in 1827 landed in New Orleans where he founded the town's first Jewish congregation. Eager to help the Cincinnatians then thinking of building a house of worship, he solicited funds for their synagog. It is likely to have been in 1826 that he issued a Circular and Plan for an American Jewish Asylum. This was to be an academy and asylum for Jewish boys and girls, where they could live till they had come of age. Like Levy's “Institution,” Solis's asylum was to cultivate the arts, sciences, crafts, and agriculture. It was hoped that orphans and children would also be brought from Europe. Again, like Levy's academy, this Asylum never came into being. Opening a national academy for American youngsters and European orphans was too ambitious a project for a Jewry that numbered only 6,000 souls.³⁵

It may not be fortuitous that those who sought better educational facilities for American youth were Jews of Spanish-Portuguese origin. Though these ethnic Sephardim had been a minority in the Jewish community since the 1720's, they had a traditional interest in the arts and sciences. M. E. Levy and Jacob S. Solis were followed by the young Dr. Daniel Levy Maduro Peixotto. This physician was the son of the hazzan who had succeeded Seixas at Shearith Israel. The father, Moses L. M. Peixotto, had brought Daniel with him from Amsterdam. Moses Peixotto and M. E. Levy were friends; the hazzan was a member of Levy's New

York cell, and Dr. Peixotto, too, was well acquainted with Levy and acknowledged this connection publicly. In a sense, Dr. Daniel was a spiritual heir of Levy's. In 1830, the Society for the Education of Orphan Children and the Relief of Indigent Persons of the Jewish Persuasion called on the aspiring physician to make the anniversary address. He spoke at length on this occasion and outlined his philosophy of Jewish education. He had read Levy's and Solis's Circulars. Like them he wanted to found an institution in the countryside on Pestalozzian principles where rich and poor could grow up together, where Hebrew lore could be studied, and where the secular arts could be pursued. Only Judaism and the Hebrew language could hold Jews together. Professional leadership was, of course, needed; like the Charlestonians and Davies, he, too, hoped that a young man of promise and character would be educated by New York's congregation to serve as the religious instructor of the entire community. It would be this teacher's job to expound the Hebrew Bible, to teach morality. He reminded his auditors that it was not merely their duty to dispense charity; they were called upon to encourage learning among the ignorant and the indigent. Jews must maintain their ancient traditions of educating the young, revering their women, cultivating music and the mechanical arts, pursuing agriculture. In Arabic Spain, Jews had been preeminent in philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. Peixotto's essay is really a panegyric on the intellectual achievements of Jewry throughout the ages. The ideal Jew for him was Moses Mendelssohn, religious Jewry's first modern man. Nothing, however, was done subsequently to effectuate Dr. Peixotto's appeal. In their religiocultural programs, Levy was on the left, Peixotto in the center, Leiser on the right, but they all had this conviction in common: Judaism can survive only through education, through a knowledge of the meaning of the faith.³⁶

ADULT EDUCATION

The efforts of most Jewish educators were directed toward children. It follows—though it was not always the case—that the educationists were themselves men with considerable Judaic, if not Hebraic, background: Dr. Peixotto could and did quote the Jewish Scriptures in the original Hebrew; Moses Elias Levy boasted that he had read a Hebrew prophetic portion from the Prophets when he was but four years of age. Relatively little emphasis, however, was laid on adult Jewish studies during the first four decades of the new century. No academy, no college, would open its doors in that generation; the Jews here were too few and too poor. There was to be no college sponsored by Jews until 1855, no rabbinical seminary until 1867, and neither would be anything to brag about. Massachusetts was ready to open Harvard College in 1636 when there were only 40,000

men, women, and children in the Bay Colony; American Jewry, about 200,000 strong—but, unlike the Bay Colony settlers, scattered over the continent—would not support Leiser's Maimonides College after its founding in 1867. Adult religious education was simply not a Jewish concern in this country in the early days. It was deemed enough if most men could read the Hebrew prayer book and, in any case, should the eye rove, the reader could glean the meaning of the text from the accompanying English translation. The typical congregant did not know what the Hebrew words meant. In 1789, no man in Newport, Rhode Island, could read the unpointed text to be found in the Scroll of the Law. To be sure, two nights of the liturgical calendar were set aside for "study": the first night of Pentecost and the night of Hoshana Rabbah. The "study," stereotyped, included published readings from the Bible, rabbinic writings, and the mystical Zohar. Unfortunately, there was no edition with a translation on the left side of the page, though this in no sense dampened the enthusiasm of the devout.³⁷

There were always men—and women, too—who bought books of Jewish interest, mostly British imports like David Levi's works. The Jews here also enjoyed reading Tama's English-language *Transactions of the Parisian Sanhedrin*; European Jews had been summoned by Napoleon to meet at Paris in 1807 to formulate answers to questions meant to document their attitude toward the modern state and society. Most cultured Jews here read the polemical works of anti-Christian Gentiles, although they were at times wary of associating personally with such radicals. The one book few Jews read was the English Bible itself. Unlike the Protestants, they were not—and are not—Bible readers. Even Jacob Mordecai, one of the country's most devout and learned Jews, never imposed Bible reading on his brilliant son Alfred, who later indeed, as an army officer living almost always among Christians, found it advisable to know the English Bible. His father had neglected the Bible, but made him read the ancient classics and modern French writings, too.

There was a change for the better in the 1820's. Jewish immigrants were landing; they had to be taken care of spiritually. Back in Europe, too, Jews were beginning to stir culturally; by the 1830's, the historicocritical approach to Jewish studies in Central Europe had become a reality. Jews here may have been stimulated by the flood of Protestant religious publications that poured into every town and village and an increasing number of Jews began to evince an interest in adult education. The conventicle that made its appearance in Shearith Israel—it called itself Training of Youth (*Hinukh Nearim*)—made it clear that adults, too, wanted to know more about Judaism and Jewish practices. They proposed appointment of a teacher who would talk to them once a week in English about their ceremonies, their laws, their religion. Saturday afternoon, no

doubt, was the time set aside. The Hinukh Nearim society, a *hevrah*, was indeed to be a religious commune, very much like the *havurot* of the 1970's. The 1820's was a decade of revolt, and cultural and religious as well as political ferment throughout the world; this decade would witness a religious bouleversement among the Jews in Charleston. The rebels in New York's Shearith Israel were also angry men, and their constitution documents this. They were touched by the universal atmosphere of protest and saddened by the extended religious indifference. They wanted change, improvement, but always within the ambit of tradition.

Yet, let there be no doubt, their revolt was also an expression of their Ashkenazic Central European ethnicity, still strong in them. They seceded and created a separate congregation, Bnai Jeshurun. Once on their own, however, they seem to have lost their crusading fervor, their lust for learning. Can we assume that the later (1837) lectures of David Davies—if ever delivered—reflected a rebirth of the drive for adult education? By 1840, when there were well over 5,000 Jews in the city, Shearith Israel itself had established a Hebrew Literary and Religious Association. Dr. Simeon Abrahams met with the group to explain Jewish laws and customs. There were classes also in Hebrew, in reading and in translation. Professor Nordheimer was one of the instructors but nothing further is known about this group. The typical layman was not interested in furthering himself educationally, culturally, or Jewishly. Wittingly or unwittingly, he knew that he would be kept Jewish by his ethnic environment. He sensed that for him a formal Jewish education was not imperative. Further study was not needed to ensure religious loyalty. Through home ceremonies, synagogal services, and a world of ritualistic practices, the adult was bound to become adept in the Jewish way of life. Most Jews of that day, certainly the immigrants, were secure in their devotion to their people and content to be Jews.³⁸

Jews were literate; all owned some books. The inventory of Asser Levy, who had landed on American shores in 1654, included a number of books. Synagogues did not supply prayer books, neither did the Jewish schools; parents and children had to bring their own. Abigail Franks was always reading, although, judging from her letters, her primary interest was in English literature. Personally, she was a pious observant, if questioning, Jew. Her son David must have owned a large library; when he was expelled from Philadelphia as a Loyalist, he published a catalogue of his books and sold them at auction. Since no copy of the catalogue has yet turned up, it is impossible to determine his Jewish holdings. The libraries owned by businessmen and artisans were pitifully small. This is true of most Americans of that day. Jewish books were not numerous; there were not many available in Yiddish, German or English. Yet such works were never completely absent. Even the humble and the untutored possessed a

number of dog-eared Hebrew prayer books. The learned owned legal code books, for they were called upon to solve problems of ritual and ceremonial conduct. One wonders if Marcus Elcan's library was in any sense typical. His substantial collection indicates that he was a man of education, liberal in his political, cultural, and social views. The Enlightenment had left its mark on him. Among the Jewish authors he read were David Levi and Mendelssohn, and he probably had about 200 books and pamphlets, all told. If this seems a small number, let it be borne in mind that the Library of Congress began in 1802 with 964 volumes and nine maps.³⁹

SCHOLARS AND SCHOLARSHIP

Elcan was no scholar of Judaica. Only a few men here were at home in rabbinical and legal literature. As a rule, the learned among the Jews avoided this continent, which for them meant a frontier where apathy and ignorance prevailed—so they thought. Learning, they believed, was not valued here. But this was only partially true. Haym Salomon respected a scholarly uncle, but advised him to stay home: "Your *yikes* (family and academic background) is worth very little here." No learned Jew could survive here on his scholarship alone; no community would support an adept in the rabbinic codes, not even modestly. Still, men of knowledge did find their way here. Judging from the extant books he once had in his library, Isaac Miranda (d. 1732), a convert to Christianity and a pioneer Pennsylvanian, was at home in rabbinic literature. One is almost tempted to suggest that, with a few notable exceptions, the scholarly men who settled here were devoid of business acumen. Around the year 1820, a religious functionary in Philadelphia was not even considered for a job though he described his talents as a reader, circumciser, and shofar blower in a Hebrew acrostic poem.

We have some reason to believe that the number of learned Jews here was larger than previously supposed. Actually, ever since the seventeenth century, even some Christians in the country had been collecting Hebrew books in the hope of becoming adepts. Most Christians who studied the Holy Scriptures had Jews as teachers, men who could translate the Hebrew into passable English. There is a chain of Jewish scholars here going back into the eighteenth century, although there is little evidence that this learning was transmitted directly from generation to generation. The reservoir of scholarship was constantly replenished by European immigration. When important issues arose, men who had attended European yeshivot, rabbinical academies, answered questions dealing with marriage, divorce, the mikveh (for ritual immersion), the legitimacy of children born of a Gentile mother, and the like. When Jews here did not feel com-

petent to deal with these juristic difficulties—or the authority of the scholars here was not acknowledged—American congregational wardens turned to rabbinical authorities in Amsterdam or London. American Jewry never had any illusions about its expertise in the field of rabbinics. Eastern Europe supported numerous talmudic scholars; in Central Europe there was a growing body of young men equally at home in Hebrew and in secular studies. Moses Mendelssohn was a notable prototype.⁴⁰

Here in the new republic one found an intermediate group of concerned Jews who cannot be described as scholars, yet were Jewishly knowledgeable. Noah, the country's best known Jewish layman, may well fit into this category. He knew some Hebrew, for he had studied under Rabbi Seixas. Years later, he published a translation of a medieval Hebrew book, the *Sefer Ha-Yashar*, a reprint of a work first produced in England by Moses Samuels. Professional Hebrew scribes who copied Scrolls of the Law and other Hebrew documents were never wanting in North America. It is a valid assumption that they understood the contents of the material they copied, and probably knew even more. Manuscript prayer books intended for personal use or for gifts were not uncommon. It is not known for sure whether the men who prepared such works were able to interpret the texts but probably they could. It is interesting to note that, in 1824, Jonas A. Phillips (1806–1862) was the author of a manuscript translation of Johannes Buxtorf's Hebrew grammar. The original edition had appeared in Latin, though a English translation appeared at London in 1656. Apparently young Phillips, then only eighteen, made a translation of his own, possibly from the Latin. Even if he did no more than copy another, already existing translation, his manuscript still remains something of a *tour de force*. He could not have undertaken the job without a good knowledge of Hebrew grammar. The question still presents itself: what prompted this young man to embark on such a task? Who trained him?⁴¹

POETS AND GRAMMARIANS

Contradictions in cultural policies do not seem to have annoyed the Jewish communities. While they did not set out seriously to further the study of Hebrew, they occasionally called on their gifted men to write Hebrew odes for marriages and for synagogue dedications, or a lament on the untimely passing of a national official like President William Henry Harrison. One classicist who wrote a Hebrew "Prayer for the Government" in 1818, when the Mill Street Synagogue was rebuilt, invoked God's blessings on "Jimmy"—not James—Monroe! Finding an equivalent for the English "J," which does not exist in Hebrew, was difficult, but the poet compromised on "dsh." By the early nineteenth century, a number of immigrants in the United States had already studied biblical Hebrew

scientifically, that is to say grammatically. One took a rabbinical post, and all of them added to their meager salaries by teaching Hebrew to Jews and Christians; several published grammatical works.⁴²

At least eight such grammars and primers were printed here in post-revolutionary days. Two of the grammarians of Jewish background were confessing Christians. In 1833, Joshua Seixas, son of the Revolutionary War rabbi, wrote a *Manual Hebrew Grammar for the Use of Beginners* and also *A Key to the Chaldee Language*. A convert to Christianity, he had taken the name James, and it was under his new given name that his works appeared. He also prepared a Syriac and Arabic grammar in manuscript form. Seixas, a professional Hebrew teacher, claimed that he had taught hundreds, Christians no doubt. This is probably true. During the winter of 1835-1836, he was hired to instruct the Mormons, who had then settled in Kirkland, Ohio, where he held classes for them and their leader Joseph Smith. He also vetted the Hebrew grammar of Moses Stuart, the outstanding Christian grammarian of that day. In 1834, Joseph Aaron, of New York, published his *Key to the Hebrew Language and the Science of Hebrew Grammar*. Aaron taught both children and adults. With an eye to the basic needs of the city's Jewish youngsters, "Professor" Aaron appended a morning prayer, the blessing for bread, the grace after meals according to the Sephardic and the Ashkenazic rites, and the devotions recited at bedtime.⁴³

Only one among these Jewish grammarians was a scholar of calibre, Isaac Nordheimer (1809-1842), the first scientifically trained Jewish scholar in the United States. He was indeed exceptional; he could hold his own in any department of Semitics in any college today. Nordheimer was a polymath, a talmudist, a student of the classics and of modern European languages, a learned philologist who had earned his doctor's degree at Munich. Shortly after landing here in 1838, he published *A Critical Grammar of the Hebrew Language*, and the same year *A Grammatical Analysis of Selections from the Hebrew Scriptures with an Exercise in Hebrew Composition*. The languages he taught were Hebrew, and, probably, Arabic and Syriac. He supplemented his modest income by occupying a teaching post at the University of the City of New York. His students, it may be assumed, were in the main Protestant clergymen, though Jonas A. Phillips's earlier venture into Hebrew grammar would indicate that there were young Jews willing to memorize the Hebrew conjugations and declensions. Nordheimer is significant not only on the basis of what he wrote, but because he was in himself an intimation of changes to come. In little more than a decade, America would become home for a number of scholars combining religious liberalism with a modern critical approach to biblical and rabbinical literature. Nordheimer was in the van of this group; by the time he came to these shores, he had already emancipated himself

from the authority of rabbinical law. In his historicocritical approach, he was influenced by Isaac Marcus Jost, Abraham Geiger, and Judah Loeb Rapoport. For the *American Biblical Repository*, he wrote two excellent articles on the Talmud, the rabbis, their schools, and their literature. In these surveys, he carried the story as far as the Golden Age in Spain. His is probably the first objective study of rabbinical literature published in the United States.⁴⁴

Coeval with Nordheimer and the earlier grammarians were a number of other educated men who stand out, though for diverse reasons. Gershom Seixas, Joshua-James's father, was notable as the first American-born Hebraist to serve a large community as hazzan. Despite his meager training he could consult the standard law code, the *Shulhan Arukh*, and knew enough to write a Hebrew oration for young Sampson Simson when he graduated from Columbia. Greek and Latin addresses were made by others, all this in the best English humanist tradition. Emma Lazarus's grandfather Eleazer S. Lazarus also native-born and, it would seem, a disciple of Hazzan Seixas, revised and corrected the Hebrew text of the Sephardic prayer book published by Solomon H. Jackson. Dr. Jonas Horwitz also had a manuscript Hebrew grammar, which he forbore to publish. In 1827, the professor of Hebrew at Princeton College—in Massachusetts, not New Jersey—M. Michalowitch made a rhymed verse translation of the articles of faith of the Reformed Society of Israelites. One of New York's most educated Jews was the Christian missionary Frey, whose bibliography is truly impressive, including a Hebrew grammar which went through at least nine printings in England and the United States. In addition, Frey published an edition of the Psalter, a Hebrew-English vocabulary, a Hebrew-Latin dictionary, a Hebrew-English lexicon, and also edited Van der Hooght's Hebrew Bible. In his last years, so a biographer reports, he taught the Holy Tongue at the University of Michigan, the first instructor there in that language.⁴⁵

Two other Hebraists merit mention in any history of American Jewry, Manuel Josephson (ca. 1729-1796) and Israel Baer Kursheedt (1766-1852). Josephson, the elected head of the Philadelphia Jewish community when Washington served as President in what was then the nation's capital, was not only a competent rabbinical scholar but was able to express himself in well-ordered fashion in good English when discussing religiolegal (halakic) problems. Kursheedt appears to have been an even more accomplished scholar; Leeser, his contemporary, said that he had enjoyed a national repute for his learning. Kursheedt served on religious courts, made himself available when questions of rabbinic law were at issue, and on occasion lectured at Congregation Bnai Jeshurun. His first loyalty, however, was to Shearith Israel, where his father-in-law Gershom Seixas officiated. The latter bragged about his son-in-law to his distinguished Christian friends on the board of Columbia College.⁴⁶

In many respects, the most interesting of all these learned men was the American-born Jacob Mordecai (1762-1838). He was reared as a businessman, a merchant, but he was not successful. Finally—in desperation?—he opened an academy for girls in the village of Warrenton, North Carolina, and in this venture he was successful. He was educated, and in his children, a brilliant congeries, he had a built-in faculty. Mordecai knew the Bible in the original Hebrew, but this autodidact was in no sense a thoroughgoing scholar. His knowledge of rabbinics must have been minimal. People tended to exaggerate his learning, but he was well-read in English literature, history, and Christian theology. He acquired a respectable body of learning despite the fact that he was immured in a remote settlement where library facilities were distinguished by their absence. In his devotion to Jewish learning and to apologetics, Mordecai was anything but typical. He was devout, observant, and later, when he lived in Richmond, chanted the service as a volunteer reader. Nothing that he wrote was ever published, yet he wrote a great deal hoping through his apologies to defend his people and the faith he loved.

Although he was highly esteemed, the extent of his influence is difficult to determine. Somehow or other he had studied the writings of Maimonides—translations had appeared in London. He corresponded with Rebecca Gratz, sent her a copy of an essay he had written, and dedicated Richmond's first synagog building. After Charleston's Isaac Harby broke with rabbinic Judaism in 1825, the indignant Mordecai wrote a long essay, in 1826, attacking the reformer. A copy of Mordecai's counterstatement was dispatched to Charleston. The Virginia apologist hewed to the traditionalist line: Palestine is central in Judaism; the day will yet come when God will restore his people to the Promised Land. Ceremonies and rituals are important. Schisms and sectarianism are dangerous; rejection of ancestral laws and practices can only lead to assimilation. Hebrew must be retained in the prayers; it is the common bond that holds us together as Jews. Yes, some English in the service may serve a useful purpose; the English sermon would be helpful, but rabbinic authority must be respected. Like our ancestral Hebrew tongue, the dicta of the rabbis unite us. We are a people enjoying a national life and must continue as a cultural and religious enclave.⁴⁷

Mordecai's most important manuscripts are the two volumes now deposited in the American Jewish Archives. Both were written in the 1830's. Volume One, dated 1836, bears the following ponderous title: "Remarks on Miss Martineau's Tract Entitled Providence as Manifested Through Israel, and on the Writings of the Rev'd Alexander Keith Entitled Evidences of the Truth of the Christian Religion, Derived from the Literal Fulfillment of Prophecy, Particularly as illustrated by the History of the Jews and by the Discovery of Recent Travellers." As the title sug-

gests, Mordecai set out to answer Miss Harriet Martineau, who had traveled in the United States in 1834 and had come to know Rebecca Gratz. Miss Gratz found her “accessible” and “warmhearted,” which she may well have been; she may even have visited Ben Gratz and his family in Lexington. She was a Unitarian, a thoroughly modern person, a religious liberal—yet also a conversionist. As she saw it, Jews, Catholics, and Moslems would do well to accept Protestant Christianity, the best of all religions. Miss Martineau did not hold Judaism in high regard, as is clear in her *Providence as Manifested Through Israel*. Mordecai’s second volume essays an analysis of the Old Testament verses which Christians used to prove that Jesus must be acknowledged as the promised Messiah and the Son of God. The Christian assumptions and Christian interpretations of the Old Testament prophecies are rejected by Mordecai the apologist: these predictions had not been fulfilled in Jesus; what the Rev. Alexander Keith and others had adduced was in no sense evidence of the truth of the Christian religion. Mordecai may well have been pushed to answer Miss Martineau and Alexander Keith because he and his children, while in Warrenton, had been constantly subjected to conversionist pressures.⁴⁸

Mordecai’s contentions and arguments in answering the persistent proselytizers were standard among Jews. They are found in all the Anglo-Jewish literary arsenals available to American Jewry: Jesus was not God; the Nazarene’s very existence, his historicity, has never been authenticated; the gospels are not good history. The polemic went on: there is no Trinity; Jesus was no Messiah; the seventh day is the only true day of rest ordained by God. If Jews have been scattered and oppressed, it was not because they rejected Jesus; they had started their wanderings long before the birth of that man. Jews have suffered because they have broken God’s law; Christianity has not superseded and will not supersede Judaism. Let the Christians believe in Jesus; let the Jews save themselves. In Richmond, Mordecai had helped train the German stripling Isaac Leeser, who arrived in the city in 1824. Leeser of course had come with considerable learning. By 1840, the maturing Leeser had already published six books on Judaism and was widely recognized as an educator of quality. Religiously, he, too, was comfortably ensconced on the right. It was in 1840 also that Abraham Rice arrived in Baltimore to serve as rabbi for the Dispersed of Israel. Now, for the first time in nearly two centuries of Jewish settlement in North America, there was an ordained rabbi in the land, a man well-versed in rabbinical lore and aglow with determination to hold fast to time-honored doctrines and practices. With the exception of Nordheimer, all the scholarly men of that generation were traditionalists: “Moses commanded us a law.” This verse from Deuteronomy 33:4 was taken literally. Despite their acculturation, their complete acceptance of their beloved America, these bookish men gladly bore the yoke of the Torah.



CHAPTER TEN

EDUCATING AMERICAN JEWISH YOUTH 1776-1840

REBBES

If the Jewish community in these decades had only a few outstanding scholars, what then was the level of general Jewish knowledge? What did Jewish children learn? If then there were no diplomate rabbis serving the Jewish community during the years 1654-1840, who taught Hebrew to the youngsters? They were taught by *rebbes*. Rebbe—a Yiddish term—simply means “teacher.” There is no reason to doubt the existence of rebbes in New York City at least since the late seventeenth century. Often they were the cantors, who were given an additional stipend for instructing the children of the community’s indigent. At times, the rebbe was not the hazzan but the beadle or shoet or a scribe. Part of the job of the rebbe, whose class was under congregational supervision, was to keep an eye on the children in the synagogue where they were usually herded into a corner of their own. The teacher was also in charge of their “morals”—whatever that may have meant (one suspects it was an admonition not to spare the rod). If the rebbe was reasonably comfortable with English and knew Hebrew grammar, he could increase his income by teaching Christian laymen or clergymen interested in the language which God thundered forth from Sinai. Thus Isaac Seixas, Richmond’s minister, taught Hebrew to George Wythe, student of the classics, distinguished jurist, and teacher of John Marshall and Henry Clay. Some of the rebbes were excellent teachers—others were pitifully incompetent. It must constantly be borne in mind that teaching was too often the last resort of an otherwise unsuccessful immigrant. Some were not versed in English. The Rev. Mr. Keys of Philadelphia, was one of the good teachers, Rebecca Gratz informs us. He had been induced to come from the West Indies by the promise of a fabulous income teaching children: the promise was never fulfilled.

The local reader's contract generally required him to teach the children of the poor without charge, for practically all Jewish schools were tuition institutions. The determination of the synagogal leaders to provide instruction for children without means is one of the few instances of communal interest in the education of the young. In the postrevolutionary period, if not earlier, girls, too, were admitted to the classes. The teachers were often only part-time instructors who taught boys and girls individually in their parental homes, or met them as a class in the rebbe's house or in a room provided by the community. What was taught? Boys and girls learned to read the Hebrew prayer book, a skill considered basic, and some boys learned to chaunt their biblical and prophetic portions when called to the Torah as bar mitzvahs. Some rebbes and parents were more ambitious; the youths were taught grammar, translation, the standard blessings for all occasions, and given an informal but extensive knowledge of Jewish laws and ceremonies. The Richmond banker Joseph Marx wanted the children to be taught "religion," which was—and is—more a Protestant than a classically Jewish concept. Jews in a school were not taught religion as such; religion and ethics were not specific disciplines. The children were taught to be practicing Jews—which encompassed all the basic teachings of Judaism in the widest and most inclusive sense.¹

SCHOOLS: INTRODUCTION AND PREVIEW

The Jews who settled here had been influenced by the school system prevalent at home, in Europe. For the Sephardi, the schools in London were to a degree prototypes; the Ashkenazim harked back to those they had attended in Eastern and Central Europe. Jews with English traditions had witnessed the beginnings of an all-day school system in the kingdom, a system concerned primarily to educate the poor without charge. The London Ashkenazim, more recent arrivals, were slow to open formal schools with secular studies until they were driven to do so by fear of the free schools established by the missionaries. By that time, 1817, New York Jewry, a potpourri of Ashkenazim and Sephardim, had already been enjoying the benefits of parochial schools for two generations. In Germany, Jewry under the influence of the French and German Enlightenment had begun to modernize its schools. German émigrés arriving here in the early 1800's were quite aware of the innovative schools back home, but they accomplished nothing comparable in the first few decades of the new century. Lack of money and of interest on the part of the typical Jew here hindered any pedagogical advances on this Jewish frontier. Most schools operated on the lowest level. The community, the congregation, intervened only because of the subsidies and fringe benefits granted to the hazzan-teacher or the rebbes. On the whole, this is the history of the ele-

mentary Hebrew school from the late seventeenth until well into the nineteenth century. Only Hebrew was taught at first in a half-day or all-day school. It should not be forgotten that instruction in America's free schools was generally also of low quality.

By 1755, New York could boast of a Jewish day school in which both Hebrew and secular studies were taught. Indeed there may have been earlier schools of this type but there is no evidence to bolster the supposition. These religiosecular elementary academies lasted for about a century until the rise of public schools and the tendency of these new schools to exclude Christological teachings. Jewish day schools never made any substantial advances in this country in antebellum days because the Jews—unlike the Catholics—were unwilling to make sacrifices for an all-Jewish religiocultural environment. The successes of such schools were minor; their best years were the decades from 1840 to 1860. There was always some congregational supervision, but it was not very effective or continuous. The quality of instruction in the schools varied; good teachers refused to stay on the job and sought other opportunities. Some individuals, influenced by the teaching of Rousseau, Pestalozzi and their disciples, pointed to the excellent Christian academies that abounded. But these modernist Jewish educators were exceptional; none of their proposals was ever adopted in any community before 1840. Such as they were, day schools and late afternoon Hebrew schools barely managed to stay alive. In general, their quality was poor, their existence desultory. There were times when there were no schools whatsoever, even in the larger towns. But, since "Israel hath not been forsaken" (Jer. 51:8), there were always rebbes for hire.²

SCHOOLS: PRIVATE, AFTERNOON, AND ALL-DAY

Completely private secular-studies schools conducted by Jews were not unknown in the early nineteenth century. Simha C. Peixotto, of Philadelphia, the Pallache sisters of New York, and Isaac Harby of Charleston, operated such junior academies quite independently of the local Jewish communities. Harby's school seems to have catered chiefly to Gentiles; there is no reason to believe that any Jewish courses were taught. The other two institutions, young girls' schools, were open only to Jews. The little ones were given instruction in Judaism and the Hebrew language.³ Most Jewish schools did have a relationship to the local synagogue. In 1838, possibly even earlier, the Cincinnati congregation, now almost twenty years old, sponsored a Hebrew school in the vestry rooms (basement) of its building. A town with good private and public schools to which the Jews could turn for general studies, Cincinnati was culturally forward looking; it boasted that it was the Queen City of the West. The 1828

constitution of New Orleans' Gates of Mercy congregation (Shanarai-Chasset) deliberately spoke of establishing schools for the education of Israelites, but it would seem nothing was done. Savannah was equally quiescent; it was, in any case, not a strongly "Jewish" community.

Charleston, far more active, was between the years 1800 and 1820 the most important Jewish town in the country. Children without means there were educated by the Hebrew Orphan Society; instruction is believed to have included both Hebrew and general studies. Major Raphael J. Moses who grew up in Charleston, recounts in his memoirs how he went to a private school and to a Catholic academy for his general studies. This grandson of a "rabbi" says nothing about his Jewish education, yet he was an ardent defender of his people and his faith. Moses, like most Charleston Jews, was probably sent to a rebbe; a good day school was conducted in the town from 1811 to 1814 by the minister, the Rev. Mr. Emanuel Nunes Carvalho. Later years may well have seen a Hebrew school, but the documentation is missing. From 1836 to about 1838 the Rev. Gustavus Poznanski conducted a Hebrew school. Possibly more than any other Jewish community, Charleston was America-oriented; there seems to have been very little talk about Jewish education. Richmond's hazzan taught Hebrew in a congregational room; the Baltimore synagog, too, made some provision for Hebrew instruction, especially for the children of the poor. About the year 1841 or 1842, a special association was set up, bearing as its grandiose title, "The Hebrew and English Benevolent Academic Association." Judging from similar titles, this society was interested more in charity than in schooling.⁴

Ever since 1802, Philadelphia had sheltered both a Sephardic and an Ashkenazic community. The German newcomers, clustered around Rodeph Shalom, followed the pattern of all recent immigrants; they were more observant, more traditional, than the native-born and earlier settlers. In 1819, this young organization employed Jacob Lippman as its minister. A humble congregational servant and of no demonstrable intellectual calibre, he may have conducted a Hebrew school, though there are no documents to confirm this conjecture. During the years that Lippman was Rodeph Shalom's factotum, the congregation established the United Hebrew Beneficent Society. (Its Hebrew name was *Hevrah Gemilut Hasadim ve-Hinukh Nearim*, literally, the Society of Loving Kindness and the Education of Youth.) Founded in 1822, this *hevrah* was open to all Jews in the community. It was primarily a relief and burial society. Though it spoke of encouraging Hebrew studies and apprenticing Jewish boys to masters who would permit them to observe the Sabbath, it is very doubtful whether the society ever did anything to further Philadelphia children culturally.⁵

Philadelphia's Sephardic congregation was two generations older than the Ashkenazic Rodeph Shalom. Its roots went back to the eighteenth century. No later than 1776, the members employed a reader and teacher. During the Revolution, with the British in and out of the city, Jewish schools probably fared badly; there is no evidence that Seixas, the minister from 1780 on, remedied this situation, but in 1784, after Seixas returned to New York, Mikveh Israel did build a schoolroom, and there can be little doubt that a Hebrew school was opened. In 1789, the new congregational constitution made provision for the employment of a rebbe; obviously the community was conscious of its obligations to untutored children whose parents had no means. Years later, in 1815, Mikveh Israel was fortunate in enlisting the services of Carvalho, who was brought up from Charleston. It is reasonable to assume that, as an experienced pedagogue, he established some sort of fee school in town, but he died in 1817. In 1818, an immigrant Jew, H(artwig?) Cohen, wandered in from Richmond and for a brief period taught Hebrew on a private basis to children—and to adults too—at the home of Rebecca Gratz. Apparently even before the year was up, he left for Charleston where he officiated as a minister for a few years. Bernard M. Baruch, the twentieth-century American financier and friend of presidents, was one of his descendants. In 1824, seven years after the death of Carvalho, a new “rabbi” was secured from Barbados—Abraham Israel Keys, who served until his death in 1828. An excellent Hebrew teacher and with no ambition but to please his employers, he was very popular.⁶

After Keys's death, Mikveh Israel offered the job as minister and teacher to Isaac Leeser, whose goals, problems, and achievements have already been described. This ambitious young man, inspired by what the Christians already had, wanted a good all-day Jewish school. As early as 1831, he held classes in his boardinghouse, but the students damaged the furniture and the synagog board would give him no subsidy. Two years later, he proposed that Mikveh Israel help him open a Hebrew-English communal school; the elders disdained even to acknowledge his appeal for a subvention; he was a youngster and a hireling. The congregational elite remained unmoved by his appeals. The affluent were content with the private (Christian) schools at their disposal; the poor, seeking no charity from Leeser, attended the public schools despite their Christian character. These schools were “American,” after all, and cost nothing. Leeser fell between the stools of the socially ambitious Sephardic congregants and the poverty and pride of the Ashkenazic newcomers. Unreconciled, the new minister persisted in his conviction that only a synagog-sponsored school could save the younger generation.

Once again in 1835, he made an appeal for help. If the European Jews, oppressed though they are, have good schools, why can we not

have them in free America? We need democratic institutions where rich and poor study together, he argued. In March, Leeser opened an all-day Hebrew and English-studies school. Very few of the students paid full fees; some were on scholarship. His new venture was Pestalozzian only to the degree that he decried unnecessary punishments, and he was willing to take children of preschool age. Initially he took only boys, not because he objected to education for girls, but because his resources were so limited. It was his (mistaken) boast that the new school was the first of its kind in the United States. Alas, this academy was short-lived; it dragged on its wretched existence for less than two years. His board—on which he had few friends—remained deaf to his almost piteous pleas for help. The new constitution *Mikveh Israel* adopted in 1841 made no mention of education, school, or teacher.⁷

NEW YORK SCHOOLS

While Leeser was struggling unsuccessfully to create a communal all-day school where Hebrew along with Judaism and general studies would be taught, New York was almost floundering in its efforts to build a Jewish educational institution. New Yorkers had the same problems as the Philadelphians; if anything, their difficulties were compounded, for by 1840 there were at least five different communities in the city. *Shearith Israel*, in sole possession of the field to 1826, was satisfied with minimal goals, but the efforts of Protestants and Catholics to create good denominational schools was certainly a silent reproach to the Jews; hence, the attempts to improve Jewish education. New York Jewry had been enjoying tuition schools, Hebrew and all-day academies, since at least 1755—probably earlier—with heartening results. *Seixas* is an example of what a student could learn in such surroundings. The parochial school of the 1750's, one of the first in the Jewish world of the Atlantic basin, was coeval with the faint efforts of London's *Sephardim*.

Though American Jews, free and equal, were fairly well integrated into the general community, they were by no means happy with the Gentile schools, public or private, since all of them were inevitably Christian in their orientation. Even the federal ordinances of 1785 and 1787 countenanced and encouraged the teaching of religion at the expense of the government—which is to say, the taxpayer. After the Revolution, when New York's exiles returned and the Jewish community was reconstructed, it set out to find a man who would keep school for them. Hebrew had to be taught; it was unthinkable that a Jew not be able to read the Hebrew prayers. Progress was painfully slow. A semi-private day school was opened in 1792; there is reason to believe that it was an unsuccessful venture. *Seixas* the following year found himself teaching Hebrew

to boys and girls (the girls were among the best students). Thus, maybe for the first time, girls were formally admitted to classes. Instruction included translation. Bar mitzvah boys were trained and when the students tramped into the synagog to take their places in their allotted seats, it was his job to keep an eye on them. Seixas was willing to teach; he needed the extra income; his family was constantly increasing in size.⁸

In 1801, Myer Polonies, a New York Jew, left the congregation a legacy for the establishment of a Hebrew school. It was with the interest from this fund that Shearith Israel inaugurated the Polonies Talmud Torah, a free school. Tuition students undoubtedly were permitted to attend when this academy finally opened its doors in 1803. Seixas continued to teach, at least for a time. The supervisors of the new school, three of the most dedicated men in the congregation, set up goals for the children. It was important, they said, that the children understand Hebrew; Judaism is a rational faith; Jews must know what they are saying when they address the deity. This was in 1804; yet it was in this very year that the school seems to have closed and to have remained shut for several years.⁹

Carvalho, who had been in town since 1806, certainly taught students, at least privately; during the years 1808-1811, he was in charge of an all-day school. Because Seixas was now ailing, Carvalho was occasionally called upon to assist him. Carvalho's Jewish school prospered; inasmuch as the Lancasterian method of teaching was employed—monitors were appointed—it may be assumed that the number of students was large. Medals were handed out to encourage the ambitious and the bright. No impracticable visionary schemes of education were tolerated—an anti-Pestalozzian gesture! Yet there was emphasis on morality and religion, on an understanding of the meaning of the text. Three men were very much interested in the school: the scholarly Kursheedt, Judah Zuntz, later a follower of M. E. Levy, and finally Mordecai Myers, destined to emerge as a hero of the War of 1812. (Today Myers and his Christian descendants are memorialized in a monument on the grounds of the National Episcopal Cathedral in Washington, D.C.)¹⁰

There does not seem to have been any school in Shearith Israel during the years 1805-1808. It was in this period when class instruction was at such a low ebb, and may not have existed at all, that the congregation appealed to the state for funds to educate its poor. Protestants and Catholics had been receiving grants; the Jews saw no reason why they, too, should not be helped. They were finally given government funds in 1811 and continued as late as 1840 to seek public subventions. The arguments used by Jews—and Christians, too—are of interest to latter-day civil libertarians concerned to maintain the wall between church and state. The poor, said the Jews petitioning for public funds, have to be taken care of or they will make trouble. Educate them. Self-respecting citizens do not

ask for aid; they have means and seek no alms from the government. Religion is the foundation of all social happiness and of every republican institution. The Free School Society is nondenominational. It does not, unfortunately, further a specific religion. We do! Since religion is so necessary for the welfare of the state, it would be ill-advised to deny churches public monies. Church schools (*read* synagogal schools) rescue children from vice and ignorance. A nondenominational Free School Society and a similar Public School Society had been established since the early nineteenth century, educating impoverished children and providing them with a nondenominational, but of course Christian, type of religious education. Because it was inconvenient for the government to supply the needs of every denomination, the state finally decided that it was the better part of wisdom to deny all religious grants and to encourage a new species of public school in which religion would not be taught and thus would not constitute a divisive factor. By the 1840's, the New York public school system was well on its way; by 1860, the schools were largely nonsectarian. Jews could now patronize them without fear of Christian indoctrination.¹¹

After Carvalho left New York for Charleston in 1811, the day school system in New York was continued, but not successfully. Until 1821, the English-Hebrew school could brag of no effective achievements. Instruction was often bad; children increasingly turned to the so-called public schools for their secular studies. From 1823 on, Shearith Israel sheltered no all-day educational institution; from 1827 on, afternoon Hebrew schools were given some help, if only to make provision for the children of the poor. There were periods when this congregation could not even keep a Hebrew school open. Some of the Hebrew instructors during the years 1823-1840, native Americans, were competent and, it would seem, related well to the youngsters. The Society for the Education of Poor Children and the Relief of Indigent Persons of the City of New York paternalistically talked of educating the brilliant, but did little more than provide a subvention for the Hebrew education of its charges. The number of such clients was pitifully small; only three boys were given help in 1833. Desperate to secure a competent Hebrew teacher, Shearith Israel in 1839 published a *Circular*, making a national appeal for an instructor with a good English education, one capable of teaching his students to read and translate Hebrew texts. He was also to serve as an assistant hazzan. The salary promised was a very generous one.¹²

Congregation Bnai Jeshurun of New York came into existence in 1826 as a Shearith Israel rump group concerned with the education of the youth and of adults, too. Although this enthusiasm for the furtherance of Jewish culture speedily waned, the new congregation did throw open its doors to a private Hebrew school which met on the premises. The origi-

nal protestation of the need for educating the youth had been, to a degree at least, but a pretext for an Ashkenazic secession. Only two years after these English, Dutch, Polish and German Jews opened the first Ashkenazic synagog in town, another group, Central and East Europeans, established another congregation, Men of Love, Anshi (Anshe) Chesed. A year later, in 1829, as if to justify its existence as an educational pioneer, Anshe Chesed proudly announced the creation of a new school, Those Who Study the Law, Lomdi (Lomde) Torah. The founders set out with high hopes of establishing an exemplary coeducational day school, and some of the best men in the city voiced their approval. The school, however, does not seem to have opened until sometime in the 1830's, and there is very little evidence to indicate that it was a successful enterprise. The actual educational accomplishments of Anshe Chesed, Bnai Jeshurun, and Shearith Israel never matched their intentions.¹³

SUMMARY

A superficial view suggests chaos in formal Jewish education: schools were few; most of them could boast of no continuity; good teachers were scarce; congregational supervision was lax; learned European scholars refused to come to America, culturally for them the Ultima Thule of the Jewish world. Since all schools were fee institutions, poverty and thrift, exacerbated by lack of interest, determined enrollment. Formal education for all on a congregational or communal basis existed neither in the afternoon Hebrew school nor in the occasional all-day Hebrew-English school. Although every Jew stressed the need for Jewish education, congregational constitutions and bylaws rarely took note of this matter; Jewish education was simply not deemed a communal obligation. Orphans and the children of the impoverished? That was different. Because they required help, provision was invariably made for them. Congregationally supervised semi-private Jewish schools were subsidized, if only to make sure that no Jewish child was left without instruction in the Sacred Tongue. Most parents were quite content if their children could read Hebrew; their demands were very few, and they had no truly intellectual goals. In any event formal Jewish instruction was over by thirteen when the son, bar mitzvah, was called to the Torah. By that time boys—and girls, too, sans ceremony—had been indoctrinated and, with exceptions, were to remain loyal the rest of their lives. The school, the synagog, the home had stamped them irrevocably as Jews, although religious instruction was not primary in the economy of their lives. Secular education, by contrast, was all important, for by 1840 a large number—possibly a majority—were immigrants determined to acculturate. Their problem, as they envisaged it, was not Judaization but Americanization or de-Europeanization. They were very ambitious, keen to get ahead.¹⁴

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL AND REBECCA GRATZ

Despite the fact that Jewish education was secondary for congregations—and it certainly was—the communal leaders were not content with the current school systems. They realized their inadequacy. Intelligent, devoted leaders wanted to do more than keep the younger generation nominally Jewish. Something different was needed. A new type of school did come into being; it was both American and Jewish; the innovator was a woman, Rebecca Gratz, of Philadelphia (1781-1869). A great deal is known about this woman, for she loved to write letters. Many, very many, are still extant. Because they were not written with an eye to posterity they are excellent sources for the history of the first half of the nineteenth century. To be sure, the correspondence does not necessarily betray Miss Gratz's innermost thoughts. A "lady," she was nearly always careful of what she wrote. Her family was upper middle class; Thomas Sully and Edward Malbone painted portraits of her. In politics, she was a conservative, a Federalist, even after this group was out of power. It was during the presidency of Jefferson that she deplored the current indifference to the memory of George Washington. The daughter of a prosperous merchant, she had been well-tutored, reading the best in English and American literature and whatever Jewish books she could lay her hands on. Grace Aguilar's writings appealed to her; Rebecca admired the brilliant Sephardic Jew, who wrote so well and praised the noble heroines of the Old Testament. Miss Gratz, too, was a great admirer of the biblical Deborah and Ruth.¹⁵ The *Philadelphian* had read an English translation of Mendelssohn's letter to Lavater, not easy to understand. Everything Jewish was grist for her mill: the sermons of Gotthold Salomon and the Jewish apologias that now began making their appearance. In 1841, reading an English translation of a German book, she wrote: "I . . . believe that in a few years the name of Jew will rather be a distinction than a reproach."

For most of her life she was a "housewife"; she, herself unmarried, kept house for her unmarried brothers and raised the children of her late sister Rachel. Marriage, in a way, was almost impossible for her. She would marry a man only if his culture and social status were comparable to her own. He must be a person acceptable to her Gentile friends and would have to be an observant Jew. The German newcomers were all out of the question; they were aliens; many were uncouth. Under no circumstance would she wed a Christian. It was rumored that she was in love with a Christian, but there is no reliable evidence to confirm this. Inter-marriage? As she saw it, there could be no happiness in a family if a husband and wife had different religions; faith must triumph over affection. Having a full life, she was reconciled to spinsterhood. At forty, she said: "a ball room seems more like a memorial of lost pleasures than an incitement to new ones."¹⁶

At the age of twenty-one, she began her career as a social worker. Maybe she realized that she would never marry. At first, she devoted herself solely to philanthropic work in the general, the Gentile community. She was elected the secretary of the Female Association for the Relief of Women and Children in Reduced Circumstances; later she helped found the Philadelphia Orphan Asylum and served as its secretary for four decades. This able welfare worker was forty before she employed her organizing skill to aid fellow Jews. Only in 1819 did she begin devoting her energies to Jewish philanthropic work, sponsoring Jewish organizations patterned on earlier Christian ones. In matters religious, Rebecca was unequivocally Orthodox. Judaism was the best of all faiths, superior to Christianity, but she never engaged in polemics with Christians; she was not unsympathetic to the otherworldly Jesus. Winning converts to Judaism did not appeal to her, and by the same token she blandly waived aside all efforts of her Christian friends to lead her to the baptismal font. Her kitchen was kosher, and she frowned on those Jews who traveled on the Sabbath and the holidays. The Reformers of Charleston shocked her; she had no sympathy whatsoever with their radical departures from tradition. Yet though she never deviated from the old paths which her faith had hewed out for her, many, if not most, of her closest friends were Christians. The non-Jews respected her for her welfare activities, her education, her social position. Washington Irving and James K. Paulding, both literary figures, were her friends.¹⁷

Miss Gratz wrote well, though her letters were somewhat formalistic and stilted. But she never set out to polish her paragraphs. Her ethos is most often typically American, Protestant-like, moralistic. She was garrulous. Everyone agreed that she was charming, lettered, well-read, a fine conversationalist, a superior, intelligent person. Only occasionally was she profound. This daughter of German immigrants had studied no philosophy, knew no classical languages, and had played but a modest part in the larger world of books and ideas. She was not comparable culturally to her older contemporaries, the salon women of Berlin and Vienna. She had no salon; in no degree did she exert the influence which marked the careers of those Central European Jewish women who were recognized leaders in the effort to throw off the shackles of a feudal provincialism and to create an independent Germanic culture. The distinguished European women embraced Christianity; Rebecca, a proud Jew, had no desire to escape her past by becoming a Christian. Though a local social worker of prominence, she never ventured into the national realm of social reform. She was no abolitionist, but no racist either; Miss Gratz was convinced that a "noble spirit" could inhabit "a sable skin." This Philadelphia Jewish woman was a humanitarian, generous but parochial.¹⁸

Through the Jewish and Christian societies in which she was destined to play so important a role, she comforted many, Jews and Gentiles. Historically she is important because she proved that a Jew, as Jew, could be accepted in the best American Christian circles. She was recognized and acclaimed as the outstanding American Jewish woman of her time. In her own day she was to become a tradition, almost a myth. The myth, in turn, would enlarge her repute and extend the influence which she already exercised. It was, therefore, easy for popular fancy to make her the original of Rebecca in Scott's *Ivanhoe*, though no sound documentary evidence exists to support this commonly held belief. Miss Gratz, concerned about Jewish education for the young, finally decided to take action. In 1838, she initiated the Hebrew Sunday School movement in this country. But what had she in mind? Why was the movement created?

THE HEBREW SUNDAY SCHOOL: ORIGIN, STRUCTURE, CURRICULAR ACHIEVEMENTS

It was Rebecca Gratz and the women of the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society who established the first permanent Jewish Sunday School in the United States. Leeser helped, probably with mixed feelings. His heart was set on an all-day school, but his hopes were dead for the time being. He wanted something better and in less than four years he and a rabbinical colleague were to come out with a proposal for a national system of all-day religiosecular schools. Miss Gratz's new Jewish school, the Sunday School, was patterned slavishly on a Christian model. America's first (Christian) Sunday School had been brought to this country from England in the 1790's. Originally, in England and at the very first in the United States, it was a welfare institution designed to aid poor children without education or church affiliation. They were to be taught to read, to be kept off the streets on Sunday. When, however, better secular public schools developed, the Sunday Schools became religious institutions. They were no longer dedicated to the eradication of illiteracy; the emphasis was on religion, faith, and morals.¹⁹

In a way it is surprising that Rebecca Gratz waited so long before she sponsored this Jewishly new religious institution. She made a feeble attempt in 1818 to establish a one-day school for children; in Richmond, too, there was a Saturday-Sunday academy of sorts in the late 1820's. It was during those years that Moses Elias Levy, addressing the Philo-Judeans in London, spoke of the need for Jewish Sabbath schools for the young. In 1838 when Rebecca and her cohorts finally decided to go ahead, there were already about 8,000 Christian schools of this genre in the United States. Large numbers of Christian textbooks and periodicals were literally pouring off the presses, but, one suspects, it was not the ex-

ample of the Christians that actually triggered the rise of the Jewish schools. The country was then in the throes of a devastating depression; there was unemployment and the new Jewish immigrants and their children were in distress; the youngsters needed Jewish schooling, training, if they were to remain loyal. Thus, the first schools were communal mission schools, to a degree, and were open to every Jewish child in the city. If necessary, those children in dire need were to be clothed. Recall that it was the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society, a charity, that called the first school into being.²⁰

The school was born in a day when the Jacksonian rhetoric of democracy and equality was heard in the land. Many were persuaded of the importance of education for the masses. Rebecca was convinced that religious instruction for all Jewish children was imperative. Parents looked with favor upon this new departure in education. It was American, calling for assembly on Sunday when Christians (Americans!) gathered together. It was an institution common to millions, important because the language employed was intelligible; it was free; it was not compulsory. The fact that the school met but once a week—a radical departure in Jewish education—only served to enhance its popularity.²¹

When the first school met in rented quarters, seven teachers and about fifty children greeted Rebecca Gratz—an auspicious beginning: eight-nine children to a teacher; no need here for Lancastrian monitors! Some of the pupils were very young, probably of nursery and kindergarten age. Classes began at 10:00 and were dismissed at 12:00. Physical cleanliness was insisted upon; discipline was strict. In this latter respect, the teachers did not genuflect in the direction of Pestalozzi. School was opened with a prayer; Hebrew and English hymns were sung, and a chapter was read from the Bible. A contribution box was a guarantee that there would be pennies for the poor of Palestine. The most important school event was the annual examination. It was not held at the end of the academic year but on a Sunday close to the festival of Purim. Usually that was in March. Purim was selected because it was the gift holiday. Then it was that visitors and proud parents came to beam as the little ones were called up to recite. It would seem that the school never lacked for money; it was the only Jewish institution so blessed. Abraham Hart, the publisher, and Rebecca Gratz supplied large numbers of textbooks. The Christian Female Bible Society gave them copies of the Bible which were gladly accepted. The New Testament gospels and epistles included in the standard King James version were of course ignored.

The 1840 examination was typical. Leeser prayed (four printed pages!). Rebecca, too, paid her devoirs to the Holy One Blessed Be He in which she reminded the tots and youngsters to be dutiful, honest, grateful to parents, attentive to teachers, and of course, devout. Then the children

were called upon to recite monologues, sing hymns, and to answer the formal questions that were put. They recited from memory the portions they had been taught. A full-length sermon was preached by the Rev. Moses N. Nathan, a Jamaican minister visiting the States. It was said that he had come up from the Islands to recuperate in a more salubrious climate. It is equally true that he may have been looking to succeed Leeser at Mikveh Israel: Leeser was always in hot water with his board; that was an open secret. In his talk, directed to the large numbers who thronged the place, Nathan flung down the gauntlet to the missionaries and told his audience that the youngsters must be prepared to answer the conversionists. In this age of indifference, conversions, intermarriages, and defection, much depends upon the mothers. Social barriers between rich and poor Jews must be removed; the Sunday School must include children of all classes.

Like a number of his contemporaries, the preacher wanted more than a Sunday School. He, too, was thinking of a Jewish academy and a college. Sad, he said, some youngsters who attend Christian academies even go so far as to conceal their faith. The United States can develop scholars even as Europe has done. A Jewish name can become a passport to admission to a Jewish college, not a bar to acceptance in a Christian school. Before the children were finally dismissed on that joyous occasion, they were given prizes for attendance, an English Bible or the Ten Commandments printed on white satin. Leaving, each was enriched with an orange and a pretzel.

For a time at least, the very young were taught to read English. More consistently, the effort was also made to teach Hebrew. Leeser in 1838 published his *Hebrew Reader* for use in the new Sunday School. He called it "An Easy Guide to the Hebrew Tongue," and it was certainly useful, containing as it did Hebrew prayers, blessings, hymns, and even the Maimonidean creed. It went through four editions, but a second, more advanced book, was never published by him. Obviously there was no demand for such a work. Indeed one wonders how much Hebrew could be taught in a one-day-a-week school with a maximum of two hours of instruction for the entire curriculum. Hymns, both Hebrew and English, were sung, some of them borrowed from the Protestants. The children were taught to pray in English; they employed the vernacular for almost all occasions. Biblical instruction was stressed; the basic facts and events recounted in the Scriptures were memorized.

Ceremonies and rituals were not neglected. All formal textbooks employed were in English, though a few of them contained quotations in the original Hebrew. The centuries-old Hebrew prayer book was not used for purposes of instruction—a radical departure from past practice. Learning and pedagogical aids, actual textbooks, too, were borrowed from the

American Sunday School Union. The Americanization of the children was one of the chief goals of the school. It was considered important that youngsters exposed to Old World folkways at home be completely acculturated; the constant emphasis on English made for identification with the new land. This was welcomed by the students and, probably, by most parents.²²

The Sunday School started out with very few textbooks, but Rebecca and her helpers made shift. At first they leaned very heavily on the Protestants, from whom they borrowed the King James Old Testament and the hymns of the Christian theologian Isaac Watts. Some non-Jewish texts of the American Sunday School Union were borrowed and adapted; objectionable Christian passages were pasted over with slips, frustrating the curious children who tried to see what was underneath. However, some Jewish books were already available. Two editions of Shalom Cohen's *Elements of the Jewish Faith* had already appeared in the country by 1823. *Elements* was an English translation of a Hebrew catechism written by one of the early European Jewish "Enlighteners." The English translation made in London was endorsed by the Ashkenazic chief rabbi. It was obvious that this work, first published at London in 1815, would be critical of the conversionists then very active in that city. Jews are not a missionary people, said Cohen; Jesus was not a true prophet, his miracles notwithstanding. As a devotee of the new French "Enlightenment," Cohen emphasized the Ten Commandments. In marriage, he said, Judaism insists on a single standard of marital fidelity. The writer dwelt on immortality, prayer, repentance, and rewards and punishments, but rejected old-fashioned concepts of Hell and Heaven. Our rewards are spiritual. Circumcision is the mark of the covenant between God and his Chosen People, the Jews. The text was so organized that it could have served as a confirmation manual, though there were to be no confirmation rituals in this country before 1830 at the earliest. Cohen's catechism was undeviatingly traditional, yet also dedicated to universalism. All religions share the same great basic principles; love of our fellowman is important. Any Gentile who acts justly, loves mercy, and walks humbly with his God is assured of salvation.

Available also was Leeser's catechistic *Instruction in the Mosaic Religion* (1830), a translation and reworking of a popular book by the German pedagogue, Joseph Johlson. This was the first of a series of children's textbooks which Leeser hoped to produce. He was compelled to pay for its publication himself and employed his friends throughout the country as his agents. Because this book was hardly adapted for use by youngsters, Leeser came out in 1839 with a *Catechism for Younger Children*, a work dedicated to Rebecca Gratz and designed for use in the Sunday Schools, although he had already written it as early as 1835 when he realized that

the *Instruction* was not sufficiently popular. This *Manual*, as it is often called, was also an adaptation of an earlier German work. Leeser borrowed heavily from a book written by the Hamburg preacher Eduard Kley. It is a tribute to Leeser, an evidence of his pragmatism, that he was willing to use this catechism of the Reformer Kley. Leeser's text is a good survey of Judaism, its theology, beliefs, and practices. As does Cohen's *Elements*, Leeser's *Manual*, too, breathes a spirit of reconciliation with all religions. One must not hate his fellowman because of religious differences; everyone is entitled to his own theology. All early American Jewish textbooks were apologetic, motivated by caution as the Jews emerged from their "ghettos," from a world of political oppression into a new world willing to accord them political rights and to tolerate them personally.

In answer to the demands for more and better texts, Miss Simha C. Peixotto prepared a Bible catechism that borrowed heavily from the Christian *Child's Scripture Question Book*. Called *Elementary Introduction to the Scriptures for the Use of Hebrew Children*, this work was published in 1840; by 1875, it had already enjoyed thirteen reprintings. Obviously popular, it covered the entire Bible, every word of which, for her, was divinely inspired. The child was expected to memorize the portion assigned to him or her; no one was expected to learn the complete text by heart. Simha's sister, Mrs. Eleazar Pike, also published a very popular Sunday School book, *Primary Catechism of the Jewish Religion for the use of Infant and Other Schools*. Questions and answers were in rhyme:

Q. Have you an evil heart within?

A. Yes, or I should not often sin.

Mrs. Pike, however, spared her tots the type of complaints found in a child's book published at Boston in 1714: "Oh, Children of New England, Poor Hearts! You are going to hell, indeed: But will it not be a dreadful thing to go to hell from New England?" By 1840, French and German catechisms were being translated and adapted for American use; one or two were widely used.²³

By 1841 Louis Salomon(s)'s *The Mosaic System in Its Fundamental Principles* was also available as a text. Salomon's original German draft was translated into English by another Philadelphian, a man of culture. Leeser, too, carefully checked the translation. The learned author, serving as "rabbi" at Rodeph Shalom, knew very little English. Inasmuch as he himself was not at home in English, the children of his congregation attended Miss Gratz's school. Why then this English catechism of over 200 pages? Leeser and Salomon were at this very time talking of a national union of American Jewish congregations and the establishment of schools in all towns where Jews resided. Dr. Salomon may have hoped his book

would be used. He called himself "Dr.," thus becoming the third Jewish congregational functionary in this country to assume this title. Like Cohen's *Elements of the Jewish Faith*, Salomon's *Mosaic System* was designed for use as a confirmation manual. Confirmation classes in Germany were by this time no longer a novelty. Salomon's work stressed the creed, the Ten Commandments, and Judaism's ethical imperatives. It reflected erudition; almost every page cited a quotation in the original Hebrew. Salomon, like Leeser, emphasized the importance of the Mosaic Code, which had not been abrogated even by Jesus; Moses was the greatest of all prophets. Following a distinctive trend of that generation, Salomon, something of a rationalist, shows that religion, nature, and science constitute one congruent whole. It is hard to believe that his book, or indeed that any of the catechisms of that day, could have been intelligible to children, or that any of them were at all effective. As early as 1819, Joseph Marx of Richmond, suggested that Jews publish an anthology of the best in their literature; Judaism must put its best foot forward, otherwise the Jew will disappear in a generation or two. Apparently he saw no salvation for Jewry in the literary product, such as it was, of his own day.²⁴

"A new era has dawned on the House of Israel," said Rebecca Gratz. She was right. Judging by the standards and the achievements of that day, the Hebrew Sunday School was a success. By the end of the first year, it had about 100 pupils. Miss Gratz, too, looked forward to the establishment of an academy, a trade school, where youngsters could become master craftsmen and where apprentices could lead a Jewish life and thus guarantee their survival as Jews. Why were these Sunday Schools accepted? Because—in addition to the reasons cited above—the teachers were kind and considerate, women who were drawn to children and evoked their affection. The youngsters were rewarded for coming to class and for their scholastic achievements. They were motivated. As far as Judaism was concerned, this was the only good, appealing instruction they would ever get. They were taught "religion," morality, ethics, the amenities of their neighbors—this last was very important. When Rebecca spoke of religion, she was employing the idiom of the Christians about her. Indeed to a considerable extent, the Protestant theological schema did make its impress on the Jewish Sunday School, for it accentuated theology, the credo. Actually, the total pedagogical gestalt made for effective indoctrination. How pleased the Jews were when some Seventh Day Baptists visited their Sunday School and told the eager Jews that they, the Baptists, also knew oppression because of their religious beliefs.²⁵

The almost immediate acceptance of the Sunday School idea in Charleston, Richmond, New York, and Savannah attests to its appeal and success. Special societies of women were established in Charleston and in New York to make sure that the new first-day institution would receive

communal support. The New York female organization came at an appropriate moment, since systematic instruction for the Jewish young in New York City in the late 1830's was almost nonexistent. The post-Jacksonian depression caught the new German "wave" of poor immigrants at a very inopportune time. To relieve the poverty of the incoming immigrant children—and possibly some of the native-born as well—the young ladies of Shearith Israel created a special society to clothe needy Sunday School youngsters. This Sunday School Association for the Moral and Religious Instruction of Children of the Jewish Faith even had the beginnings of a library. Its purpose, it would seem, was to lend textbooks to the children, inasmuch as needy parents had no money to buy catechisms. As in Philadelphia, New York's Sunday School flourished, but—and this is very difficult to comprehend—this metropolitan school and its patron society soon disappeared. Did the polyglot Ashkenazic immigrants refuse to accept help from the Sephardic elite? Yet, and this, too, is interesting, all the Sunday Schools of the pre-1840 period were started and maintained by Sephardim.

If all the sponsors were not natives by birth, they were all America-oriented, ardently so. By 1840, there were at least fifteen Ashkenazic synagogues and conventicles. None of them had a first-day school, but in later decades they too accepted the Sunday School. By that time, they had psychically dimmed their European origins; they, too, turned passionately to America; they were less fearful of cultural loans, more realistic in their educational goals. All this was a growing up in America. Again it merits repetition: the Hebrew Sunday School, first and last, was the work of women. There can be no question that here, too, there is an element of female consciousness-raising.²⁶

BY WAY OF SUMMARY: JEWISH EDUCATION AND CULTURE 1776-1840

Culturally, Jewishly, what had American Jews produced in the years 1776-1840? Compared to Jews abroad, what had they accomplished? By 1840 in Europe, among Jews who were concerned with Jewry, there was cultural and intellectual ferment. More than this, there was an intellectual revolution that radically modified every expression of traditionalism. Beginning with Moses Mendelssohn, a number of men, brilliant, learned, scholarly, led Jews out of the Middle Ages. Some were traditionalists, others were religious reformers. Most of them lived in the German and Austrian lands; a few were Italians. For the first time in Jewish experience, critical methodology became the distinguishing characteristic of many university-trained European Jews who engaged in the study of rabbinical literature. In Europe, therefore, these are the crucial decades that

witnessed the rise of modern Jewish scholarship, the writing of important books, the beginnings of religious Reform, the coming into being of the first rabbinical academy prepared to meet the challenges of the new intellectual approaches.

In method and in learning, English Jewry was in no sense as advanced as that of Central Europe. After a fashion, England was Europe's cultural frontier. London did have a number of Hebraists and writers who were producing an Anglo-Jewish corpus of apologetics put to good use here in the United States. American Jewry was growing rapidly; it had increased about 600-700 percent in the years since the skirmishes at Lexington and Concord. But, compared to Europe, America's achievements were of little significance. In reading matter the Jews here leaned heavily on England and Germany. America was no land for traditional or for modern scholars; there were no jobs for them, no opportunities. At first, Jews borrowed their Hebrew-English prayer books from abroad: a Pentateuch translation, catechisms, apologies, and works to confound the evangelicals, the missionaries, the Deists, the infidels. Jews here turned to the rabbinical authorities in London and Amsterdam for legal advice. Culturally, America was European Jewry's remotest frontier.

Religioculturally, were the Jews more advanced, more innovative than their Christian neighbors? In a way, any comparison would be meaningless, for the Jews were outnumbered 1,000 to 1. Christianity was beginning to prosper here as it had never prospered here before. Christian orthodoxy was alive, vigorous. There was an evangelical upsurge, an interest in missions, a religious efflorescence that would entrance myriads of the faithful. Religious publications, sermons, tracts, books, flooded the country. There were over 3,000 academies in the land, over 47,000 primary schools, over 170 colleges, practically all avowedly Christian. There was a number of eminent Christian clergymen of culture and distinction in the Protestant churches. Despite prejudice and disabilities, the Catholics, too, pushed forward resolutely. They opened an academy, a seminary for priests; they established a religious community for women, a normal school for training teachers. By 1840, there were already about 200 Catholic parochial schools and classes.²⁷

THE JEWISH CULTURAL NIVEAU IN THE UNITED STATES

The Jewish cultural level in the United States was not impressive. In 1840, the American Jewish communities, all of them, so it would seem, were predominantly immigrant in origin. They were not poor, but they were not affluent, though there were men—and women, too—in every town who were wealthy. There were intellectuals, but their number was limited. The extant congregational minutes demonstrate that the Jews knew very little Hebrew; the Hebrew words that they wrote out were

frequently misspelled. Many of those who landed here were untutored, village folk from Central and Eastern Europe. The schools back home were not good; the schools that they created here were often no better. Most newcomers here, and many natives, too, could not afford to attend the better Christian academies even if they were willing to swallow the Christian teachings which permeated practically all of them. Were the religioliterary accomplishments of the Jews comparable to those in middle and lower class Christian circles? Probably not. It was not until 1826 that, for the first time, a Hebrew-English prayer book was edited and published in this country. By that year, Jews had been living here in an Anglo-Saxon world for over 160 years.²⁸

Why was so little accomplished religiously by American Jewry? The immigrants who came here, all from lands where some disabilities were imposed on them, brought little Jewish or secular learning with them. In a cultural sense, they were not creative; they were humble, westward-moving pioneers set on making a living and remaining Jews. Like most Americans, they wanted to get ahead; education as such was not a prime concern. The few Jewish schools, afternoon or all-day, were not much good; often there was no continuity; with few exceptions, the teachers were incompetent; the curriculum was inadequate. In the area of religious instruction, parents followed the line of least resistance; their goals were easily achieved, for they were quite content if the boys could rush through the Hebrew. Except for the Sunday Schools, educational funds were always in short supply, although the community did respond to the need to educate the children of the impoverished. If education was an issue, then the prime concern of the Jew was secular schooling, which was identified with Americanization.²⁹

Jews were fully aware that they could make careers only through secular learning. Knowledge of the three R's was important; English was the language of the land; opportunities could bear fruit only when there was a command of the vernacular. Jewish immigrants did not have the means to insist on an advanced Jewish education for their children; often they had no desire to do so. Many had no basic interest in pursuing Hebraic studies; that would butter no parsnips. Even the salaried Jewish officiants were not picked for their scholarship. Not one secondary school was ever established in the United States during this period. The affluent? Some of them, acculturated to be sure, had little interest in Judaism as an academic discipline; a number were secular in inclination. Newcomers, still rooted in age-old practices, blamed the native-born for educational indifference; they, in turn, inaugurated but few cultural institutions; they did not even maintain those they had started.

Pursuing further the question—why was so little achieved in view of the fact that Jewish schools were essential for any cultural development of

the group as a whole?—it is well to bear in mind that the general American need for communal schools was a concept not fully accepted in any American state at this time. Jewish communal schools—truly communal, religious or secular—were never to take root in any American town of size, not even in the late twentieth century. It may be heresy, but it is certainly good history, to ask how important were schools in the schema of any American Jewish community before 1840. Of course the schools they had were preferable to none at all. In the larger cities, the “communal” schools never really had any impact except for some of the one-day schools. Even so, what percentage of the children did the Sunday Schools embrace? Philadelphia was gleeful in 1838-1839 when it had 100 students! And Philadelphia sheltered a large Jewish community. Leeser always worked towards communal schools—even though on a tuition basis—but he was egregiously unsuccessful.

One is tempted to exaggerate by saying that the children of the typical Jewish householder went to the local Jewish semi-private schools riding—for a price!—on the coattails of the impoverished. Tuition pupils always outnumbered the charity clients. During the entire early national period, religious education was not communal, not compulsory; it was ultimately a private concern. Education is not stressed, often not even mentioned, in the constitutions and bylaws of contemporary congregations. In a manner of speaking, a school was not an absolute need for the individual Jew; identification through the synagogue, even if one attended only two or three days a year, was a guarantee of religiocultural survival. Emotional allegiance, not knowledge, was held imperative.³⁰

In every community, there were always individuals aware of the challenges of a good Jewish education. They were eager to further study and learning for all, particularly the youth. In every generation, these men and women have constituted the saving remnant. Individuals, devotees, had an ideal program which they had charted. One of these men with a plan was Dr. Daniel Levy Maduro Peixotto (1799-1843). Peixotto, like M. E. Levy and Jacob S. Solis before him, suggested the founding of a rural or suburban school where Hebrew and the arts and sciences would be taught. Rich and poor were to be reared together in this institution; ethics were to be emphasized. For him, the pattern of perfection which he held up to his auditors was Moses Mendelssohn, loyal Jew, scholar, modernist. He suggested that New York Jewry create a city-wide organization to fund and educate a talented young man who would return to lead the academy and edify tomorrow's generation. It was at this very same time that Charleston Jewry, too, thought of financing the training of a young future leader.³¹

The reality achieved? American Jews began—it has been pointed out—with borrowing from England the liturgies, texts, and apologies they

needed. But borrowing and adapting is also a form of creativity. What did they themselves produce? They wrote Hebrew grammars and language studies, printed prayer books which they had edited and translated, and began to write sermons which reflected their theologies. Programs for Jewish academies were solemnly announced; polished appeals to aid the poor were broadcast; Hebrew and English poetry began to appear in print; congregational administrative documents abounded. Apologetic and polemical works were the most important literary products of the generation. The missionaries goaded the Jews to think, to write, to defend themselves. Mayhap the Jews overreacted. Fearful of conversion, they fought for the religious integrity of their families; in a way, they were fighting for their liberties also; they dreaded the attempt of the conversionists to baptize the federal and state constitutions. The Jews learned to do battle; this, too, was American: the right to fight back. American freedom also produced a new type of Judaism, the revolt in Charleston that gave birth to the Reformed Society of Israelites. It was not in itself successful, but it was a beginning, a form of intellectual emancipation, this turn to the left. There was another revolt when the Ashkenazim seceded from Sephardic Shearith Israel, ostensibly to intensify Jewish education. Both revolts are a manifestation of cultural pluralism. Revolts such as these constitute an ethnic or cultural declaration of independence; they testify to the recognition of Jews that they had a right to live their own intellectual, spiritual, and religious lives.

The individualism now evident had resulted in part from exposure to Americanism. Protestant piety and theology impinged on traditional Judaism. Calvinistical Jews spoke of predestination, original sin, grace, salvation. (They may well have given these concepts interpretations of their own.) Decorum was stressed; there was constant emphasis on the vernacular through the sermons, the textbook, the Sunday School. Education for girls was taken for granted. This push for education surfaced in the 1830's in a decade when social reformers and politicians talked of the need to educate the common man. The American interest in all types of cultural institutions is reflected in the feeble attempt to establish afternoon and all-day schools at a time before there was a substantial immigration of tradition-minded Central European Jews. The Sunday Schools were successful, for, adhering to the common Christian pattern, they dwelt on "religion" and prayer; they catechised the youngsters on the English Bible and, what was of equal importance, harped on manners. Well over 1,500 years old, the rebbe system successfully made the Atlantic crossing, and its importance cannot be exaggerated. These teachers taught individual children either in their parents' homes or in their own humble quarters; classes were held in synagog building or in the teacher's house. It was the rebbes, encouraged or tolerated by dedicated religionists and the syna-

gogs, who helped keep alive an interest in Hebrew. Jews knew that the Holy Tongue was a bond linking them all together. There were many individuals who cultivated this language, probably more than the hard evidence reflects. There were always some youngsters able to cope with the Hebrew text of Sacred Scripture.

JEWISH CULTURAL ACHIEVEMENTS: HIGHER AND LOWER LEVELS

American Jewish intellectual and theological development was discernible on two levels: a higher and a lower one. There were individuals who had liberal political—and cultural—concepts which they managed to fuse and harmonize with a devotion to traditional Judaism. The number of people in this category was probably extensive. Jeffersonian leftwingers of the early 1800's, men like Solomon Simson and Benjamin Nones, served as presidents of essentially rightwing Sephardic congregations. Quite a number of Jews were aware of the threat of the sciences to biblical cosmogony. Jews with libraries always had some Jewish books. True, there was no extensive Jewish literature in this country, but there was a literary awareness of the inherited faith and the challenge it faced from Christianity. (If no sharp distinction was made between Judaism and Jewish culture, it is because none exists.) There were always men here—a few women, too—who were Hebraically, Jewishly knowledgeable. These people were stimulated by modern educational concepts to investigate and attempt to regenerate Jewry and Judaism. There were always men and women in every town who had strong Jewish interests. Jacob Mordecai, Mordecai M. Noah, and Rebecca Gratz are notable examples.³²

Most Jews who lived through the American Revolution and the early decades of the new century had no academic, no literary knowledge of the faith to which they were committed. They could read the Hebrew service, but few understood the meaning of the text. Reading it was an emotionally rewarding experience. Those children who attended the Sunday Schools at the end of this period could recite the blessings; they knew the customs, the traditions; they were bar mitzvah; they had learned a great deal about the Bible in their catechism classes. These youngsters of the late 1830's were thus able to secure a good Jewish education because their Sunday School texts were very detailed, dealing with almost every aspect and phase of the Jewish way of life. Thus these boys and girls experienced no difficulty in aligning themselves intelligently, knowledgeably, loyally, with their fellow Jews. Despite the inadequate school system, Jewish education was not a failure if its essential criterion was to orient the Jew toward his people and their *Weltanschauung*. On all levels, education during these years made for identification. Jews were becoming one with their people through formal schooling, through the prayers, through the mystical power of the Hebrew text, through outer

pressures, through resentment, through dread of evangelical Christianity. The spiritual support brought to Jewry and to Judaism by all these media and these fears was reinforced by the teachings of the home and the sanctuary. The power of the synagogue lay not in its religious but in its ethnic appeal. The religion, the sociocultural complex that is inadequately defined as “Judaism,” was no longer the very faith and philosophy of their European fathers. By 1840, the emerging Jewish culture of the United States was an amalgam of traditional Judaism and the American Anglo-Saxon way of life. The Old World order had survived the challenge of the New World.³³

LEADERSHIP

What part did the “leaders” play in Jewish education in the early years of the new nation? Rebecca Gratz stands out as the founder of the Sunday School system. Who were the men who led other cultural enterprises? What was the nature of their influence? To compare the Jewish elite to the Christian elite is not very helpful. When faced with a Francis Asbury, an Isaac Backus, a John Carroll, a William Ellery Channing, the Jews do not loom very large. True, there were 1,000 Gentiles in the United States for every Jew; multiply Isaac Leeser by 1,000 and the tiny Jewish community looks much better. Jewish cultural achievements here are admittedly very modest, if one counts teachers, classes, students, books written, but what was accomplished was due to “leaders.” Most of these men were not outstanding; with few exceptions, the hazzanim were not significant personages. Yet the hazzan who chanted the service was important enough. In every community, he was the visible core, the embodied symbol, around which the congregation agglomerated. Richmond once said that, if its hazzan left, the synagogue could not survive. New York’s Gershon Seixas was something of a leader: he came from a good family, he was a native in command of the vernacular, he had learning of sorts, he was dignified, he was respected by the Gentiles; many Jews could and did look up to him.

On the other hand, Jacob Lippman, of Rodeph Shalom, Philadelphia, part-time hazzan, second-hand clothes dealer, dues collector, circumciser, was certainly not a man whom the cultured and affluent could admire—but he was better than no hazzan. There were periods when the largest communities were without a hazzan. On such occasions, the lay leaders carried on. Every community had at least one man who devoted himself to its spiritual welfare: Joseph Jonas in Cincinnati is a classical example. The *Occident* subscription list for 1843 shows that there were Jews in many towns and villages. They were interested, concerned. These are the men, the handful, who guaranteed that Jews would take root and survive on American soil.³⁴

What did these men who assumed leadership believe? What were their spiritual, cultural goals? There were probably as many credos as there were individuals. Among the native-born Jews there were some who were completely acculturated, intellectually indistinguishable from their Protestant fellow citizens except for their rejection of Jesus as God. There was no dearth of religious liberals in this country, agnostics and atheists, too. There were also the affluent businessmen who ran the synagogues and adhered to tradition, although they were fully aware of existing radical religious doctrines that were soon to be reinforced by university trained German émigrés. Most American Jews of older stock and most immigrants adhered in principle to the rabbinic Judaism which went back for almost 1,500 years, the religion known today as Orthodoxy.

LEESER: LEADER AND APOLOGIST

Traditional Judaism's sociocultural religious concepts of man's place in the world and his relationship to the deity found their classical exemplification in the life, activities, and writings of Isaac Leeser. To understand him is to understand the customary conventional Judaism of this age and to gauge its leadership. Prior to the Civil War, this Philadelphia "rabbi" was the country's most representative exponent of the Jewish faith. His culture and beliefs were typical of its thinking elite. What he did for American Jewry is discussed in an earlier chapter. Leeser stands out as a defender of his people and their beliefs.

In practically all of his writings, Leeser appeared in the role of an apologist. He had a job to do: to see to it that his ancient Oriental faith was tolerated by his fellow Americans. This was difficult, for over ninety-nine percent of all Americans, Gentiles and Christians, preached a civil and a denominational religion at variance with the Judaism fixed in Mesopotamia over 1,500 years earlier. The Jews were torn between acculturation in an Anglo-Saxon world and loyalty to an inherited European Jewish self-contained way of life. The tiny Jewish minority felt a compulsive need to fit into the world of the vast majority. American Jews, led by Leeser and others, were forced to adopt an apologetic stance. Conscious that Christians were set on destroying them with love, apprehensive Jews created an apologetic literature, a press of sorts, and Sunday Schools where Jewish children could be taught to understand Judaism and to defend it intelligently. Leeser wrote two works defending his people against attacks that appeared in the *London Quarterly Review* in 1828 and in 1839 and were reprinted, in part, here in the United States. Both of Leeser's responses were republished in book form in the *Jew and the Mosaic Law* (1833) and in the *Claims of the Jews to an Equality of Rights, etc.* (1841).

In his two rejoinders, Leeser emphasized the political disabilities under which Jews labored all over the world. Even here, full equality was

honored in the breach, though on paper Jews seemed to enjoy privileges and immunities. Leeser could have pointed out that, as late as 1840, five states still refused to emancipate their Jewish citizens. There is no place in this country for such prejudices, he argued. "It is time to discard the word Jew as a term of reproach." Sunday laws are unfair, since they compel the Sons of Israel to observe the Sabbath of the majority. Philadelphia's proud hazzan was angry that a distinguished New York Calvinist clergyman had publicly declared that Scott in his *Ivanhoe* had presented "The Jewish character in too favorable a light." What right had the *Quarterly Review* polemicist to malign Jews and Judaism, to pray for them as infidels, to stigmatize them as a degraded people because they had rejected Jesus? Such attacks, Leeser pointed out, only retarded the granting of rights to Jews in England. (It would be another fifteen years at least before a Jew could sit in Parliament). Jews are good citizens, not gamblers or drunkards. When given a chance, Jews can excel in the arts and the professions; the roll of distinguished Jews in Europe fully demonstrates this contention. Leeser in his apologias insisted on political and religious liberty for everyone, everywhere. The humblest individual must be secure in his personal freedom. Ours was the first code to proclaim liberty throughout the land. Our religion honors God and preaches love for our fellowman. What we ask is justice, not pity. Convert to Christianity? God has promised us a great future; we are the guardians of the Law, a Law that will ultimately govern the world.

LEESER AS EDUCATOR

Convinced that American Jewry was threatened with dissolution because of apathy, Leeser set out to save it; his essential instrument to that end was education. If a new generation of Jews was to survive, it would have to be educated Jewishly. He moved forward on several fronts. Textbooks were imperative. The young hazzan began publishing texts in 1830; by 1840, his bibliography included seven works. The Hebrew language was very important; children must know the meaning of the prayers they read; ours is a rational faith. To teach Hebrew he printed a Hebrew primer, which sold fairly well, but lack of interest precluded the publication of a more advanced work. Intent on building a Jewish library for those who shared his concerns, he republished here in America the edifying works of Grace Aguilar. Leeser, the educator, was aware of the pedagogical philosophies of his day. He was not uninfluenced by the Pestalozzians, but he did not believe that a school should be child-centered. Discipline, decorum were essential; brutal punishment was frowned upon. Like most Christian clergymen of his day, he insisted on memorization of passages in the catechism. The keystone of his proposed Judaic renaissance was the all-day school with its blending of religious and secular studies. He

frowned on the Gentile private academies and the public schools of antebellum America because of their Christian teachings. In the Jewish schools which he envisaged, religious studies would take precedence. Once established, these institutions could serve as normal schools to educate teachers, lecturers, and preachers. In the classes where rich and poor would meet on common ground, there would be a leveling upward; the "better" families would influence the humbler, the newcomers. The problem of social distinctions was still a basic one in the 1830's among the Gentiles and probably among the Jews, too. Was Leeser influenced by Jacksonian trends? Possibly.

At any rate, Leeser was eager to provide impoverished children with a good education. He never forgot that he had once been a poor orphan and that he had been helped by others. Children were to be taught trades; peddling was bad. Fortified with a craft of their own, Jews would not have to work on the Sabbath for Gentiles; Jewish artisans would take on apprentices and give them an opportunity to live Jewishly. In 1841, sticking doggedly to the hope for communal all-day schools, he and the Rodeph Shalom minister appealed to American Jews to establish a national teachers' training academy and local non-tuition schools which would welcome every child in town. The curriculum would embrace religious and secular disciplines. For the time being, this was an unreal hope, and Leeser had no choice but to accept the Sunday School. He had tried desperately in the 1830's and 1840's to establish a school system that would bring him closer to his goals. He failed because, as has been pointed out, the more affluent Jews preferred the non-Jewish private schools for social or for pedagogical reasons. The less affluent and the poor were content with the constantly improving public schools. At least, they did not carry with them the taint of pauperism.

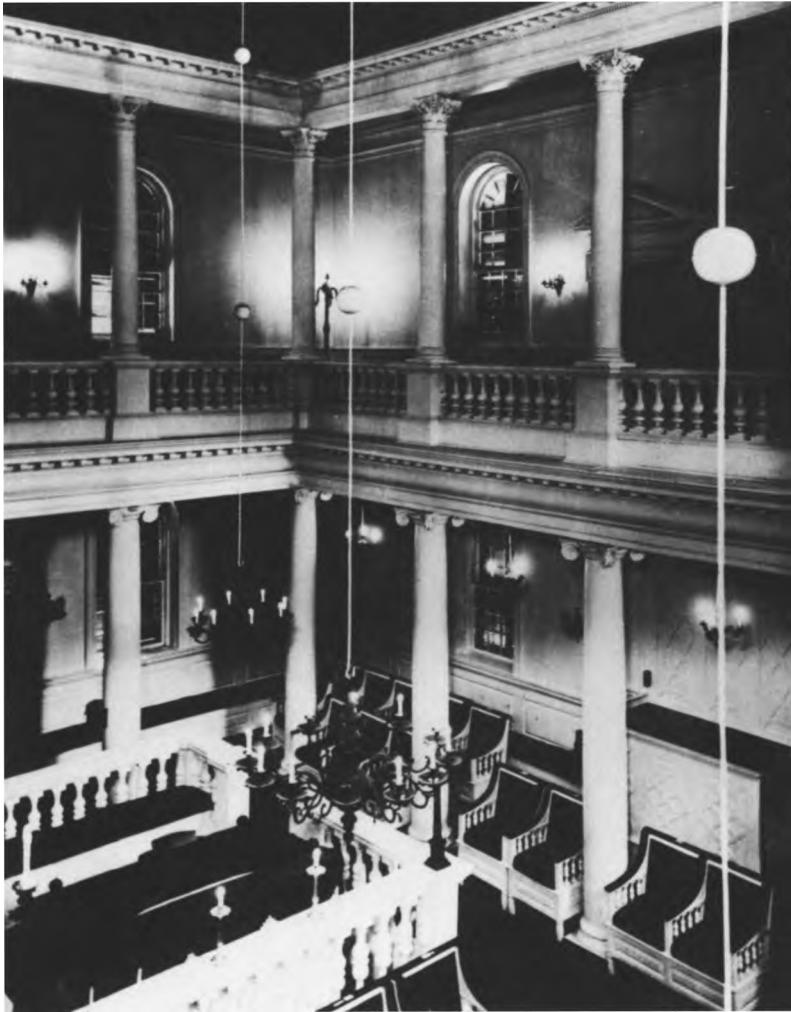
Leeser's religious and moral interests were not the same as those of many notable Christian leaders. The concerns of the Philadelphia rabbi were narrower. He gave no time to abolition, woman's rights, pacifism, communitarianism and utopianism, the care of the insane, the plight of criminals. These causes did not attract him. As a typical conservative American, these issues did not move him deeply, though he was fully aware of them. He could not afford the luxury of social reform. What disturbed him and touched him immediately was the apathy of the Jewish affluent, the misery of the poor, the Jewish illiteracy of their children. Leeser was an evangelist, albeit a rational one; he was a "Reformer," too, for he sought to improve Jewish society socially and religiously by emphasizing tradition and its ethical imperatives. No obscurantist, he made every effort to meet the challenge of the new knowledge. This man was ready to accept the nineteenth century, but always in the framework of the rabbinic code. Religion must always take precedence. He had a sim-

ple, old-fashioned formula for saving Jewry from the seductive appeal of America's permissiveness. Pestalozzian-like academies in the hinterland were not the answer. If Jewry was to be reached, it could only be through the home, the synagogue, the sermon, the rites and the rituals, and above all Jewish schools.

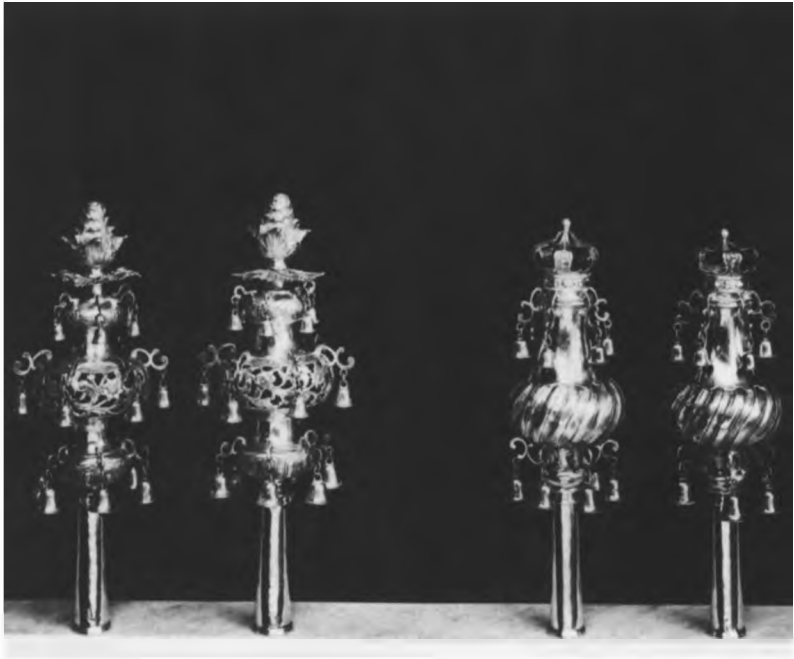
External factors worked against the acceptance of his educational programs. To a large degree, however, he was the architect of his own misfortune; his refusal to stoop, even to conquer, hampered him.



ILLUSTRATIONS

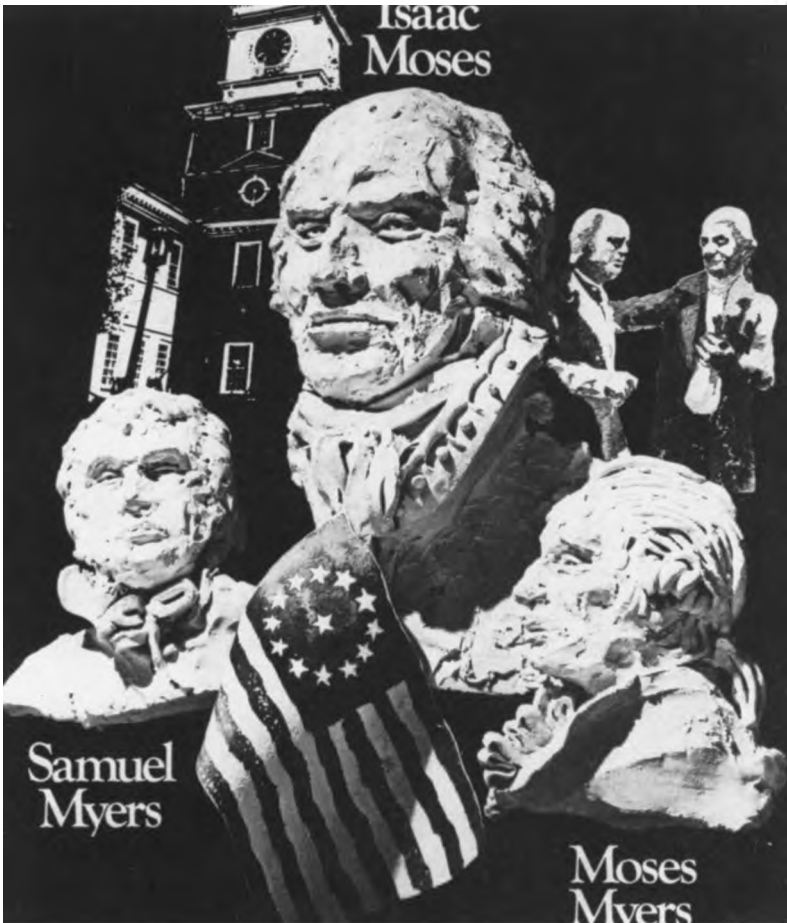


Interior of the Newport, Rhode Island, synagogue built in 1763. The architect was Peter Harrison, a gifted amateur.
Courtesy, Kerschner, Newport.



Meyer Myers (d. 1795) was a distinguished silversmith. He executed commissions for churches also.

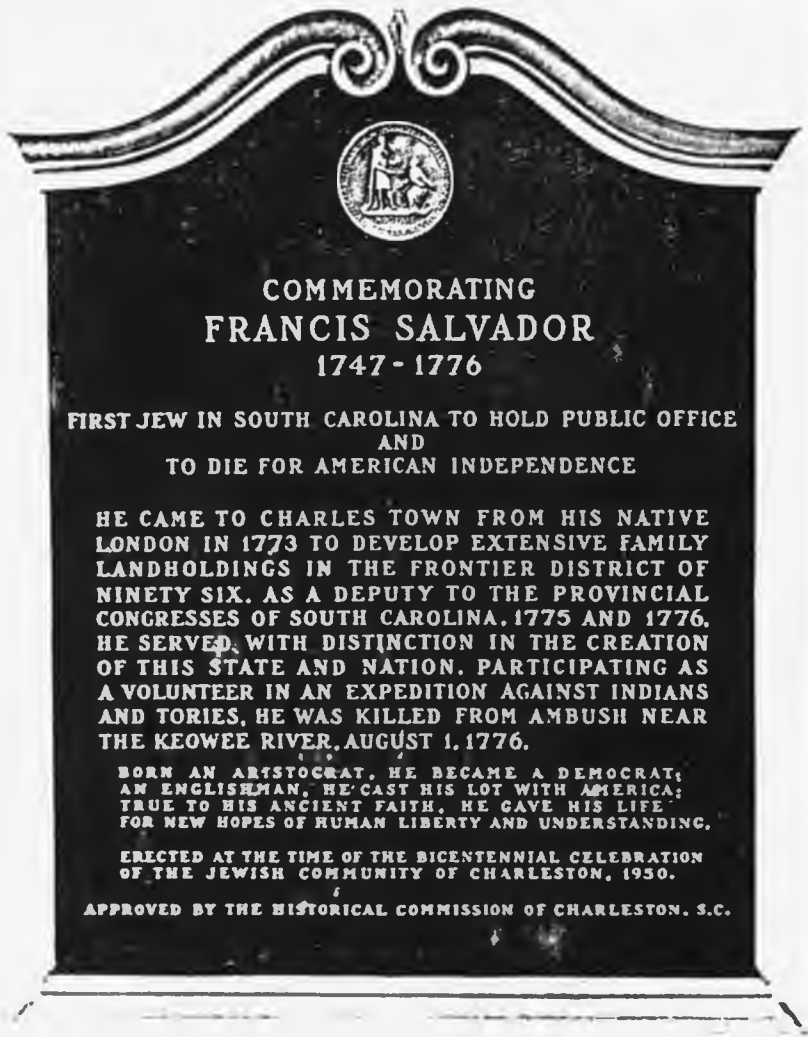
Photo by Charles D. Mills and Son, Philadelphia.



Isaac Moses and his partners, merchants, gave a very large sum in gold to help finance the 1775 expedition against Canada. *Courtesy, American Jewish Archives.*



Mrs. Aaron Lopez and son of Newport, Rhode Island, wife and son of the famous merchant-shipper. Portrait by Gilbert Stuart. *Courtesy, Detroit Institute of Arts.*



COMMEMORATING
FRANCIS SALVADOR
1747 - 1776

FIRST JEW IN SOUTH CAROLINA TO HOLD PUBLIC OFFICE
AND
TO DIE FOR AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE

HE CAME TO CHARLES TOWN FROM HIS NATIVE LONDON IN 1773 TO DEVELOP EXTENSIVE FAMILY LANDHOLDINGS IN THE FRONTIER DISTRICT OF NINETY SIX. AS A DEPUTY TO THE PROVINCIAL CONGRESSES OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1775 AND 1776, HE SERVED WITH DISTINCTION IN THE CREATION OF THIS STATE AND NATION. PARTICIPATING AS A VOLUNTEER IN AN EXPEDITION AGAINST INDIANS AND TORIES, HE WAS KILLED FROM AMBUSH NEAR THE KEOWEE RIVER, AUGUST 1, 1776.

BORN AN ARISTOCRAT, HE BECAME A DEMOCRAT; AN ENGLISHMAN, HE CAST HIS LOT WITH AMERICA; TRUE TO HIS ANCIENT FAITH, HE GAVE HIS LIFE FOR NEW HOPES OF HUMAN LIBERTY AND UNDERSTANDING.

ERECTED AT THE TIME OF THE BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF CHARLESTON, 1950.

APPROVED BY THE HISTORICAL COMMISSION OF CHARLESTON, S.C.

Plaque commemorating Francis Salvador. *Courtesy, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston.*



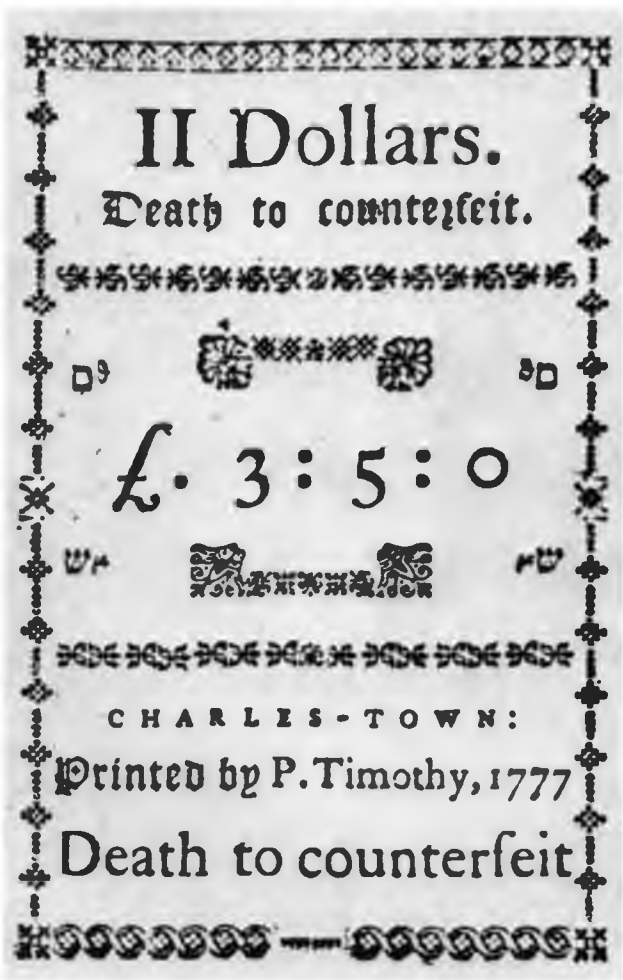
Sheftall Sheftall was in command of a flag-of-truce ship that brought relief to imprisoned American soldiers during the Revolution. This is an artist's conception of Sheftall who was then eighteen years of age (1781).
Courtesy, American Jewish Archives.



Salomon (d. 1785) was the chief bill broker for Robert Morris, Superintendent of Finance during the latter days of the Revolution. *Photo by Ewing Galloway, New York.*



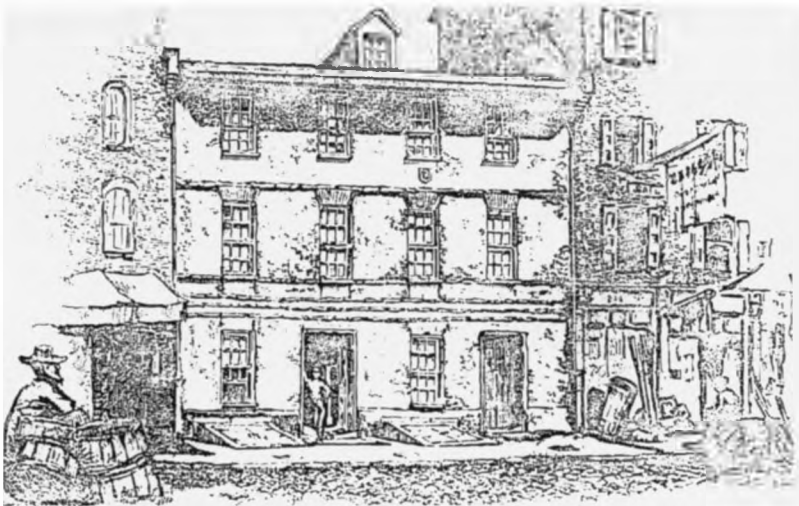
Aaron Levy (d. 1815) founded the town of Aaronsburgh,
Pennsylvania, in 1786. Portrait by Robert Edge Pine.
Courtesy, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.



Paper money with Hebrew characters was used to foil counterfeiters. *Courtesy, Eric P. Neuman, St. Louis.*



The Aaron Isaacs home in Easthampton, Long Island. Isaacs (d. 1798), a Revolutionary War patriot, was the grandfather of John Howard Payne, the author of "Home, Sweet Home." *Courtesy, American Jewish Archives.*



Michael Prager, member of a Dutch and English mercantile family, was one of the founders of the Insurance Company of North America (1790's).
Courtesy, American Jewish Archives.



Original Adam mantel in bedroom in Moses Myers's house
in Norfolk, Virginia (1791). It was brought from London.

Photo by Craftsmen, Inc., Norfolk, Virginia.



Entrance to town house of Benjamin Gratz in Lexington, Kentucky. This became his home in 1824. Gratz, a brother of Rebecca, was a pioneer Kentucky Jewish settler.
Courtesy, The Kentucky Society, Lexington.

T H E
J E W :
O R,
BENEVOLENT HEBREW
C O M E D Y.

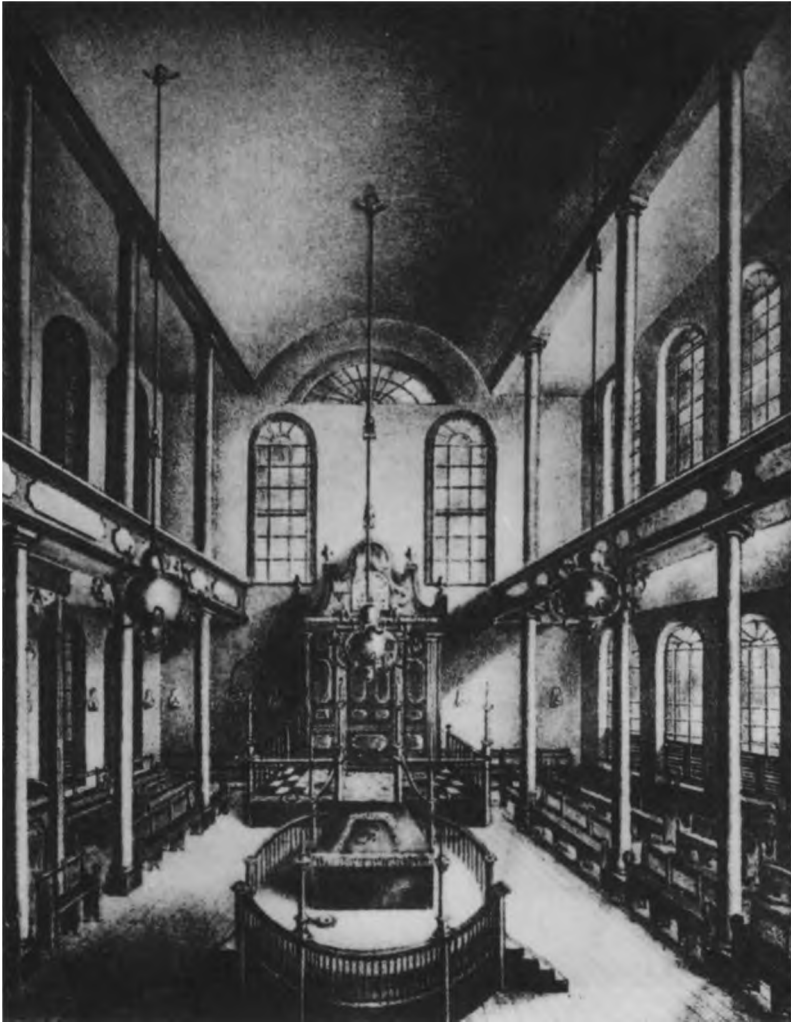
AS PERFORMED WITH UNIVERSAL APPLAUSE, AT
THE *NEW THEATRE*, IN PHILADELPHIA,

WRITTEN BY
RICHARD CUMBERLAND Esq.
*Author of the Banishment of Cicero, Sumner's Tale
West-Indian; Fashionable Lover; Cholerick Man;
Carrelite; Natural Son; the Walloons; the
Impassors; the Brothers; Battle of
Hastings; Box Lobby Challenge,
&c. &c.*

PHILADELPHIA:
PRINTED FOR HENRY & PATRICK RICE, AND
JAMES RICE & Co. BALTIMORE.

1795.

The Jew by Richard Cumberland (d. 1811) is one of the few
English plays in which the Jew is not pictured
as a scoundrel.



The Charleston, South Carolina, synagogue dedicated in 1794, was burnt in 1838. This picture was painted from memory by the artist Solomon N. Carvalho.
Courtesy, Furchgott Studios, Charleston.



Mordecai Sheftall (d. 1797) was one of the first men to rebel against British rule in Georgia. He was the state's commissary general during the Revolution. *Courtesy, American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Massachusetts, and the B. H. Levy family.*



Hays was an eminent Boston businessman and a pioneer
Masonic organizer. *Portrait by Gilbert Stuart.*



Rebecca Gratz (b. 1781) was American Jewry's outstanding woman in her generation. She established the first Jewish Sunday School. *Portrait by Thomas Sully. Private Collection.*



**Fanny Yates Levy (b. 1797) was a noted English beauty of a distinguished family who married Jacob C. Levy of Charleston (1817). Levy was one of the city's most cultured citizens. *Portrait by Thomas Sully.*
*Owned by Corcoran Gallery of Art.***



The Jacob Mordecai home in Warrenton, North Carolina.
Mordecai ran a girls' school in town, 1809.
Courtesy, Robert Neal Press, Warrenton.



The Philadelphian, Michael Gratz (d. 1811), like his brother Barnard, engaged extensively in the western fur trade and in land speculation. *Portrait by Thomas Sully. Private Collection.*



Miriam Simon Gratz was the wife of the Revolutionary War merchant Michael Gratz. *Portrait by Gilbert Stuart. Private Collection.*

CONSTITUTION

AND

BY-LAWS

OF THE

חברה של בקור חולים וגמילות חסדים

Established in the Month חשוון

בשנת רפאני ה' וארפא הושיעני ואושעה

כי תהלתי אתה לפק

A. M. 5574.

מלוח ה' חונן דל וגמלו ישלם לו

Prov. 19. ver. 17. He that hath Pity, upon the Poor, lendeth
unto the Lord, and he shall pay him his reward.

Philadelphia:

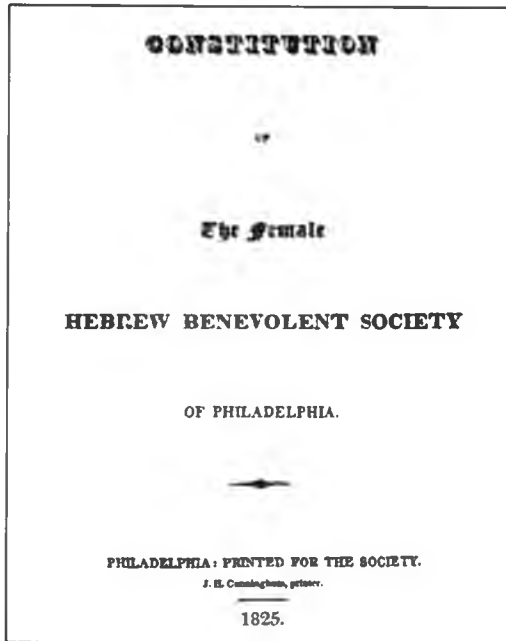
PRINTED BY JOHN YOUNG, 34, NORTH THIRD-STREET.

A. M. 5584.

In 1813 Jews in Philadelphia established a Jewish sick-visiting and burial society. The constitution and by-laws were published in 1824.



Gershom Seixas (d. 1816) was the patriotic minister of Congregation Shearith Israel of New York City during the Revolution. *Painted from a miniature by J. F. Brown, 1929.*



In 1819 Rebecca Gratz (d. 1869) and some friends established the first women's Jewish social-welfare society in the United States.

THE JEW

A DEFENCE OF JUDAISM

Against all Adversaries,

AND

PARTICULARLY AGAINST THE INSIDIOUS ATTACKS

OF

ISRAEL'S ADVOCATE.

על לקנות ליה דבריו חוקים :
ואקנה חייבי דבר כי כמותו שבתיו :

" 'Tis time to work for the Lord; they make void thy law.

" And I will answer the blasphemers of thy word, for I depend on thy words." *Prophet.*

EDITED BY S. H. JACKSON.

—♦—

NEW-YORK:

PRINTED BY JOHNSTONE & VAN NORDEN,
No. 133 Cherry-street.

1824.

Title page of *The Jew*, the first American Jewish periodical.

THE FORM
OF
DAILY PRAYERS,

ACCORDING TO THE CUSTOM

OF THE

SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE JEWS.

AS READ IN THEIR SYNAGOGUES, AND USED IN THEIR FAMILIES.

Translated into English from the Hebrew, by
SOLOMON HENRY JACKSON.

The Hebrew Text carefully Revised and Corrected by
E. S. LAZARUS.

FIRST EDITION.

NEW-YORK:

PRINTED BY S. H. JACKSON, AT THE HEBREW AND ENGLISH PRINTING
OFFICE, 23 MERCER-STREET.

A. M. 5396.

Solomon Henry Jackson of New York (d. ca. 1847)
published the first American edition of a complete
Sephardic prayer book in Hebrew and English (1826).

THE
CONSTITUTION

OF THE

Reformed Society of Israelites,

FOR

PROMOTING TRUE PRINCIPLES OF JUDAISM ACCORDING TO ITS
PURITY AND SPIRIT.

Founded in Charleston, South-Carolina,

16th of January, 1825.



CHARLESTON.

Printed by B. Levy, a member of the Society

1825.

This is the title page of the constitution of the first liberal religious congregation in the United States, 1825.



Thomas Kennedy (d. 1832) was a rural Maryland Christian politician who was determined, in the years 1818–1826, to help emancipate Maryland's Jews because he believed in the American concept of egalitarianism.

Courtesy, New York Public Library.



Isaac Harby (d. 1829) was a Charleston, South Carolina, litterateur, dramatist, journalist, and schoolmaster. He was the leader in establishing the Reformed Society of Israelites in 1825. *Courtesy, L. C. Moise, Sumter, South Carolina.*



The synagogue of Congregation Bnai Jeshurun, the first Ashkenazic synagogue in New York City, was originally a church.



Mordecai Manuel Noah (d. 1851) was probably America's best known Jewish layman. He was a lawyer, a judge, a consular officer, a journalist, a surveyor of the Port of New York, a sheriff, a dramatist, a proto-Zionist. *Portrait by John Wesley Jarvis. Original in Congregation Shearith Israel, New York City.*

SERVICE

FOR

THE TWO FIRST NIGHTS

OF THE

PASSOVER,

IN HEBREW AND ENGLISH:

ACCORDING TO THE

CUSTOM OF THE GERMAN & SPANISH JEWS.

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY THE LATE DAVID LEVI,
OF LONDON.

=====
FIRST AMERICAN EDITION.
=====

NEW-YORK.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY S. H. JACKSON,

—

5597.

The Haggadah, the Passover night ritual, was published in 1837 in New York by Solomon H. Jackson, a Jew. This is the first Haggadah printed in the United States.



Lorenzo Da Ponte (d. 1838), an Italian Jewish immigrant, was Mozart's librettist. He taught Italian at Columbia and furthered Italian opera in this country. Da Ponte was a convert to Christianity.
Courtesy, American Jewish Archives.



The Hendricks copper-rolling mill, early nineteenth century. Harmon Hendricks (d. 1838), a philanthropist, was a successful industrialist.
Photo by F. L. Huff, Newark, New Jersey.

CIRCULAR.

New-York, יום כ"ט טבת תקצ"ט לפק January, 7th 1839.

To the Parnassim and
Elders of the Congregation. in

Gentlemen.

The Trustees of the Congregation ישראל in this city, the oldest in this country, aware how much the congregation has suffered from a want of a person every way competent to teach the Hebrew grammatically, and to translate it in a manner to be perfectly comprehensite to the pupil; have adopted a resolution, authorizing and empowering the undersigned to address a circular to several congregations, making known their wants, and applying for the services of a competent person.

They desire therefore to know whether there is in your congregation the prospect of obtaining the services of a well educated young man, or one with a small family, capable of teaching the Hebrew, with the Spanish and Portuguese pronunciation, and also the rudiments, if not the more advanced parts, of an English education. It is also necessary that the person thus qualified as a teacher, should be able to aid our רב in the discharge of his duties, as occasion may require: as in case of sickness &c. for which purpose he must understand the manner of chaunting the prayers and reading the קריאת התורה according to the מנהג ספרדים and be possessed of a clear voice and distinct enunciation. Our main object is to procure a teacher, and one able to aid the רב in one person.

It is needless to say that he must be a man of unblemished morality and piety, strict in his religion, devoted to his duties, and of good temper and address. To a person thus qualified, an income of one thousand dollars per annum, may be calculated on; with a prospect of doing better, should his services be every way acceptable, and his course of conduct popular with the Congregation.

Should you know of such a person in your district willing to come to this city, and answering, in every respect the qualifications required, you would essentially oblige the congregation by addressing either of us on the subject, detailing all the particulars, at your earliest convenience, accompanied with such vouchers as you may deem necessary, in order that the trustees may be able to come to an immediate conclusion.

We are, Gentlemen, your humble servants,

SAMUEL N. JUDAH,
TOBIAS I. TOBIAS, } Committee.
AARON L. GOMEZ.

In 1839 Congregation Shearith Israel of New York
advertised for an assistant minister who would also teach in
its parochial school.

PERSECUTION
OF
THE JEWS IN THE EAST.

CONTAINING THE
PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING

HELD AT
THE SYNAGOGUE MIKVEH ISRAEL, PHILADELPHIA,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, THE 28th OF AB. 5600.

CORRESPONDING WITH
THE 27th OF AUGUST, 1840.

PHILADELPHIA:
C. SHERMAN & CO. PRINTERS, 19 ST. JAMES STREET.
1840.

In 1840 the Syrians in Damascus began to oppress and torture many of the Jews on the false charge of killing Christians. American Jews conducted mass meetings of protest in the leading cities of the country.



Isaac Leeser (1806–1868) was the most important religious figure in antebellum America. He knew the needs of Jewish America and set out to provide them. For years he was the “rabbi” of Philadelphia’s Mikveh Israel.

Courtesy, American Jewish Archives.



Joseph Jonas (d. 1869) was the founder of the Cincinnati Jewish community. This silversmith and watchmaker was a writer, an organizer, a devoted Jew, and a Democratic politician of note. *Courtesy, American Jewish Archives.*



Uriah Phillips Levy, United States naval officer (b. 1792).
He fought for the abolition of corporal punishment in the
United States Navy. *Attributed to Thomas Buchanan Read.*
Monticello.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE GENERAL CULTURE OF THE AMERICAN JEW

1776-1840

INTRODUCTION

To what extent did the Jews of Revolutionary and postrevolutionary America enjoy a good general education? Abigail Franks's (d. 1756) daughter Phila had been taught Hebrew, French, Spanish, music, and painting. Different subjects were taught to different children. Gershom Seixas had never had more than six or seven years of schooling; he read a great deal, though probably not as much as Abigail, who had far more leisure. Her husband, Jacob, was a wealthy army purveyor. In 1815, the German emigrant Dr. Jonas Horwitz could boast of a degree from the University of Pennsylvania. He had hopes—never realized—of teaching in an American college. One hesitates to assert that Jacob Cohen and Isaiah Isaacs, two Yiddish-speaking and Yiddish-writing Richmond merchants were cultured men, but they were certainly highly intelligent and conversant with the liberal teachings of their fellow Virginian Thomas Jefferson. Some “Jewish” books were a contribution to American culture; the Hebrew grammars written by early nineteenth-century Jews surely were, for most of them were prepared for a Gentile readership. Leeser, too, always had Gentiles in mind when he wrote his apologetical works. His books reflect his good sound education; he had spent at least two years in a German gymnasium. This brilliant Jewish religious leader quotes and misquotes the New Testament and was not unfamiliar with some of the English poets.¹

THE IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR CULTURE

SCHOOLS

The stream of immigrants from Europe never dried up. Most had secured little training in secular studies, but there were numerous exceptions, es-

pecially as the volume of newcomers increased in the 1830's. Academy and college-trained men began to come to the United States then in order to take advantage of its opportunities. It was not easy for ambitious Jews to carve out careers for themselves in Metternich's Europe. Were American-born Jews conversant at all with the arts and sciences, and if so, to what extent? Did American Jews before 1841 write anything worthwhile? Jews without means, humble craftsmen, petty shopkeepers, often sent their youngsters to the so-called public or charity schools; they had little choice, though these schools left much to be desired. There were also some elementary private pay schools for very young children run by Jewish women. The Hebrew Orphan Society of Charleston may well have had a school of its own for its charges. All-day tuition schools were found in a number of towns, but the communally-supervised Carvalho academy in Charleston (1811-1814) was probably exceptional in its quality. Jews who had any means whatsoever usually sent their children to private schools.

At least two such schools were run by Jews in Richmond; four were owned by Jews in Charleston. Isaac Harby, of the latter city, ran a school which catered both to Christians and Jews. After moving to New York, Harby continued to conduct a school of his own; it was his only means of livelihood. Following his death, a sister kept it open, providing a Hebrew teacher for those seeking some knowledge of the traditional liturgy. Charleston's Raphael Moses, who was to make a name for himself in the Confederate Army, went to a private school which his mother had opened. Young Moses was all of two at the time. A little later, he enrolled in another school where the discipline was severe; from there, he moved on to the academy of the Catholic bishop, John England, where all the instructors were priests, though discipline was lax. Later Moses shifted once more, this time to Harby's school where the pedagogical motto was: Spare the rod and spoil the child. Before he was thirteen, Moses had already finished his formal education. Girls were frequently sent to boarding schools. Thus a Minis youngster was educated at Madam Grelaud's French school in Philadelphia; one of the Baltimore Cohen girls was sent to a Burlington, New Jersey, academy.²

Affluent Southern Jews who sent their daughters North for schooling, had they so desired, could have patronized a Southern educational institution run by a Jew in the second decade of the nineteenth century. One of the better schools in the South was the Warrenton Female Academy or Seminary (1809-1818). Warrenton, North Carolina, was something of a cultural center. The scholarly owner was the former shopkeeper Jacob Mordecai, a native American.³ The best girls' school in the South, so it would seem, was also run by a Jew, a convert to Christianity, Elias Marks. (Strange, but some of his children are buried in the Colum-

bia, South Carolina, Jewish cemetery). Elias Marks (1790-1886), the son of an English Jew who had settled in Charleston before the year 1800, took a degree in medicine in New York, at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1815. His doctoral dissertation discussed the influence of the mind on bodily functions, as much a study in psychology as it was in physiology. Marks was a man of culture in the best South Carolina tradition. He published a volume of poetry, salted his writings with Latin and French quotations, and in 1818 translated the *Aphorisms of Hippocrates* from a Latin version.

Primarily interested in education, not medicine, Marks around 1818 established a girls' school in Columbia; it was called the Columbia Female Academy. Later, in 1826, he urged the South Carolina legislature to establish a higher school for women and, when his appeal was rejected, opened the South Carolina Female (Collegiate) Institute in 1828. Very probably this was the first woman's college in the South. Marks was aided by his Christian wife, who had been a pupil of Emma Willard, the pioneer in higher education for women. His was really a five-year school; one year was devoted to preparatory work, four years were devoted to collegiate studies. The extensive curriculum, constantly expanding, included European languages, music, art, painting, chemistry, laboratory work of sorts, and a mineral cabinet. Like many other educators in the United States, Marks was influenced by the Pestalozzians and by the writings of the Edgeworths. To give his new school the approved rural setting, it was located at Barhamville, near Columbia.

Running a girls' school was not necessarily uneventful. One night boys from the neighboring South Carolina College serenaded the girls with tin trumpets and drums. Annoyed, Dr. Marks came out with his shotgun, discharged it, and mildly wounded one of the students with buckshot. This luckless wight, fortified with a bottle of whiskey, pursued the Doctor and fired point-blank at him with his old flintlock musket. The gun did not go off; if it had, Marks would have been torn to pieces. His escape was fortunate, for he was truly a distinguished educator. Marks, too, like the earlier Jacob Mordecai, emphasized the training of the mind, though both men were also very much interested in sound knowledge. On occasion, Marks addressed his students in a formal fashion. One of his discourses, later printed, was on the subject of belles lettres: Don't read light fiction, he warned his hearers; cultivate your literary taste; nurse your spiritual welfare. Girls must be homemakers, though, to be sure, literary pursuits are fully compatible with domestic pursuits. Be refined in taste and elegant in sentiment. Marks was not prissy. The girls were encouraged to engage in sports and were taught dancing and the exterior graces. In his educational system, he set out to combine an excellent education with a nondenominational Christian

piety. Church attendance was compulsory. As in the state college at nearby Columbia, William Paley's *Views of the Evidence of Christianity* was included in the curriculum. Girls were to be like Mary, the mother of Jesus; they were to pray and make excursions heavenward. No Jewish girls, it would seem, were enrolled at Barhamville, which soon became exemplary for other Southern women's academies. One suspects that Jewish parents, who normally did not avoid Christian-owned schools, shied away from Dr. Marks's college because he was a convert. For Jews, apostasy was the unforgivable sin. In later decades, the logotype of the Institute was a six-corner star enclosing a triangle. Was he attempting to epitomize symbolically—perhaps subconsciously—a synthesis of his ancestral Judaism and his newly-acquired Christianity?⁴

Some Jews—not many, to be sure—aspired to go to college. In those days there were no anti-Jewish quotas though all students were expected to conform to the Christian religious practices in vogue at many schools. It is not improbable that some academies and colleges, Protestant institutions, may well have discouraged Jewish applicants. Most college presidents up to the second quarter of the century were clergymen. Earlier, many of the students themselves had been preparing for the ministry. Writing to Isaac Harby in 1826, Jefferson expressed his regret that Jews were kept out of schools because of the required course in Christian theology. How many Jews, if any, avoided the colleges because of the mandatory Christian religious studies is difficult to determine. The numbers were probably not significant. The few Jews who wanted to attend schools of higher learning went and were not mistreated. It is hard to believe that, in 1762 New York-born Moses Franks would have raised money in London for the College of the Province of New York (Columbia), if Jews there had been exposed to distressing discrimination. In 1784 Rabbi Gershom Seixas was a regent of the University of the State of New York; in 1787 he was a trustee of Columbia. Down in Richmond, in 1786, Cohen and Isaacs were quite ready to make a gift to help establish a university in Virginia, even though their English left much to be desired. Jewish students interested in medicine apprenticed themselves to physicians, though a few also took formal courses at medical schools. A New York family of means sent its twenty-one-year-old son to study at the Royal College of Surgeons in London. American Jews, eager to get good medical training, were still studying in Europe as late as the 1920's, a decade after the 1910 Abraham Flexner report. In 1831, the politician and communal worker Mordecai M. Noah was to become one of the founders of New York University.⁵

Isaac Abrahams graduated from Kings' College at New York City in 1774. That same decade, the Pinto brothers began attending Yale. Two graduated during the Revolution; one did not take a degree. All three

were soldiers. Their mother was a Gentile; their father, a Jew. Ezra Stiles calls them Jews, and that they were ethnically; religiously they were non-believers or Deists. De Lucena Benjamin, who graduated from Yale in 1788, may have been a Jew; Moses Simons, who studied there in 1806, certainly was; young Simons was the nephew of Savannah's Saul Simons. In his will, the elder Simons stipulated that his executors were to hire out four Negro slaves and the total annual income, \$200, was to be used to keep young Moses at school. Years later, young Simons practiced law in New York City before moving on to London. Nathan Nathans, a Philadelphia Jewish lad, had thoughts of going to Harvard in the second decade of the new century. In order to prepare himself, he tutored in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, at a Christian school, where he was permitted to observe his own Sabbath, but of his own free will attended Sunday services with his Christian classmates. When ready finally to matriculate, he opted, not for Harvard, but for the University of Pennsylvania. Harvard, he feared, would impose religious requirements; Pennsylvania at that time was more liberal.⁶

Individuals of Jewish ancestry had been going to the University of Pennsylvania ever since the 1760's. There is a record of at least four of them attending; at least three of the four, if not all four, had non-Jewish mothers. Were Jews at that time not welcomed? By the 1770's, however, and certainly after the Revolution, Jews turned to this university in relatively substantial numbers. Over the years they were to become lawyers, merchants, politicians, and physicians; one would stand out as an eminent professor of medicine. Another graduate was to become a mining engineer after further studies in Europe; still another received a silver medal for superior scholarship. By the year 1840, at least twelve Jews had studied law at the University of Pennsylvania. Jews had begun to turn to the colleges as they prepared to enjoy the professions. Most of them chose law over medicine; in the new industrial and expanding commercial world, law offered more opportunity. In 1787, the year after it opened, Hyman and Richea Gratz matriculated at Franklin College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Richea—so it would seem—was the country's first Jewish woman to seek a "college" education. The school was in reality an academy, and Richea was then only thirteen years of age.⁷

LIBRARIES

It is obvious that college men would own books; it is equally true that numerous self-taught businessmen bought books and read them eagerly. Francis Salvador probably brought a substantial library with him from England when he landed on these shores in 1773. The Salvadors were once one of the kingdom's richest families. Young Francis had been educated in both England and France. Here, in South Carolina, he became

the country's first large-scale Jewish planter. Early in the next century, individual Jews in Boston, Philadelphia, and Richmond were active in the semi-private subscription libraries. In the 1820's, Baruch H. Judah served as the librarian of the Richmond Library Company and as Keeper of the Virginia Museum.⁸

Present-day scholars are fortunate in that they can gauge the intellectual interests of Marcus Elcan, a well-to-do Richmond Jewish merchant who died in 1808. There is a succinct inventory of his books, which were bequeathed by him to Joseph Marx, one of the most eminent Jewish businessmen in the Virginia of that day. Both men seem to have been autodidacts. The total library comprised about 275 volumes, a choice collection which included a number of works on the natural sciences, on the American Revolution, and on the life of Washington. There were prints of Charles James Fox, Pitt, and the Washington family. The classical history of the Greeks and Romans was well provided for; Gibbon's history was, of course, present. The English historians were also represented by Hume and Smollett; the eighteenth-century Enlightenment was reflected in the writings of Helvetius, Rousseau, and Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*. Along with a few volumes of gallant literature—invariably present in a gentleman's bookcase—there were works by Bolingbroke, Samuel Johnson, Pope, Fenelon, and Chesterfield. Elcan read English, French, and German, knew Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, and, like Jefferson and Madison, leaned toward the Deists and religious liberals, if we may judge from his copies of *The Age of Reason*, *Christ Unveiled*, and Priestley's *Letters to the Jews*. It is interesting to note that, though both Jefferson and Elcan were children of the Enlightenment and fellow Virginians, they had fewer than ten books in common. Among these were Rousseau, Pope, Swift, Johnson (Dictionary), Jean Francois Marmontel, and Laurence Sterne (his *Sermons*).

It is equally worthy of comment that, in this little town of Richmond in the decade of the Revolution, a town that sheltered about 2,000 people half of whom were slaves, there were at least three Jews who were men of culture: Marcus Elcan, Joseph Marx, and Jacob Mordecai. All in all, there were hardly more than ten Jewish families in town. All three of these intellectuals were widely read in the theological literature of the age; they were at home in contemporary and French literature. It is somewhat disturbing to our pat concept that such culture as existed must have been limited to the larger Jewish communities to discover these men of intellectual capacity in what was little more than a frontier shanty town. Edward Gottschalk, the father of the piano virtuoso Louis Moreau Gottschalk, had a library that included works in English, French, Spanish, and German, though there is no detailed catalog of his books.⁹

Fortunately, a list has been preserved of the library of Alexander Marks (1788-1861), the older brother of Elias Marks, of Barhamville. Elias, the educator, was very proud of his school's collection of books. Alexander had an interesting career. When still a teenager, he worked as a secretary for William C. C. Claiborne, Governor of the Territory of New Orleans. Later he served as a soldier in the War of 1812. Like Elias, Alexander lived in Columbia, where he became a clothing merchant, kept busy supporting his fourteen children. (Ultimately he was to have seventy-eight grandchildren.) Arrested for selling goods on Sunday, he offered the defense—unsuccessfully—that his religious and constitutional rights were being abridged. Though active in Columbia's Jewish community, he found time to read. His library was a mixed bag: Robert Southey, Washington Irving, Oliver Goldsmith, Sir Walter Scott, Hugh Blair (*Rhetoric*), William Cowper, Josephus, William Nicholson's *British Encyclopaedia or Dictionary*, Shakespeare, Hume, Smollett, Burke, Thomas Jefferson, and Laurence Sterne. There were also books on nature, on various religious sects, on India, on Italy, on women, on venereal disease. He subscribed for one of the best eighteenth-century English periodicals and for an American magazine, too. One of Marks's contemporaries was Nathan Levy, a fourth-generation American and son of the aristocratic Benjamin and Rachel Levy, of Baltimore. Because Nathan's library totaled about 350 volumes, his executors summarized them by category. There were 60 volumes of history and similar works, 66 volumes on law and some miscellaneous items, 144 novels, and about 70 other volumes that apparently defied classification.¹⁰

JOURNALISM

The American magazine which Alexander Marks read was *The Port Folio* of Joseph Denni, a literary paper. Young Isaac Harby published a belletristic periodical which he called *The Quiver*; it was a complete failure. This attempt was made several years before the appearance of *The North American Review* in 1815 or *The Southern Review* in 1828. Harby's commitment to journalism was in a sense typical of Jews with a literary turn of mind. They wanted not only to write but, if possible, to achieve political recognition, influence, and even office through the papers they edited. Journalism was the handmaiden of politics. By 1813, Naphtali Phillips, son of a Philadelphia merchant who had been a Revolutionary War blockade-runner, was the owner of the *National Advocate*. His nephew Mordecai Manuel Noah (1785-1851) was soon to become American Jewry's outstanding journalist. The attraction of Jews to journalism is documented by the fact that, in the 1820's, two of the four newspapers in Charleston had Jewish editors, Isaac Harby and Isaac Newton Cardozo.¹¹

From 1814 to 1817, Harby owned and edited the *Southern Patriot*, a pro-Madison paper; from 1822 to 1823, he was with the *City Gazette*, supporting Calhoun and Andrew Jackson. During his years as an editor, Harby urged the state legislature to modify the Code Noir, the slave code, by tempering it with humanity. He was opposed to duelling and to imprisonment for debt. He favored a strong central government, but inasmuch as he died before the problem of states' rights became critical, there is no way to know whether he would have sided with the Unionists or with the Nullificationists. It is probable that he would have turned to the Unionists, for he was an ardent patriot, proudly proclaiming to the world that the United States had defeated the British in the War of 1812. Harby was a witty man. Criticizing a contributor who had signed himself Cincinnati, the editor told him that he was more fitted for the plough than the pen. Announcing the marriage of a Mr. Campbell to a Miss Death, he wrote a poem which ended with these lines:

Clasped in the arms of Death he lay
Nor wished a resurrection day.¹²

PUBLISHERS AND BOOKSELLERS

No later than the early 1790's, Jews were already engaged in the business of publishing and selling books. Merchants, too, carried books in stock, but some became specialists as stationers, binders, printers, and publishers. These men had set out not to dispense knowledge but to make a living, yet in a way they were pioneers, furthering culture in its broadest sense. They, too, were helping the writers of the Old World make the Atlantic crossing. As late as 1820, so it is said, 70 percent of all books sold in the United States had been imported from Europe. Benjamin Gomez (1769–1828) was one of the two best-known Jewish bookmen at the turn of the century. All told, he published more than twenty books in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Mathias Lopez, of Philadelphia, a professional prompter, published four plays; entrepreneurs in Washington and Charleston compiled directories, and another Charlestonian brought out *The Charleston Book: A Miscellany in Prose and Verse*.¹³

Richmondians reissued two important apologetic works in English, while a third member of the Jewish community, Israel Baer Kursheedt, arranged for David Isaacs in Charlottesville to stock a few copies of George Bethune English's anti-Christian work which was discussed by his father-in-law Gershom Seixas in a letter to his daughter. He planned to send English's work to "IBK . . . should Mr. K. incline to sell any he can apply to the author." When English's book had appeared Judah Hays, of Boston, read it and reported on it to his friend John Myers, of Norfolk: the Christian clergy of course had attacked it; the Unitarian, Channing,

preached against it twice. Hays was of the opinion that such works would not affect the "Christian hodgepodge" as much as the battles between the different Protestant sects. Christianity was deemed on the verge of calamity: "The house must be about their ears before long." Thus Hays in April, 1814.¹⁴

JEWES AND SECULAR CULTURE

Publishers are prime cultural instruments. That is obvious. But if an indigenous culture is to develop, there must be a constantly growing base of concerned men and women; there must be learned technicians in all fields of the arts and sciences. Like others, individual Jews, too, were making a conscious effort to further American culture; like their fellow citizens, they were American cultural nationalists. Jews in the different towns were helping to found colleges, library companies, and historical societies, as well as academies for the fine arts, natural philosophy, and medicine. Even a cursory reading of the Rosenbach and supplementary bibliographies of books and pamphlets relating to Jews in the United States from 1776 on shows the diversity of the secular cultural interests of the Jews. Individuals wrote or published one or more works and pamphlets in the following areas: politics, answers to defamatory attacks by Gentiles, appeals for emancipation, treatises on banking, currency, and fiscal matters, on travel, and on history. The bibliographies for this period contain retail business announcements, company reports, articles or books on the Florida Indian Wars, on science, medicine, chemistry, and art.

The diversity of publications is reflected in an oration before a literary society, a spirited court-martial defense, a treatise on gems, and a book catalogue. Among the earliest non-belletristic publications were manuals compiled by Jews, lawyers for the most part. Jews, a handful, had been practicing in the courts of the country before 1800 in South Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Georgia. Sheftall Sheftall, the Revolutionary War veteran, began to practice in Georgia's federal courts in 1794. As attorneys, Jews were participants in, if not furtherers of, American culture. The three Levy brothers, natives of Philadelphia, had been called to the bar during the years 1778 to 1791. They had been converted to Christianity or had lived Christian lives. The ablest of the three, Moses (1756/1757-1826), was to have a notable career. Thinking of him as a candidate for the post of attorney general, Jefferson consulted his secretary of the treasury, Albert Gallatin. In a cautious, carefully worded letter, Gallatin wrote that Levy was "second rate" and questioned whether he would give up his "lucrative practice." Gallatin said that he knew nothing of the "moral and social disposition of Levy," whatever that meant. Levy was not invited to take the post.¹⁵

Levy, who had graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1772, later became a trustee of the institution. When the Revolutionary War broke out, he enlisted and on Christmas night in 1776 crossed the Delaware with Washington's troops. Two years later he was admitted to the bar and probably took the oath, as an officer of the court, "on the true faith of a Christian." There is no record of his conversion. One must constantly bear in mind that Pennsylvania Jews were not completely emancipated till 1790. On his death, his family gave him a Christian burial. He has a place in legal history because it was during his tenure as a judge, 1806-1822, that he sat on the bench in the important case of the shoemakers union. In 1806, the Philadelphia cordwainers, as they were called, were charged with combining and conspiring to be paid higher wages, to create a union, to strike. This very act was unlawful, criminal. Levy and the jury found the defendants guilty, and they were fined, albeit modestly. This remained the law, and the decision was frequently cited in cases of similar character till 1842. Levy was an eminently successful practitioner, a "Philadelphia lawyer" highly respected by his associates.¹⁶

After a decade or two, the new republic permitted Jews to practice law without resort to a test oath. With the advancing decades, increasing numbers of Jewish lawyers frequently turned to politics. Some made notable careers in their states or in the national legislature. In antebellum days, an Indiana lawyer, Samuel Judah, ran unsuccessfully for the United States Senate, but two other states elected Jews as Senators: David L. Yulee represented Florida; Judah P. Benjamin, Louisiana. The most famous of all Jewish legal practitioners was of course Benjamin, destined to hold the posts of attorney general, secretary of state and of war for the Confederacy. Together with Thomas Slidell, he published *A Digest of the Reported Decisions of the Superior Court of the Late Territory of Orleans, etc.* in 1834. If Benjamin was the best-known of the Jewish lawyers who had begun practicing in pre-Civil War days, the most notable was Philip Phillips (1807-1884). Bertram Wallace Korn, the historian, refers to him as "perhaps the most accomplished and respected American Jew of the antebellum period." This young South Carolinian was sent to Harby's school, where he received a classical education. Aware of the boy's ability, the proud father sacrificed to send him to a good military school in the North. Academically, the schooling was wasted on him, for he turned to sports and became an expert swordsman. The powerful physique which he then developed enabled him to march with heavy knapsack, shouldering a rifle, for thirty miles in seven hours!¹⁷

Returning home, he read law and was admitted to the bar at twenty-one. Phillips then began riding the circuit eating spread eagle—broiled chicken. Very speedily and successfully he turned to politics. As a Unionist, he opposed the Nullifiers; he had no desire to speed the dissolution of

the Union. In 1834, he was sent to the state legislature; a year earlier, when only twenty-six, he had been elected colonel of a militia regiment. In 1835, he went West, to prosperous Alabama, and soon had a large and very lucrative practice there. Five years later, he wrote a *Digest of Cases Decided and Reported in the Superior Court of the State of Alabama, etc.* Mobile looked upon him as one of its most distinguished citizens. He was sent to the state legislature and finally to Congress. In subsequent years, no longer an aspirant to office, he practiced before the United States Supreme Court. After his death, his colleagues, eulogizing him, said he was "by common consent among the greatest." Though he was a founder of the radical Reformed Society of Israelites and on occasion put himself at the service of Jewry, as in the Mortara Affair, he was not a member of any Jewish organization. He identified as a Jew and conducted himself as a self-respecting member of his people, but, as was true of other Jewish notables, his relations to Jewry were marginal.¹⁸

A decade before Phillips wrote his *Digest*, another South Carolinian, Myer Moses (1779-1833), had published *The Commercial Directory and a Digest of the Laws of the United States Relating to Commerce (1830)*. Moses, a native Charlestonian, was the son of a merchant of the same name who was highly respected for his care of the wounded during the Revolution. The younger Moses was a man of many interests: an active member of the South Carolina Society for the Promotion of Domestic Arts and Manufactories, a militia officer, a soldier in the War of 1812, a state legislator, a bank director, a commissioner of the free schools, and a sought after orator. It was he whom the congregation invited to deliver the discourse on Thanksgiving Day in 1812. By 1825, he had moved north to New York City; Charleston was on the way down; New York City was the metropolis of the future. Many years earlier he had married into the Jonas Phillips family and was thus a kinsman of New York's politically powerful M. M. Noah. Moses maintained his Jewish interests in his new home and was called upon to address the Society for the Education of Poor Children. This brilliant Southerner, primarily interested in carving out a career for himself, soon became a power in Democratic Party circles and in 1831 was invited to deliver the anniversary oration celebrating the founding of Tammany. A year earlier, Harper had published *Full Annals of the Revolution in France, 1830. To Which Is Added a Full Account of the Celebration of Said Revolution in the City of New-York on the 25th November, 1830, etc.* The second part of this book, describing New York's celebration of the Paris July Revolution, was the work of Moses. New York Jews among the notable participants in this affair were Mordecai M. Noah, Dr. D. L. M. Peixotto, a Jacksonian, J. L. Joseph, the banker, and of course Moses himself. At the banquet, the ubiquitous Noah toasted the courageous press of France; Joseph held high his glass in hopes that the

“rainbow of Freedom” would “illuminate the world with the light of liberty, intelligence, and happiness.”¹⁹

ARTS

Here, in the Western Hemisphere individual Jews have always been interested in the fine arts. Seventeenth and eighteenth-century Jews in Surinam and the Caribbean Islands often decorated their homes beautifully. Dutch tiles depicting biblical scenes made for an attractive decor. Even more striking are the magnificent tombstones in the Curaçao cemetery. These imported stones may have been made by Christian artisans in Holland but in their concept and imaginative reaching out they testified to the aesthetic interests of the bereaved families. With rare, very rare, exception, the tombstone art of North American Jews leaves much to be desired. Jewish silversmiths were by no means uncommon in eighteenth-century America; some were artisans with exquisite taste, notably Myer Myers, president of the New York Gold and Silversmiths' Society in post-revolutionary days. Those Jews who evinced little or no appreciation of the arts were nevertheless moved, out of a sense of good citizenship, to support the graphic arts. Thus, Cohen & Isaacs subscribed for shares in the Academy of the Arts and Sciences of the United States of America, thought of as part of a college to be established in Richmond in 1786. Though Jefferson and some of his friends lent their support to this project nothing was accomplished.

It is no doubt wrong to ascribe aesthetic interests to all those men and women who sat for their portraits. These portraits were ordered because people wanted to leave their families a pictorial representation of themselves. And Jews, being what they were, patronized the best or the most popular of the artists. Thus they sat for Gilbert Stuart, Rembrandt Peale, Charles Peale Polk, John Wesley Jarvis, Charles Willson Peale, C. B. J. Fevret de Saint-Mémin, Thomas Sully, and Edward Greene Malbone. Malbone and Sully were the favorites. Sully in particular, since he made everybody look beautiful. Rebecca Gratz in Philadelphia helped sponsor him in 1807. Judge Moses Levy in 1805 was a director of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, an institution which set out to train artists. A generation later, Rebecca's brother Hyman served on its board. One of the artists who exhibited his work at the Academy was Abraham I. Nunes, an art teacher and portrait painter, who, when his skills did not afford him a living turned to the West India trade.²⁰

ARCHITECTURE

In the course of time, congregational board members learned something about architecture. Ever since the first synagogue was erected in 1730 at

New York, the building committees had to make choices, and they did. They developed some understanding, if not an appreciation, of architectural nuances. Because, on the whole, they were not innovative, they adopted the prevailing church styles. There seems to be no “Jewish” style in architecture, although the Sephardim, because of conservatism and liturgical needs, adhered to a set pattern in the interior of their synagogues. With variations, they always held the Amsterdam-London Sephardic shrines in mind. The Charleston sanctuary of 1794, a church-like structure with a cupola on top, was baroque. When it was dedicated with numerous Christians present, the *South Carolina Gazette* was moved to write that there was “a numerous concourse of [Christian] ladies and gentlemen. . . . We can perceive those little prejudices and weaknesses that have for ages disgraced the human character to be wearing off.” Philadelphia’s 1825 Mikveh Israel building was neo-Egyptian; the 1834 New York sanctuary, the 1836 one in Cincinnati, and the 1841 one in Charleston were all Greek revival in style. The contractor in Charleston—not the architect—was David Lopez, a man of some culture who served as a trustee of the town’s Apprentices’ Library.²¹

By the early nineteenth century, Jewish businessmen had become interested in art as a commodity, an article of commerce. This was true of the Philipson brothers, merchants, who had begun to settle in Saint Louis as early as 1807. There were three brothers; the last had made the western trek in 1821. These native Poles had lived for a time in Hamburg before moving on to Philadelphia and finally to the growing city on the Mississippi. The brothers, who opened general stores—they did not work as a group—also handled art. It was said that they had about 400 paintings and 100 prints; apparently they were originals. How they acquired them is not known. Joseph, one of the three, inherited about 150 works from Brother Simon, among them a Holbein, a Titian, a Rembrandt, a Da Vinci, a Raphael, and a Rubens. Jacob wanted the city fathers to buy this collection and to establish a museum, but it seems these worthies were not interested. When Joseph died in 1844 the collection disappeared. By the 1830’s, Aaron Levy, of New York, had opened a commercial art gallery. Levy, a son of the well-known fur entrepreneur Hayman Levy, was a lieutenant-colonel in a state artillery regiment. He auctioned art in his store, issued catalogs, and tried to interest people in his sixteenth and seventeenth-century Italian paintings, some of which portrayed scenes from the life of Christ. It was his boast in 1842—it may or may not be true—that his was the only gallery in the country devoted to the fine arts.²²

The year the first Philipson went West is the year that Moritz Furst (1782-1840) left Europe for Philadelphia. Furst, a native Hungarian, had been educated in Vienna as a medalist. A truly competent craftsman, he was kept busy fashioning commemorative portrait medals of America’s

greats: Oliver Hazard Perry, Winfield Scott and at least six presidents. In 1816 after Gershom Seixas had died he was called upon to make a medal portrait of New York's beloved hazzan. Fifteen years before Furst arrived there was a Danish Jewish painter, Joshua Canter (1792), living in Charleston making his living as a teacher of art and as a miniature and portrait painter. A younger brother John was also engaged in the same type of professional activity. A contemporary, who admired Joshua, said that he had developed an appreciation of art in the city. Joshua was also a director of the South Carolina Academy of Fine Arts.²³

Better known and more eagerly patronized than the Canters was their fellow-Charlestonian Theodore Sydney Moïse (1808-1885). This notable portrait and animal painter had a large following in the South. In some of his portraits—those of Henry Clay and Andrew Jackson, for instance—he collaborated with another artist. Frequently in debt, he settled his accounts by painting his creditors. Still another Charlestonian was an artist and painter, Solomon Nunes Carvalho (1815-1897), a nephew of the town's former minister, the Rev. E. N. Carvalho. It was young Carvalho who earned the substantial fee of \$50 by painting from memory the beautiful local synagog after it had burnt down in 1838. Carvalho was later to become a daguerreotypist, photographer, and a writer. Because of his professional skills, he was invited by Col. John C. Frémont to accompany him on his western exploring expedition in the 1850's. Carvalho's story of this hazardous undertaking is recorded in his interesting book, *Incidents of Travel and Adventure in the Far West etc.* (1857).²⁴

A contemporary of Moïse and Carvalho who was interested, after a fashion, in the arts and sciences was the New Orleans builder Daniel Warburg. As his name indicates, he was a member of the remarkable German clan which has produced art patrons, philanthropists, and a Nobel laureate. Warburg owned a business, the Company of Architects. Priding himself on his knowledge of mathematics, Warburg said that he could square the circle and was willing to sell the secret to the United States government for \$10,000,000. In 1839 he published two brochures on mathematics. Two of his sons, mulattos, were men of artistic calibre. The one, Daniel, who remained in New Orleans, made a living as a stonecutter and engraver. The other, Eugène, left the city, studied abroad, and died in 1859 after completing bas-reliefs and sculptured busts, including one of the American ambassador to France, John Y. Mason, whose wife, Mary Anne Fort, had studied at the Warrenton School of the Mordecais. There is no available evidence that any of these Warburgs had any interest in Jews or Judaism; they had become fully assimilated. Far to the North, in 1837, the year that Michigan was granted statehood, Frederick E. Cohen, a portrait painter, made his appearance there. His self-portrait, a beautiful piece of work, is ample evidence that he was competent. Be-

cause of his name, it is assumed that he was a Jew, or of Jewish ancestry, but it must be borne in mind that, as far back as the eighteenth century, there were Cohens, Levys, and Moseses who were Christians, not Jews.²⁵

MUSIC

It would seem that music, more than the graphic arts, was cultivated by middle-class American Jews. Eighteenth-century Abigail Franks had insisted that her children play some musical instrument; later, David, her son, and Nathan Levy, of Philadelphia, her brother, were members of chamber music quartets.²⁶ In the 1830's, when Carvalho was working on his picture of the Charleston synagog, when Theodore Moïse was painting Andrew Jackson's portrait (or at least his horse in the famous picture of the victor at New Orleans), and when the Philipsons in Saint Louis would have offered a Da Vinci or a Rubens or a Raphael for less than \$100, an English Jew named Henry Russell (né Levy, 1812/1813-1900) was touring this country as America's most popular ballad singer. As a teenager, he had studied opera in Italy under Vincenzo Bellini and had also been influenced by Donizetti and Rossini. Shortly after he came to the United States in the 1830's, he was befriended by Mordecai M. Noah, to whom, thankful for the courtesies shown him, the composer and singer dedicated one of his songs: "Our Way Across the Mountains, Ho!" When he first came here, he sang opera in Philadelphia. In Rochester, where he was to settle for a while, he taught piano and played the organ in a Presbyterian church. Before 1840, he had moved on to New York and had begun to concertize, singing songs and oratorios, appearing also with philharmonic societies and even reciting soliloquies from Shakespeare. The accompaniment was his own. The ballads he wrote and sang were dramatic, romantic, and sentimental. Some dealt with temperance, others with the sorry lot of the slaves and with the hunted Indian. He sang these songs not because he was a social reformer but because they appealed to his audiences. Americans were typically effusive in their sentimentality; so are their grandchildren.

All told Russell wrote about 800 songs, most of them here in the United States. Often both the words and the music were his. Many of these ballads were published. He made little or no money selling his compositions; he turned them over to his publishers for a pittance, but became rich concertizing. It is reported that in three consecutive seasons alone Russell garnered \$50,000, a huge sum in those days. People loved to hear him. His manly songs entranced his admirers. He carried his concerts alone, without a supporting cast. Some of his ballads are still sung, among the most popular are "Cheer Boys Cheer," "A Life on the Ocean Wave," "Some Love to Roam," and "Woodman Spare That Tree." "The Old Arm Chair" (1840) went through at least twenty-three printings. It is

easy to understand why he was the country's most beloved singer before the advent of Stephen Foster. Finally, in 1842, he returned to England to become a moneylender and a bill broker. He was buried as a Christian, though there is no evidence that he was a convert; two of his sons had a Gentile mother; it was probably they who saw to it that he received a Christian burial.²⁷

One of Russell's most famous songs was "To The West, To The West, To the Land of the Free." This ballad, it is said, influenced many to pull up stakes and to cross the mountains to the great American heartland. Long before Russell set foot on these shores, however, the Philipson brothers not only pioneered in the graphic arts in America's new West, but also brought music to the Missouri metropolis at the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. When Joseph Philipson lost his money in the long depression of 1815-1821, he turned to piano teaching; brother Jacob, another casualty of the business world, taught the violin and modern European languages. Simon, the third brother, fathered two children who became piano virtuosi. Obviously these Philipsons were culturally, aesthetically, and linguistically gifted as well as musically talented.²⁸

They were not alone. In 1836 Daniel Schlesinger (1799-1838) arrived on these shores. In the brief space of the two years still left to him, he was to make his impress musically upon this land of his adoption. A learned mathematician, he was a fine musician and a distinguished concert pianist. Back in Europe, he had studied under the Jew Ignaz Moscheles, the friend of Beethoven and Meyerbeer and the teacher of Felix Mendelssohn. Before the appearance of Chopin, Moscheles was said to have been Europe's greatest pianist. His first months in America were exceedingly difficult for Schlesinger; he had very few pupils; Americans would not pay a good fee for instruction by a master artist. His attempts to organize chamber music concerts were unsuccessful. Concert-going Americans preferred vocal music, the songs and ballads of a Henry Russell. However, he persisted in concertizing and after a time received recognition, pupils, and appreciation. The improvisations of this gifted virtuoso were much admired. Schlesinger's coming here was important; good music now began to cross the Atlantic. He introduced new compositions and prepared the way for instrumental virtuosi.²⁹

Almost a decade before Schlesinger came here with his portfolio of piano classics, Bnai Jeshurun of New York had a choral group which met in the "vestry" (basement) and sang publicly on festive occasions (1828). As early as 1820, Jews were associated with Philadelphia's Musical Fund Society—a philanthropy of sorts—as members and players. The city at that time could even boast of a music store owned by a Jew. The Society gave concerts, helped musicians in need, and furthered the cultural life of the larger community. That same decade, in 1829, Lorenzo Da Ponte,

Mozart's librettist, brought Italian opera to the city. This immigrant was one of the country's most exotic and glamorous personages. Da Ponte had been born into a Jewish family in the town of Ceneda, near Venice, Italy. His original name was Emanuele Conegliano. It is not improbable that he was a member of that Conegliano family which produced distinguished physicians, statesmen, and students of rabbinic literature. In all likelihood, he received a good Jewish education, including of course instruction in Hebrew.

At the age of fourteen, young Conegliano was converted to Roman Catholicism and took the name of his sponsor, Bishop Lorenzo Da Ponte. The brilliant young neophyte was ordained to the priesthood, but later renounced his order, although he would remain a Roman Catholic throughout his life. Da Ponte, a friend of Casanova, was banished for profligacy from Venice, where he was living during the 1770's. He then turned to Vienna, the capital of the powerful Hapsburg Empire, and there became a "Poet to the Italian Theatre," writing libretti for operatic composers. "The Marriage of Figaro," "Don Giovanni," and "Cosi fan Tutte" were the results of his collaboration with Mozart. In 1790, this unstable but brilliant poet, teacher, and man of letters had overstayed his welcome in Vienna. Three years later he was settled in London, writing more libretti, managing opera companies, selling books and speculating. Constantly making enemies wherever he went, Da Ponte knew by 1804 that he was through in England as well. He shipped his family off to America and followed soon after.³⁰

Arriving at Philadelphia in 1805 in the fifty-sixth year of his life, Da Ponte had already passed the zenith of his fame, but another thirty-three years still lay ahead of him. There is much that is admirable about him. He tackled new ventures with courage and energy, always hoping to wrest fortune from an unwilling fate. Compelled to begin life anew in 1805, this man of letters wandered between New York, Elizabeth Town, New Jersey, and Sunbury, Pennsylvania, trying to make ends meet as a grocer, merchant, and distiller. In 1819, he settled permanently in New York, where he had previously spent several years. He taught Italian, encouraged and produced Italian opera, imported and sold Latin works, and in 1825, nominally at least, became a professor of Italian at Columbia College. He referred to himself also as an instructor in the University of the City of New York. In 1833 he published in English a two-volume history of the Florentine Republic.³¹

At a time when European critics could with some degree of justice maintain that Americans had done nothing for the sciences, arts, and literature, Da Ponte had brought a rich Italian culture to this country, promoted the study of the classics, furthered the best of European music, and inspired a whole generation of aristocratic Americans to pursue and cher-

ish the fine arts—all this before he died in 1838. His bibliography in the United States, both in Italian and in English, includes some twenty works, among them essays, plays, libretti, verse, and memoirs. Himself a polymath and “Renaissance” figure, he evoked a renaissance of his own in the salons which he established in his adopted city. No one can deny that he made a notable contribution to the intellectual, aesthetic, and cultural life of the nation. Two years before his appointment to the Columbia professorship, a position which paid no salary, he published the first edition of his *Memoirs* in Italian. Although he tended to embroider his recollections, they are, on the whole, authentic if not objective. Clearly, he was something of an adventurer, shrewd, unreliable, and at times even unscrupulous. This flamboyant braggart was a bit of a faker; even so, he was one of America’s most influential “Jews.” Judging from his memoirs, of course, Da Ponte evinced no attachment to his ancestral people or faith.

Interest in music among Jews in the early nineteenth century was in no sense limited to professional musicians. The Myers children in Norfolk were given an excellent musical education by their parents. The family had a large collection of music, mostly French and Italian for the pianoforte, although some English and American pieces were included. There was literature for the violin, clarinet, flute, harp, and for the voice, too, both in classical and popular modes.³²

JACOB NEWTON CARDOZO

A younger contemporary of Da Ponte was the Sephardi Jacob N. Cardozo (1786-1873), a Southerner who was at times a music and drama critic, apparently a competent and respected one. The “N” in his name stands for Nunez, but he early changed it to Newton—a change which is no proof of assimilation. This acculturated American always identified with Jews and was a member of Charleston’s Beth Elohim, on the Orthodox side, though his brother was a Reformer. As a loyal Jew, Cardozo railed against the Marylanders who refused to emancipate their Jewish fellow citizens; he was indignant when the Papal authorities—acting on canonical grounds—took a Jewish child from the arms of its mother and raised him as a Christian. Cardozo, a native of Savannah, was the son of Sergeant-Major David N. Cardozo, a Revolutionary War hero who joined with his fellow Charleston militiamen in the forlorn hope of recapturing Savannah from the British in 1779. The Cardozos finally settled permanently in Charleston, where Jacob went to work at the age of twelve.³³

Though denied the privilege of adequate schooling, Cardozo acquired an excellent education. In 1810, he joined the Methulogic Society, a young man’s literary association dedicated to the study of truth and to the enlightenment of the mind: The glory of letters is above all other

human glory! When he was called upon to make the anniversary address, the bombast that characterized his oration was startling. It is typically adolescent though Cardozo was already a man in his mid-twenties. But it should be borne in mind that he was an autodidact. His talk is an apostrophe to men of letters and science; they are patriots who inspire others. They are men who stand up against tyrants—against Napoleon!—and political fanatics. His was an attack on the French Revolution and its Napoleonic aftermath. The new hope of the world lies not in France, but in the free American republic. This land can become the patroness of the arts and sciences; it is destined for glory because of the confluence here of liberty, philosophy, and the arts. Culture will rise triumphant through the men of letters; literature and patriotism are allied. Here, in 1811, as Cardozo demonstrates, American cultural nationalism was in full bloom.³⁴

Obviously Cardozo aspired to become a litterateur; as he grew older, he discarded his bombast. Turning to his life's work, journalism, he wrote for belletristic periodicals and became one of the founders of *The Southern Review*, which was dedicated to the furtherance of culture in the South. He never married, though he is said to have been the father of Francis Louis Cardozo. The latter was a free-born black who studied at the University of Glasgow, and in London, too, later becoming a Presbyterian minister and an accountant, and playing an important role in postbellum South Carolina, where in Reconstruction days he was secretary of state and treasurer. Francis's last important job was as principal of a Negro high school in the nation's capital, Washington. The elder Cardozo, Jacob, was editor and owner of *The Southern Patriot* (1817-1845); from 1845 to 1861, he was associated with the *Evening News*. In all his editorial posts, he was in a position to exert a great deal of influence. As a newspaper owner, he was not always successful financially; newspapers were too dependent on the winds of politics, on government patronage.³⁵

Cardozo was a statistician and an economist, actually one of the country's most distinguished antebellum students of economics. He supported the local Chamber of Commerce and in 1826 wrote *Notes on Political Economy*, a book elaborating his theories on rent and money, on exchange, taxation, banking, depressions, wages, profits, value and price. The influences that moved him were the writings of Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and Thomas R. Malthus. He was a critic of Ricardo, although he was a free trader and a follower of the laissez-faire school of economic thought. He believed in sound money, sound banking, hence was no opponent of the national bank. In essence Jacob was a conservative Democrat, no egalitarian where suffrage was concerned. His views on slavery were typical of the thoughtful Southerners of his day. Slavery was economically and morally justified; the Negroes were often better off than white wage-slaves; the black bondsmen are morally and intellectually inferior.³⁶

As a free trader, living in the cotton planting South, Cardozo was an anti-tariff, anti-protectionist economist. He was opposed to the 1828 Tariff of Abominations but was no secessionist. He was a Unionist, even though during the Civil War he felt it necessary to side with his friends in the South when they broke with the North. His views were influenced by what he thought was good, not only for the United States, but for the South. Minimum interference of the government in the operation of the economy was most desirable, yet he voiced no objection to internal improvements at government expense, and he was convinced that the operations of the national bank were on the whole salutary. The South could emancipate itself from the North by turning to textile manufacture. These are some of the views he expounded for a long generation. During the war years he carried on his editorial work in Savannah, Mobile, and Atlanta. In 1866, he published his *Reminiscences of Charleston*. As an editorial writer in major Southern towns, Cardozo was a journalist whose views carried weight. It has been suggested that, through Joel Poinsett, a Carolinian in the Van Buren cabinet, Cardozo was in a position to influence the President.³⁷

SCIENCE

Cardozo wanted practical education for the children of the working classes; he wanted apprentices' libraries and mechanics' institutes. This notable economist lived in an age when applied science was emphasized, when there were intimations, too, of advanced scientific thinking. By 1816, the United States Military Academy had already become an engineering school. One of its earliest graduates, Alfred Mordecai, is reputed to have been the man primarily responsible for introducing scientific research into the field of ordnance. By 1839, the government had appointed him to the prestigious National Ordnance Board. More than a decade before Mordecai was even born, Jacob Isaacs (ca. 1718-1798), of Newport, offered Congress a method of converting salt water into fresh water. Isaacs, a former merchant and broker, fancied himself a scientist and hoped that the government would buy his discovery. Any good device for turning salt water into fresh water was important, for sailing ships made long voyages. Secretary of State Jefferson carefully examined Isaacs's proposal and declined to recommend it in 1790-1791; the Newport businessman's process seemed to him no improvement over methods of distillation already in use. In the small American Jewish world of the 1790's, there can be no question that Jacob Isaacs and Solomon Simson knew each other; they may well have been friends. Unlike Isaacs, Simson was a very successful businessman—a merchant-shipper, a whaling industry entrepreneur, and a spermaceti candle manufacturer. The larger general

community knew him as a prominent Mason, a Democratic politician, a left-winger.³⁸

Also a vice-president of the American Mineralogical Society, Simson was a businessman interested in the production of lead, a commodity most important for bullets during the Revolution. Simson at one time recommended his brother-in-law Myer Myers, the gold and silversmith, to the Continental authorities because they were looking for an expert to supervise their lead smelting operations. Myers, too, was no scientist; he was a craftsman. Another Revolutionary figure who flirted with mining was Samuel de Lucena, a potash maker, who wanted the government to reimburse him for an unauthorized search for sulphur deposits. Moses Lopez, of the Newport Lopez clan, was more directly concerned with scientific thought. In 1806, this mathematician published a calendar of the Jewish holidays covering the period from 1805 to 1859.³⁹

Quite obviously very few Jews were engaged in scientific pursuits during the first quarter of the century. Science, pure or otherwise, offered Jews no opportunity for a livelihood. Writing to Dr. De La Motta, of Savannah, in 1820, Jefferson expressed the hope that Jews would turn to the sciences and to communal service. This was now possible inasmuch as no restraints were then imposed on them because of their religious beliefs. Indeed, by the second quarter of the century, a few Jews did begin to manifest an interest in the physical sciences. Theodore Frelinghuysen Moss (b. 1819) studied at the University of Pennsylvania in 1834 and then at Freiburg in Germany to qualify himself as a mining engineer and as a geologist. In all likelihood he was one of the first native American Jews to study in Germany.⁴⁰

A contemporary German immigrant did cut quite a swath in the mineralogical field—Fuerth-born Lewis (Ludwig?) Feuchtwanger (1805-1876), who had studied ancient languages at the University of Jena in 1827. By that time, he had become a pharmacist and mineralogist. After arriving at New York in 1829, he opened a pharmacy and even practiced medicine during the cholera epidemic of 1832. His prime work, however, was in the field of metallurgy; for he refined nickel and pioneered in the use of a nickel alloy for coins. He is, in a way, the father of the five-cent piece. During the 1837 panic he used his alloy to make tokens which were widely used in several American cities. Feuchtwanger, known for his collections of minerals, fossils, and fine gems, joined several scientific societies in New York and Germany and published at least four works. His articles on the manufacture of glass, dyes, and colors appeared in a number of magazines. Feuchtwanger's *Popular Treatise on Gems* was printed at New York in 1838; his *Elements of Mineralogy* appeared in 1839. Books on fermented liquors and on soluble glass were published in 1858 and in 1870.⁴¹

MEDICINE

By the turn of the eighteenth century, more Jews were practicing medicine. Isaac Abrahams, the first Jew to receive an academic degree at King's College (later Columbia), soon became a physician, probably by training as an apprentice. Why did some early nineteenth-century Jews begin to turn to medicine? Was it easier for them to enter college? Columbia in 1791 excused Sabbatarians from classes on their day of rest. Is it possible that consulting physicians in times of illness was becoming a tradition, a habit, a style in the early nineteenth century? In the past, people had generally doctored themselves; they were not accustomed to resort to physicians. In 1690, it was good doctrine to agree with Gabriel Thomas: "Of lawyers and physicians I shall say nothing because this country is very peaceful and healthy. Long may it so continue and never have occasion for the tongue of the one and the pen of the other—both equally destructive of men's estates and lives." This was still deemed good common sense—though to a far lesser degree—in the first half of the nineteenth century. Patients did not crowd the offices of physicians. Up into the nineteenth century many doctors engaged in sidelines to keep the pot boiling. In his early days even a brilliant clinician like Dr. John Ware of Harvard (d.1864) had to practice dentistry and take in boarding pupils to make a living.⁴²

Among those studying physic in the last decade of the 1700's was Walter Judah (b. 1778), who attended classes at Columbia, but apprenticed himself also to two New York doctors. One of them was David Hosack, the physician and scientist who was the attending surgeon at the Burr-Hamilton duel. During a devastating epidemic in New York, young Judah volunteered his services and even took money out of his own pocket to buy medicine for the poor. He was stricken and died. The bereaved family erected an elaborate monument to memorialize him; it is the most ornate of New York's tombstones, picturing as it does the city's skyline and portraying an arm with an axe cutting down the tree of life, while on high the angel of death, armed with a sword, hovers over the city as a symbol of the destructive power of the yellow fever. Another early New York Jewish student of medicine was Joel Hart (1784-1842), the son of a successful New York stockbroker and land speculator. Young Hart, like Joseph H. Myers, had studied abroad. On his graduation from the London Royal College of Surgeons, he became a member of the Edinburgh Medical Society. Returning to this country, Dr. Hart helped found the New York County Medical Society in 1806 and the New York College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1807.⁴³

The very year Hart became active in the New York College of Physicians and Surgeons, a precocious Sephardic youngster landed in New

York City, seven-year-old Daniel Levy Maduro Peixotto (1800-1843), son of Moses L. M. Peixotto, later to become hazzan of Shearith Israel. All of sixteen, Daniel secured his bachelor's degree from Columbia, and three years later at the sober age of nineteen he became a full-fledged physician with a degree from New York's College of Physicians and Surgeons. He, too, had studied privately with Hosack. When twenty-three, Peixotto married Rachel Seixas, the daughter of Benjamin Seixas and thus became a kinsman of almost every important Sephardic family in town. By that time, he was already a seasoned practitioner who had traveled about the West Indies and had written a paper for *The New York Medical and Physical Journal*; before he was twenty-six, he was appointed one of the *Journal's* editors.

He had less than twenty years to live—he was dead when he was forty-three—but he managed to crowd a great deal into the next two decades. The Academy of Medicine numbered him among its founders, and in 1830 he was elected president of the Medical Society of the City and County of New York. As head of the Medical Society, Peixotto had to make a presidential address. In July, 1831, he told the Society's members that it was their duty to regulate the licensing of physicians and the practice of medicine in the city; it was incumbent upon them as an organization to advance science and to encourage the establishment of medical associations, libraries, and a good scientific journal. Quackery must be suppressed. He regretted that there were physicians indifferent to scientific pursuits, men who could not even spell properly. This would never do if their transactions were to be published. Physicians had to have a good liberal education; he himself preferred the classical studies of the ancient cultures. Peixotto had reissued a standard medical manual in 1830; in 1835, he was invited to Willoughby, Ohio, near Cleveland, to serve as professor of the theory and practice of medicine and obstetrics at the Willoughby University of Lake Erie. The semesters were pitifully short. No doubt he returned home to New York after the brief academic season.⁴⁴

While at Willoughby, around 1837, Peixotto delivered an address to preface one of his courses. He repeated the recommendation he had made to the New York Medical Society in 1831, but also advanced some new suggestions. He asked for state support for colleges and universities and expressed the hope that this new medical school on the shores of Lake Erie would do for the Northern Ohio region what Daniel Drake and his associates had done for the settlers on the Ohio. Peixotto pleaded for asylums for the insane and instruction for the blind. Medicine, he told his auditors, was an honorable and intellectual profession. Here, too, as in other talks he had made, he emphasized the humanitarianism, the social welfare obligation incumbent on all men. In this address, Dr. Peixotto rehearsed

the virtues of the great physicians of the past and stressed the merits of his own teacher Hosack and the accomplishments of Philadelphia's Benjamin Rush. The great among the leaders of early days had achieved what they did because they made accurate observations, supplemented their conclusions by reading and reflection, and communicated what they had learned. He kept reiterating: medicine was a profession for literate people; a competent doctor must be at home in the social sciences, the fine arts, and philosophy. While he lectured out West, in Ohio, the Mormons at Kirtland asked him to teach them Hebrew. These sectarians, who stoutly maintained that Joseph Smith's revelations were rooted in the Hebrew Bible, could not afford to admit that they were ignorant of the Holy Tongue. Peixotto was discharged—he did not keep his appointments—and the Mormons soon turned to his kinsman James (Joshua) Seixas, who was teaching Hebrew at Oberlin and Hudson, Ohio.⁴⁵

Peixotto was no run-of-the-mine medical hack. Certainly he was superior to the average physician of his day, for he was a cultured gentleman, a student of the classics, a contributor to medical and literary periodicals, an able lecturer, a fluent speaker. His medicine was seasoned with a dash of Democratic politics, since he edited a pro-Jackson paper when the general ran for the presidency. This type of dilettante existence and of diversified cultural activity was characteristic of some of the more notable physicians of the period. Peixotto had an illustrious example in his own teacher David Hosack, a historian as well as a physician, and in Benjamin Rush, who was everything from medical man to politician, to say nothing of criminologist, prohibitionist, psychologist, educationist, and abolitionist. One of Rush's recent biographers has said of him that he "had an able and versatile, but not a fundamentally critical mind."

The statement could be applied with even more justice to Dr. Peixotto. He was no scientist, in no sense comparable to his Philadelphia Jewish contemporary, Dr. Isaac Hays, the ophthalmologist, ornithologist, and physicist. Hays was a first-class scholar; Peixotto was not. But Peixotto, unlike Hays, was very much interested in Judaism. In 1830, he addressed the Jewish Society for the Education of Poor Children. Two years later, during the terrible days of the cholera scourge in New York, this president of the Medical Society was fearful lest some of the observant Jews might lower their resistance to the pest by fasting on the Ninth of Ab, the anniversary of the fall of the Temple in ancient Jerusalem. No doubt the doctor consulted with his brother-in-law, the new "pastor" of Shearith Israel, and of course with the trustees. Peixotto recommended that the congregants ameliorate the fast by allowing themselves a light breakfast and an occasional cup of tea during the day.⁴⁶

PENNSYLVANIA'S JEWISH PRACTITIONERS

Because Peixotto and his colleagues had spent years studying medicine, they were righteously indignant when they had to cope with quacks. To be sure, self-interest was never absent. Jewish quacks, too, exploited the gullible. In 1800, a Dr. Samuel Solomon published a *Guide to Health; or Advice to Both Sexes in Nervous and Consumptive Complaints*. The 1800 edition purported to be the fifty-third. The medicine he sold was called Cordial Balm of Gilead. Solomon, an attractive Englishman who maintained that he had a degree from Aberdeen, practiced medicine in Philadelphia and then returned to England where he continued to sell his book and his cordial. The *Guide* by that time was already in its sixty-sixth edition, so he said. It is hard to believe that this doctor was not a quack. Another Philadelphian who practiced medicine at the turn of the century was Lieutenant Colonel Solomon Bush, a veteran of the Revolution with a fine record. After he was wounded and separated from the service, he apparently studied medicine in London, and returned to America as a physician. Hardly anything is known of him as a practitioner in his chosen field.⁴⁷

During the last years that Dr. Bush was practicing medicine, a Surinamese Jewish physician arrived to take up his residence in the city. This South American was recognized by his colleagues as a man of scientific calibre. David de Isaac Cohen Nassy had played an important role as a leader in the Jewish community of Surinam. He was a physician, a pharmacist, publicist, and above all a man of culture in Paramaribo, the capital of the Dutch colony, which boasted of a larger Jewry than Philadelphia. In all likelihood, Nassy was one of the authors of the *Essai Historique sur la Colonie de Surinam (Historical Essay on the Colony of Surinam)*, prepared in 1788 at the request of Wilhelm von Dohm, an enlightened German civil servant interested in enfranchising the Jews of Europe. Von Dohm himself was the author of *Ueber die buergerliche Verbesserung der Juden (On the Civil Improvement of the Jews)* in 1781. Nassy, impoverished by the loss of his plantation and resentful of the disabilities to which he and the Jews were still exposed, left home about the year 1792 and settled in Philadelphia, where he became naturalized. Though a Deist or free-thinker, he identified with the local synagog community and contributed to its charities. In 1793, soon after his arrival, Nassy was elected to membership in the American Philosophical Society. In 1794, he presented a paper on botany. A year earlier, he had published his *Observations on the Cause, Nature, and Treatment of the Epidemic Disorder Prevalent in Philadelphia*. Two editions of this study of the yellow fever appeared, one in English and one in both French and English.⁴⁸

The *Observations* was the first published medical work of an American Jew, but Nassy was not the first American Jew to write a paper of scientific import. In 1763, Moses Lindo, of Charleston, had experimented

in developing yellow and crimson vegetable dyes and published his findings in the *Philosophical Transactions* of the London Royal Society. Some years later, in 1771, a convert to Christianity, Joseph Ottolenghe, the former superintendent of the public filature in Georgia, was admitted to the American Philosophical Society; Ottolenghe published a letter in its transactions describing “Directions for Breeding Silkworms.”⁴⁹

During the Philadelphia yellow fever epidemic, Nassy and Benjamin Rush were, in a way, rivals. Nassy was far more successful in saving his patients than the more distinguished clinician. In 1795, Dr. Nassy decided to return to Surinam. The climate here disagreed with him and no doubt he nursed the hope that the new French-sponsored republic of Batavia would emancipate its Jewish subjects both in Holland herself and in the Caribbean and South America. Indeed, under the new Dutch regime, the Jews were finally emancipated. A few years later, after he had reestablished himself in Surinam, Nassy wrote his *Lettre Politico-Theologico-Morale sur les Juifs* (*Political-Theological-Moral Letter on the Jews*, 1798-1800), an attempt to justify the enfranchisement which the Dutch Jews had already received and which was under attack. In a note to the American Philosophical Society, accompanying a copy of this publication, the Surinamese physician wrote that the *Lettre* reflected the principles of liberty characteristically exemplified by the United States. As a naturalized American, he had carried its egalitarian doctrines back to his old South American home.⁵⁰

By 1840, at least 17 Jews had studied medicine at the University of Pennsylvania; 14 graduated. Of the 14, the record discloses that 11 were from the South, primarily from Virginia and South Carolina. Virginia was once the largest state in the Union; South Carolina had once sheltered the largest, and probably the most cultured, Jewry in the country. Among those who graduated were several destined to play a not unimportant part either in the general community or in the smaller Jewish body. Graduating with the class of 1836 was David Camden De Leon, a physician later to serve the Confederate Army as its first surgeon general. Jewish dentists, too, were not unusual, although most of them were primarily craftsmen. One was a man of some distinction—Dr. B. A. Rodriguez, of Charleston, the inventor of an artificial palate and an early contributor to the *American Journal of Dental Science*, very probably the world’s first periodical in the discipline of dentistry.⁵¹

THE LEO-WOLF CLAN

Beginning in 1827, Philadelphia’s medicine—ultimately New York’s, too—was fortified by a German-Jewish medical clan, all university trained, a father, three sons, and a son-in-law. William Leo-Wolf, his sons Joseph, Morris, and George and his son-in-law Gotthilf Moehring

were a superior group. The father had been a founding member of the Hamburg Reform Temple in 1817; four years later, he joined the Association for the Culture and Science of the Jews, established in 1819 as probably the first attempt of a coterie to bring Jewish historical and literary studies within the ambit of the scientific method. The family may have determined to leave its German homeland because of the persistence of anti-Jewish disabilities in post-Napoleonic days. Yet the men were devoted to German culture and over here became ardent protagonists of the educational practices of the country which had treated them so shabbily. They were contributors to journals in Germany and in the United States. In 1830, Joseph Leo-Wolf was called in for consultation when there was talk of establishing New York University. By the end of the 1820's then, a thin sprinkling of college-trained Jewish physicians and surgeons was to be found in those states where there were Jewish settlers. Medicine, however, was not to become a "Jewish" profession in this country until the turn of the nineteenth century. By that time, there was a large Jewish clientele which could serve as a core for a successful practice. Medicine then began to be a status profession, appealing in particular to East European immigrants and their sons fleeing from lands where they had suffered abuse.⁵²

DAVID G. SEIXAS

Allied to medicine is the care and training of deaf-mutes. The same year that Rebecca Gratz and her friends organized the female Hebrew Benevolent Society in Philadelphia, 1819, David G. Seixas (1788-1864) began his work with deaf-mutes. He established the first school in Pennsylvania for these unfortunates; it was the third permanent school of this type in the United States. At the time this son of Rabbi Gershom Seixas was engaged in the crockery business. Philadelphia tradition has it that he was strongly drawn to deaf-mutes among the children of the slums and felt that something ought to be done to help them. He was of a generous disposition and was very much moved by the plight of the helpless youngsters. He set out to do what he could for them, even though he had no systematic training in the education of such disabled children. Somehow or other he had acquired a working knowledge of the various techniques then current for teaching them. There was a book on the subject by a Philadelphia physician, William Thornton, which Seixas might have read, and the classic writings of the Abbes de l'Épée and Sicard were no doubt available. It is even possible that he was acquainted with the methods of Jacob Rodriguez Pereire, the Franco-Portuguese Jew who had won renown in the second half of the preceding century for his success in teaching the deaf and dumb.

Certainly by the time that David began to devote himself seriously to these children, a number of Americans had already acquired some familiarity with the methods of instruction of the French leaders in the field. In 1815, Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, sent over to Europe to study the various systems of teaching, had been attracted by the French approach which he was privileged to observe at the Institut Royal des Sourds-Muets, and he brought back to America with him in 1816 the brilliant deaf-mute teacher Laurent Clerc. These two, Gallaudet and Clerc, gave exhibitions in Philadelphia that very year, and the ingenious David may have seen them in action. Very much impressed by what they had witnessed, the Philadelphians contributed to Gallaudet's Hartford American Asylum and urged the establishment of a similar school in their own city. But nothing was done at that time.

Most of the people who had observed the work of David Seixas in this field testified that he was especially gifted. The children under his care were taught to write well and to communicate freely and intelligently with their hands. He made cheerful human beings out of the inarticulate waifs whom he picked from the humblest of homes. A number of distinguished Philadelphia citizens were so impressed by what he had already accomplished that they met together in April, 1820, and created the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. In May, the board formally hired Seixas at the rate of \$1,000 a year. He visited the Hartford Asylum, briefly studied its adaptation of the de l'Épée-Sicard system, and returned to Philadelphia where he worked out empirically his own modifications of current French methods. His work found ready acceptance, and he was widely acclaimed by those who visited his school or came to attend his public exhibitions. "David Seixas is distinguishing himself among the benefactors of mankind," wrote Rebecca Gratz to her sister-in-law in Lexington, Kentucky, "and is likely to reap the reward due to his talents and humanity." The Board of Directors, proud of his achievements and eager to secure private contributions and state grants, published *An Account of the Origin and Progress of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb*.⁵³

Some of Seixas's more Orthodox Jewish friends might well have said several months later that his board had given him an "evil eye," for before the year was out he found himself in trouble and was dismissed from his post. Leeser was convinced that religious prejudice was the real motive for letting Seixas go.⁵⁴ Despite his continuous success in an ever-growing school, he had made some bitter enemies, apparently, for in September of this same year, 1821, charges were preferred against him for taking improper liberties with two or three of the older girls; he had kissed them and the like. There were no charges of immorality—as we understand the term—nevertheless several of the members of the board took a very seri-

ous view of the whole matter. Seixas indignantly and vigorously denied any immoral intent, stoutly maintaining that his affection for his charges was that of a father for his children. It was true that he was an unmarried man; some thought that he had been indiscreet. The board met on the 3d of November, 1821, and dismissed him by a vote of 12 to 9. It was not a hasty action; it had been discussing "the state of the Asylum" ever since September. His dismissal became a cause célèbre, calling forth printed accusations. His friends appealed to the legislature on his behalf and a committee of that body expressed itself sympathetically to Seixas, but did nothing more at the time. The board, to defend itself against the rumors flying about, published its side of the story in 1822, in *Documents in Relation to the Dismissal of David G. Seixas*.

Seixas's friends did not give up easily. To remove this man from office while he was doing excellent work, to convict him on the evidence of two or three deaf-mutes whose interpreters were not fully conversant with the children's mode of communication, to bring charges months after the alleged derelictions had taken place, was in their opinion a grave injustice. Rebecca Gratz, who was now on the Board of Directresses, felt that he had been cruelly dealt with. Her brother, Jacob Gratz, a member of the Board, was a staunch defender of David. Another brother Joseph was also a member, but apparently took no sides in the controversy. A minority of the board, eight men, rallied to David's defense in a public statement, pointing out that although there were 31 men on the board, only 21 had attended the crucial meeting, and that he had been dismissed by the votes of 12, less than half the whole number. David's supporters emphasized the fact that he had founded the school and had distinguished himself through arduous and successful exertions on behalf of his students. They answered the publication of the board's *Documents* with *Letters to C. C. Biddle, Wm. M'Ilvaine, Mary Cowgill, and John Bacon: Connected with the Dismissal of David G. Seixas*. These four mentioned by name were the three members of the board and the matron who, so Seixas believed, had conspired to get rid of him and to replace him by Laurent Clerc, the French deaf-mute teacher at Gallaudet's Hartford school.

Because they had confidence in Seixas's integrity and ability, a number of his friends helped him create a school of his own in 1822. They called it the Philadelphia Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb to distinguish it from the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. The new school made rapid progress under his talented leadership and even received a modest grant from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives the following year. Young Alfred Mordecai, then a cadet at West Point, visited the Asylum in August and was very much impressed by the work done with children only five or six years of age, who had already acquired the ability to write and to read by "significant actions and gesticulations."

The new school was naturally a rival of the older Philadelphia Institution; both were competing for state appropriations. The Asylum crowd attacked the Institution as the champion of a French system; Seixas's method was the American, the Pennsylvania system, taught by a native American. Thus David and his friends in their appeal to the "Christian" legislature employed the growing sentiment of American nationalism to damn the work of Clerc, the French foreigner. To fortify their position and to broadcast their achievements, the supporters of the new school published in late 1823 or early 1824 *A Sketch of the Origin and Progress of the Institutions for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb in Pennsylvania*. There is ample evidence that Seixas did influence the legislatures in Pennsylvania and New Jersey to concern themselves with the plight of deaf-mutes. Seixas's Asylum, which is described in this pamphlet, was still in existence in 1825, but probably did not last much longer, for a few years later this brilliant teacher was back in his native New York City manufacturing sealing wax, visiting cards—and beer. His enquiring mind was avidly open to new ideas, and when the French government made public the daguerreotype process of photography, he was one of the first to exploit it in this country. Seixas had real ability and was to engage in many businesses, but he was uniformly unsuccessful. He finally wandered west and died in Indiana during the Civil War, an old man in his seventies, still unmarried.⁵⁵

JULIUS R. FRIEDLANDER

David Seixas was concerned solely with deaf-mutes; another Jew pioneered in educating the blind. This was Julius R. Friedlander (originally Friedlaender, 1803-1839), a native of Silesia. After his father died early leaving the family penniless, relatives provided support. Julius studied at the universities of Breslau and Leipzig, where he acquired an excellent education. In the course of time, he also developed skills as a graphic artist. At the age of twenty, he turned to Christianity, but his conversion alienated his relatives who refused to support him any longer. He became a tutor and somehow or other acquired skills in teaching the blind. In 1832, rejected by both Jews and Christians and smitten by "American fever," Friedlander was determined to cross the Atlantic and make a career for himself in a land, where, so he believed, there were no schools for the blind. He was an ambitious, competent man. In 1833, six months after he landed in Philadelphia, he had established a school which became the Pennsylvania Institution for Instruction of the Blind. His work here had actually begun in 1832 on his arrival, just about the time schools for the blind were opened in New York and Boston. This desire on the part of many to aid the sightless was symptomatic of a new humanitarian approach; the blind were no longer to be buried alive in poorhouses, but

were to be rehabilitated by private associations or by the state. In his 1837 address, the social-minded Dr. Peixotto would urge proper care for these unfortunates.

Though a sincere Christian, Friedlander was not cast in a fundamentalist mold. He did not require his wards to pledge allegiance to one particular Protestant denomination; they were permitted to attend the church of their choice. Classes were opened with the Lord's Prayer and the reading of a chapter from the Bible. Friedlander put together the first book in the United States for the blind, the Gospel of Mark. Since there was no braille in those days, he employed a somewhat similar system of raised print. Later he produced *Ruth*, *Esther*, and *Proverbs*, all interesting and appealing biblical books. As an American he thought it fitting that he also prepare a life of Washington and an edition of the Declaration of Independence. In addition to the three "R's," the curriculum of the school included algebra, geometry, natural philosophy, history, and music. The students who were taught crafts manufactured brooms, brushes, shoes, mattresses, and carpets. Girls were given instruction in knitting, fancy needlework, and, of course, cooking. It was imperative that these young women learn to help themselves. Under his direction, this school—later known as the Overbrook School for the Blind—was successful. Clients were brought in from different states of the Union. Henry Clay came to visit it; its graduates were employed as teachers in other institutions. The immigrant Friedlander was made for America; he was a good fund-raiser, clever in the art of public relations. Within the year after the school opened, he had already published three works on instruction for the blind. Friedlander laid emphasis on literature, on poetry. In 1838, at a time when teetotalers were meeting in convention in Philadelphia, one of his students composed the following:

Epitaph on a Drunkard

Here lies entom'd within this marble vault,
One who 'twas said had but a single fault. . . .
His name was Sandy:—be it known to all,
A faithful follow'r of Prince Alcohol—
Who for his great devotion to the bowl
Lost first his body, and at last—his soul.

About seven years after he came to America, Friedlander died of tuberculosis; he was not yet thirty-six. The funeral sermon was preached by Rebecca Gratz's friend, the Unitarian minister William H. Furness. This is strange, since Friedlander was an orthodox Christian. It may well be that the tie that bound the two men was their common interest in German literature⁵⁶

DR. JOSHUA I. COHEN

Friedlander was no physician; Joshua I. Cohen was. From the point of view of breadth of cultural interests, no Jew was Cohen's superior. One is tempted to say that nothing human was foreign to him. If not quite a polymath, he was certainly an earnest dilettante. After taking a degree in medicine he was not concerned about his livelihood, for he was one of the wealthy Baltimore Cohens. He had time to devote himself to science, to literature, to the arts. Like other members of his family, he was a lover of music and an instrumentalist. Cohen was a pioneer in otology and an avid student of ophthalmology, mineralogy, and geology. In later years he presided over the Medical and Chirurgical Faculty of Maryland. The social sciences were also not without their appeal for him. He was elected to the American Philosophical Society and was enrolled as a charter member of the Maryland Historical Society. His collection of colonial autographs and currencies was a notable one. There can be no question too that he was given a relatively good Jewish education. He had a fine Hebrew library and probably knew what was between the covers of many of the books. Cohen in later years participated in the fight to remove a discriminatory test oath still imposed by the State of Maryland, where no Jew could hold office unless he solemnly assured his fellow citizens that he believed in a future state of rewards and punishments.⁵⁷

DR. ISAAC HAYS

Cohen was also a pioneer eye surgeon and in 1840, together with another physician, established an eye and ear clinic in Baltimore. He was not a distinguished medical scientist, but Dr. Isaac Hays (1796–1879), of Philadelphia, was one indeed. His father, Samuel Hays, a merchant, was an important member of Mikveh Israel, and this tradition of service to the congregation was, to a degree, maintained by him. The young physician volunteered his services to the town's Jewish social-welfare agencies and in 1824 served on a committee of three to pick the new hazzan for Mikveh Israel. His prime interests, however, were in the fields of medicine and the natural sciences, not in religion or congregational concerns. A prolific writer, he had begun making contributions to the medical journals as early as 1826. Rebecca Gratz reported in one of her numerous letters that her nephew Isaac Hays opened his office in June, 1820—the year in which he received his medical degree at the University of Pennsylvania. Not long after that, Hays began to specialize in diseases of the eye; by 1822, he was already employed as a surgeon at the Philadelphia Infirmary for Diseases of the Eye and Ear. For the next half century, he hewed to this line becoming in the course of time one of America's outstanding ophthalmologists, doing pioneer work in astigmatism and color

blindness. For many years, a needle-knife which he perfected for cataract operations was popular with surgeons in the field. By the time he courteously bowed his way out to leave for the Academy on High, his contemporaries might well have said, and it would have been no more than the truth, that he was the most eminent Jewish physician and surgeon that the United States had produced up to the time of the War between the States.

Even so, Hays's true greatness lay in his editorial work. Very early he became the editor of the *American Journal of the Medical Sciences*, formerly the *Philadelphia Journal of the Medical and Physical Sciences* (1827). Due primarily to his ability and scientific integrity, the *Journal* became America's outstanding medical periodical, so all-inclusive that the distinguished medical bibliographer John Shaw Billings did not hesitate to declare that everything of consequence in the American medicine of that generation would be found in its pages. If the *American Journal* was the leading medical publication of its day, it was because Hays deliberately set out to make it so. Like many other proud and zealous citizens, he had been deeply offended by the writer of that famous article in an issue of the 1820 *Edinburgh Review* who had attacked Americans for having given so very little to the world of industry, science, and the arts. That caustic reviewer had posed the bitter question: "What does the world yet owe to American physicians or surgeons?" Hays picked up the gauntlet, flaunted it like a banner on his magazine and set out to show the world!¹⁸

If the *Philadelphia Journal* was to be transformed into the *American Journal*, the best men in the country would have to be co-opted. Among those invited to write for the new periodical were Doctors Warren, Channing, and Ware, of Boston, and John Godman, the anatomist. The men whose help Hays was trying to secure were the giants of American medicine, names to conjure with even today. Dr. John Collins Warren, one of the real builders of the Harvard Medical School and the first chief of surgery in the Massachusetts General Hospital, was Professor of Anatomy and Surgery at Harvard, but will always live in medical history as the courageous surgeon who performed the first major operation under ether anaesthesia; the anaesthetist was the dentist W. T. G. Morton. It was no doubt due to Warren that one of his patients, Abraham Touro, left \$10,000 to the Massachusetts General Hospital; we may assume that Warren got his fee; in addition, his share of Touro's estate was ten boxes of good Madeira wine. Walter Channing, one of the Newport Channings, was dean of the Harvard Medical School and known for his use of ether in childbirth; John Ware, another teacher in the same college, was an early worker in the field of delirium tremens. It is an interesting commentary on the times that, though Hays had been practicing medicine ever since 1820, he did not enjoy a lucrative practice even in the middle

1830's, years later. This was through no fault of his own, for he had all the qualities that go to make a great, and financially successful, practitioner. He was merely faced with the same problem which afflicted all medical men in the early days of American medicine: people preferred their home remedies.⁵⁹

By 1832, Hays was hard at work on a new project, an *American Cyclopedia of Practical Medicine and Surgery*, and was in touch with leading medical men whom he asked to contribute articles to this massive reference work. He had not been idle during the few years since developing the *American Journal*. In the meantime, he had reedited Alexander Wilson's monumental work on birds, the *American Ornithology*, and in the next decade this indefatigable scholar found time to edit a work on physics, another on medical terms, and, even more, to see a standard work on diseases of the eye through the press. In 1843 he began to publish the *Medical News*; in 1874, toward the evening of his life, he issued the *Monthly Abstract of Medical Science*—all this while serving a growing clientele, practicing in the various hospitals and welfare institutions of Philadelphia, preparing and supervising the material for the *American Journal*, and observing the amenities of the social world. It is difficult to fathom how the men of that generation found the time for everything they did. Hays was by no means unusual in his universality of interests; Warren, Ware, Channing, James Jackson, all the great medical men of that day, were anything but closet scholars, parochial in their interests, yet their medical work was sound and frequently brilliant. When the American Medical Association was established, Hays was among the founding fathers; he was the first treasurer, the first chairman of the publication committee, and the man who prepared its widely accepted code of medical ethics and professional conduct. Cognizant of what he was doing for medicine, foreign societies and academies invited him to share in their work. Here in this country, his knowledge, charm, and character attracted an ever growing circle of admirers. This grandson of the Yiddish-speaking Michael Gratz was every inch an aristocrat.⁶⁰

LINGUISTS AND BELLETRISTS: CULTURE OF THE JEWS IN THE SOUTH

Hays had translated the standard work of François J. V. Broussais, *Principles of Physiological Medicine*. Polyglot Jews had been serving as interpreters in the British provinces since the seventeenth century. As translators—and as interpreters, too—they were important factors in the transmission of cultures. In medieval days, they had played a significant role in introducing the metaphysics of Aristotle to the European world, serving as translators through their knowledge of Syriac, Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin.

Here in the early American republic these multilingual natives and immigrants again made themselves useful. In the 1780's, the ardent patriot Isaac Pinto helped the new country as Spanish interpreter in the Department of Foreign Affairs. Manuel Josephson, of Philadelphia, was "skilled in different languages"; Benjamin Nones, veteran of the Revolution, also served his country as interpreter. On occasion, linguists emerged as litterateurs, although there is no inevitable nexus between the two. Da Ponte translated an English play and some of Byron's verse into Italian.⁶¹

Jews in the early republic evinced an interest in literature, that is to say, in prose, drama, poetry, fiction, literary criticism. In New England? By 1800, there was no longer a Jewish community in that part of the country, only a few cultured Jews of native stock. In the South? There was every bit as much interest there in literature, classical and modern, as in the Middle Atlantic States. Noah in his 1818 *Discourse* said that the real genius among Jews was in Europe; Jews here were too few to produce people with exceptional gifts. There were a few, however, and in his opinion "the weight of talents . . . is in the Southern states." If literature was not much advanced here in the United States, it was because of the emphasis on commerce. That was Noah's way of saying that Jews were too busy making a living. Despite what Noah observed, it must be borne in mind constantly that the North at this time had its share of cultured professionals, lawyers, civil servants, physicians, businessmen. Most Jewish immigrants by the 1830's were landing in New York; a few had attended schools of higher learning.⁶²

In the South, in the cities and towns, in the villages and on the farms, there were Jews of gentility and learning; they were to be found in Richmond, Charlottesville, and Baltimore, in Wilmington, North Carolina, in Georgetown and Charleston, South Carolina, in Mobile, in New Orleans, and without doubt in other towns of the Old Southwest, as far away as East Texas. Mordecai Hendricks De Leon, a South Carolina businessman and physician, was very probably no college graduate, but his three sons were. One, a physician, had a distinguished army career and wrote for the medical journals; the second was a journalist, lawyer, novelist, and diplomatic agent for the Confederacy; the third, the baby of the family, was a well-known writer and newspaperman. His daughter, too, following in the footsteps of her father, was a litterateur and translator. After a fashion, a Southern Jewish elite was evolving, men who were articulate, well-educated, ambitious, politically-minded. They began to stand out in the decade before the Civil War.⁶³

And the women? The education of the women in the more affluent families was not neglected. As it happened—this was purely fortuitous—some of them were linguists. Zipporah Nunez Jacobs, born abroad, had come to Georgia with her parents only a few months after Oglethorpe

sailed up the Savannah River; she was multilingual. Mrs. Starr Barrett, a native of North Africa, had command of four European languages, Arabic, and some Hebrew, too. Solomon Jacobs, of Richmond, made sure that his daughters received a good education. Libraries and museums, controlled by private cultural associations, were patronized by Jewish subscribers. There were many Jews, both men and women, who had read widely in English literature. There was a Southern elite, individuals who knew Greek, Latin, French, and Spanish, too. They read poetry and went to concerts. Southern Jews of distinction were rarely interested in Hebraic culture, although some, required to do so by the Christian schools which trained them, had read the English Bible. In a formal sense most Jews were Orthodox; the intellectuals, on the whole, were indifferent to the traditional ritual and religious practices. Some did not join the synagogue. Indeed, it is very probable that many Jewish settlers in the metropolitan centers were not affiliated with any congregation. All in all, during the years 1776-1840, few if any Jews in the South were known as litterateurs beyond the confines of the cities where they were cherished. After all, how many Gentiles in the contemporary South enjoyed national recognition as literati, or as leaders in the arts?⁶⁴

Jewry in the South, at its cultural best, is exemplified by several individuals and families. These men and women are not typical of Southern Jewish shopkeepers. Certainly in the Richmond of the early nineteenth century, a number of Jews were rooted in the humanities. Among them was the businessman Solomon Jacobs (1775-1827), whose father was the Yiddish-speaking Barnard Itzhak Jacobs, country merchant in Heidelberg, Pennsylvania. Bernard had served his fellow Jews as a circumciser (mohel), traveling about in eastern Pennsylvania making himself available to his coreligionists. His circumcision record book, still extant, is in Hebrew. Like his father, Solomon was observant, interested in Richmond's Beth Shalome congregation, which he served as president. Solomon married the daughter of Benjamin Nones, a Jeffersonian Republican politician and a leader in Philadelphia's Sephardic congregation. Solomon began as a modest trader, but finally attained wealth. On the way up, he acquired a good education. He wrote well; his letters show him to have been clever, thoughtful, intelligent, humane. The general community respected him, for he had once been acting mayor of the city; he was thrice elected grandmaster of Virginia's Masons, and when Lafayette visited Richmond in 1824, Solomon, together with Chief Justice John Marshall and others of the elite, was chosen to greet the distinguished Frenchman. For a time, Jacobs acted as an agent for the London Rothschilds, probably in the tobacco trade. This Virginian served also as a tobacco purchasing agent for the French government. He was kind to his "servants" (read "slaves"), upon whom, it is obvious from his correspondence, he looked

as friends, as members of his family. One of them he emancipated. His tombstone carries the statement—a rare one—that he was “kind as a master.”⁶⁵

Some Southern Jews were well educated. One of these was Myer M. [Moses?] Cohen (1804-1887), corporation lawyer, schoolmaster, politician, essayist, orator, communal worker, and soldier. In 1824, this scion of a well-known Charleston family, all of twenty years of age, assumed charge of a boys’ and girls’ English and classical academy, remaining at its head until 1828. The following year saw him admitted to the bar. By 1835 he was a justice of the peace and, in the same year, was elected to represent the districts of St. Philip’s and St. Michael’s in the state legislature. In December, 1835, the Seminoles of Florida went to war with the United States for the second time. Troops were raised; volunteers came from several Southern states, including South Carolina. Some were thirty-day men, who returned home after their tour of duty was up. A number of these elected to remain in the service of General Winfield Scott’s army, which had been sent to round up the Indians during the spring of 1836 and moved against them in three converging groups, a right, center, and left wing. The campaign, which was over by April, failed, but the war dragged on until 1842. By that time most of the Seminoles had been deported; the few who remained found refuge in the swamps. Among the volunteers in the Thirty-Days Campaign and, later, in the Army of Florida was Cohen. As an officer of the Left Wing, he served in Col. A. H. Brisbane’s regiment as chief of the “Pioneers.” On his return to Charleston in May, 1836, a local publishing house asked him to write of his war experience. In less than a month’s time, he prepared a manuscript, which appeared as *Notices of Florida and the Campaigns*, by M. M. Cohen “an officer of the Left Wing.” “All may have if they dare try, A glorious life or grave,” he quoted magniloquently on the title page.⁶⁶

Cohen reflected Charleston Jewry at its zenith. He was thoroughly at home in the polite letters and natural sciences of his time. Classical allusions pepper every chapter of his book. Verses from the great poets are scattered lavishly about, and sonorous periods are written in a typically euphuistic manner. Cohen would rather say “manducated” than “chewed”; he set out to be humorous and punned almost compulsively from preface to end. He is heroic, sentimental, romantic—in short he is the complete Charlestonian. And he is, of course, a South Carolina sectionalist, critical of the federal government. Myer Cohen’s father, Philip Cohen, was a Nullification member of the Convention of 1832. A generation later, in New Orleans, Myer was tried—but acquitted—on the charge of attempting to assassinate a Reconstruction governor of Louisiana.

In 1837, Cohen had moved on to greener pastures, to New Orleans, then a boom town, where, during the next fifty years, he carved out a brilliant legal career for himself. The first year he landed in town, he addressed the young men of the New-Orleans Commercial Library Society, pleading for the mental and moral improvement of the youth. The watchcry of this cultured organization was: "Liberty! Washington! Knowledge!" His large and lucrative practice notwithstanding, he found time to participate in the founding of the New Orleans Bar Association, to teach in the local law school, and to publish the widely read *Admiralty Jurisdiction, Law, and Practice* (1883). "Judge" Cohen, as he was commonly known, for he had refused an appointment to a federal court, was also a recognized litterateur and lecturer who spoke frequently at Lyceum Hall.

Cohen makes no mention of Jews or Judaism in his writings. In his 1837 address to the Library Society, he maintained a low profile as a Jew. He quoted from the Latin, the Greek, the great writers of the Continent and of England, but he was very sparing in his references to the Old Testament. He had secured a Jewish education but when he related a talmudic anecdote, he identified his source as an anonymous "ancient sage." Like his New Orleans friend Judah P. Benjamin, he certainly made no effort to identify himself as a Jew. In this address to the Society, he regretted that science was ancillary to commerce; we are the freest but not the most lettered polity. It is noteworthy that Cohen was not a member of Charleston's religiously radical Reformed Society of Israelites, as far as the records show; ideologically, one would have expected him to subscribe to its tenets. The New Orleans *Picayune*, announcing his death in the issue of February 24, 1887, stressed Cohen's constant efforts to aid the unfortunate victims of the terrible yellow fever epidemics which so often recurred in the city. A daughter reported that his dying words were: "Daughter, if you want to lead a good life, live for others and love your fellowman."⁶⁷

SAVANNAH

Savannah on the border of Georgia and South Carolina was for decades a cultural if not an economic satellite of Charleston. The town had a number of Jews, like the Sheftalls and Minises, who were highly respected. These two families were old-timers; they had arrived in the colony only a few months after its settlement. With the decline of Charleston, Savannah, closer to the West and its increasing opportunities, experienced years of growth. In 1838, the town received an important recruit in the person of Solomon Cohen (1802-1875); he had come from Georgetown, a port to the north of Charleston. His family was a good one. The father, of the same name, could boast that he had been postmaster, tax collector, a non-

commissioned officer in the militia, a director of the bank, a member of the best social clubs, a protagonist of a proposed library society, and also intendant (mayor) of Georgetown for the years 1818-1819. Rebecca Gratz's niece had married the son, who, like the father, was "the great man of the village," as Rebecca put it. The younger Cohen practiced law in town, served as a director of the bank, and went to the state legislature as a Nullificationist. In Savannah, his new home, he soon stood out as a leading citizen. Here, too, in Georgia, he served in the state assembly. There were few activities in which he was not engaged, for he was an alderman, a postmaster, a founder of the public school system, a banker, a railroad builder, and a president of the local congregation. In post-Civil War days, he was elected to Congress, but the federal authorities would not permit him to take his seat.⁶⁸

Years before Solomon Cohen came to Savannah, one of the town's best-known citizens was Dr. Jacob De La Motta (1789-1845). Like other members of the South's Jewish elite, he had many interests. One suspects that here, too, was another Southerner who, in no pejorative sense, was a dilettante, for he was a lover of the arts, a man interested in many branches of knowledge. The doctor was also an apothecary, a botanist, and an amateur hazzan. He wrote prolifically in a number of fields, medicine, Judaism, literature. De La Motta was very much interested in politics and in the welfare of the general community. He had received his degree in medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, at the age of twenty-one. The idealism which was to characterize him all through his life is reflected in his dissertation, in which he expressed the hope that he would one day relieve the distress of mankind. After serving as a surgeon in the North during the War of 1812, he remained there in private practice, and when Hazzan Seixas died the congregation asked him to deliver the eulogy. He arranged to have it printed. Years later De La Motta was called upon to preach a funeral sermon in a Charleston Presbyterian church (1827); this, too, was published.

By 1818, he was back in Savannah, the city of his birth, practicing medicine, surgery, and obstetrics. Like his contemporary Dr. D. L. M. Peixotto, De La Motta was a great joiner. In New York, he had belonged not to one but to three medical societies; he had to be content with one in Savannah. In a discourse in which he addressed himself to the subject of yellow fever, he reminded his audience that medicine was a science, an art, in which the beauties and the philosophy of nature were intimately blended. No doubt it pleased him that he was in demand as an after-dinner speaker; his rhetorical bombast, the style of the day, was very much admired. Following in the footsteps of his father who had been one of the incorporators of the Savannah synagogue in 1790, young De La Motta was devoted to the congregation. He urged the Savannah Jews to erect a

building of their own; they had been in town nearly ninety years and had yet to build their first sanctuary. When it was erected, finally, he was invited to make the consecration address at a service where, for the first time in American Jewish life, an organ was used to accompany the Hebrew psalms that were sung. (The Friday services, however, were held before the coming of the Sabbath.) With an eye no doubt on the Christians in his audience, Dr. De La Motta emphasized the egalitarian nature of American citizenship. Copies of his address were sent to Jefferson and Madison, and both men answered, stressing the country's distinction as a land of freedom for all. Jefferson hammered away at a favorite theme—there could be no real freedom if there was an established church. In matters of religion, “divided we stand, united we fall!” Let the Jews turn to science, said the sage of Monticello, and let them not fail, when ready, to assume the burden of public office. De La Motta was certainly willing; he ran for office in Savannah—alas, unsuccessfully.

In 1823, reversing the western trek, the doctor moved east to Charleston, where he pleaded in vain for a medical college and set up an institute of sorts to correct impediments of speech. Always astir, he opened a drug store to complement his practice, wrote papers on botany, and addressed the Literary and Philosophical Society of Charleston. In New York, he had not failed to lecture at the Lyceum of Natural History. The Royal Academy of Medicine in Paris elected him a corresponding member, and his Savannah friends made him an honorary member of the Georgia Historical Society. Years earlier while in New York City, he had become a Mason and had played a role in the order in Savannah; ultimately he became one of the elect, accorded the 33d degree. Here, too, he was following in the footsteps of his father Emanuel, one of the founders of Scottish Rite Masonry in this country.

Politics never ceased to appeal to Jacob. In Nullification days he was on the Unionist side; he ran for Congress and was defeated, though his support of the Whig Harrison brought him a federal appointment. At the dinner celebrating Harrison's victory, he got up and sang a song whose lyrics he had written. When in 1841 Charleston Jewry split on the rock of Reform, he joined the secessionist Orthodox minority, which elected him president of the breakaway group, Shearith Israel, the Remnant of Israel. Here, as in Savannah, he was always ready to chaunt the services. In his will, he enjoined his heirs to be particularly kind to a Negro slave and her son; she was to be treated gently and not to be sold on any account. Was he a great physician and scientist? Not at all. But he was a cultured Southern gentleman with an itch for speaking and writing. Was he successful? By no means! After his death his embittered mother-in-law was called upon to help support the family.⁶⁹

THE CHARLESTONIANS

Dr. De La Motta was scarcely unique. A variation of this genre of the antebellum Southern Jew is exemplified in the life and career of Joseph Lyons (1813-1837), of Columbia, South Carolina. The young man—he was dead at twenty-four—was a South Carolinian before he was an American. He was an American before he was a Jew. There were others with variant degrees of loyalty to Jewry. It was obvious that this man would be a Nullificationist; he went out of his way, visiting the North, to wear a palmetto button affixed to his hat to proclaim devotion to his state. When he went to South Carolina College in his home town of Columbia, he joined the Euphradians, a literary society. He had acquired a knowledge of art and architecture, had read some metaphysics, was well-versed in English literature and had a knowledge of Latin, French, Spanish, and Greek. His readings included works in the field of American history and mineralogy; he played the flute and the violin.

He says nothing about his knowledge of Hebrew; the Old Testament was a “contemptible” book, yet he proposed to write a general history of the Jews and their literature. He refused to go to Kol Nidre services on Yom Kippur night, the holiest in the Jewish calendar, but fasted the next day. He solemnly confided to his diary in 1833 that there would be no synagogue in the United States in fifty years, certainly not a traditional one. Yet he was resentful when a relative kept his shop open on the Sabbath. Though no believer in Judaism, he thought for a while of preparing himself in London to serve the Charlestonians as a minister. With the salary they would give him, he could lead a life of ease and devote himself to literature. He wrote poetry and records the following in answer to a “fool” who told him that she was sorry for him:

*You are sorry for me!!!
Eternal God! Am I then that thing
As to excite pity!
Give me deep scorn, without disguise,
Most rancorous hatred, abhorrence,
Anything, but pity!*

Lyons started reading Blackstone in Savannah in 1833, passed the bar in 1835, and thought of opening an office in New Orleans. By 1837, he was in Paris where he died; he had been sick for years.⁷⁰

Lyons was frequently in Charleston where he had kin. Somewhat facetiously he calls it a city of bananas, books, and oysters. Actually, for him it was a city of books. The town's bookishness is reflected in the life of Jacob Clavius Levy (1788-1875), who apparently inherited a substantial fortune from his father Moses C. Levy, a pious Galician immigrant and a devotee of Masonry. Jacob, a banker, lost his money in the 1837 de-

pression when the Jewish banking house of Joseph closed its doors. He salvaged enough, however, to retire and to spend the rest of his days in literary pursuits. He wrote an article on the emerging Reform movement in the *Southern Quarterly Review* and was the author of the hymn sung at the dedication of the new Charleston synagog in 1841. Levy spent his mornings in the Charleston library studying; at night his home became a salon where he received, among other guests, the naturalist Louis Agassiz.

Two of his daughters were exceptional. One, Eugenia, married Philip Phillips, the lawyer and congressman. In her memoirs, Eugenia, informed the world that she was a “delicate” woman. This adjective had nuances. Eugenia married at sixteen, bore her husband nine children, twice suffered imprisonment at Yankee hands, and lived to write a brief autobiography before she passed away at the age of eighty-one. She was a highly intelligent, literate, recalcitrant Southern rebel. A younger sister Phoebe Yates Levy Pember wrote a volume of delightful memoirs. Samuel Yates Levy, a brother, a graduate of the South Carolina College, loved and recited poetry, wrote some good verse himself, and entertained his friends by playing the piano and guitar. He began to read Virgil at the age of seven. After a fashion, Jacob C. Levy represented Charleston at its best.⁷¹

In the first twenty years of the nineteenth century, Charleston was one of the most important cities in the United States, a city distinguished alike for its wealth and its culture. Its aristocracy set the tone for large areas throughout the South. The town had its library and its college, its museum, concerts, balls, and races. Artists such as Rembrandt Peale came down from the North to paint the wealthy planters. New Orleans and Mobile were growing fast, but in the early days they were still no competition for Charleston. Eli Whitney’s cotton gin had revolutionized Southern economic life; the big crop was no longer indigo or rice or tobacco, but cotton. Thousands of bales found their way across the Atlantic to the new power-driven English mills, and the finished goods and luxuries that came back by way of New York established the new cotton triangular trade of New York, Charleston, and England.

It was against this prosperous, cultured, aristocratic yet cosmopolitan background that Charleston Jewry in this quarter century blossomed forth, for a relatively short time, as the greatest Jewish community in America. Given an even chance, no Jewish group ever lags far behind the cultural and economic leaders of the community in which it finds itself. Few, if any of the town’s Jews, were planters on a large scale; many were shopkeepers, auctioneers, and commission merchants. A number of them were wealthy and built beautiful homes notable for luxurious appointments. The standard of education in the congregation was high, and even those in relatively modest circumstances were given an excellent opportu-

nity in the private schools to study English, Latin, Italian, French and Spanish. Beth Elohim could boast of its physicians and schoolmasters, its portrait and miniature painters, its constables, justices of the peace, and militia officers, as well as its coreligionists in the state legislature. The town sheltered dramatists, critics, journalists, statisticians, dentists and pharmacists, lawyers and capitalists. The Cardozos, De La Mottas, Moïses, Harbys, Carvalhos, Clavius Levys, and Philip Cohens were not everyday middle-class citizens. They were all definitely far above the average, people of education and some distinction.⁷²

Nearly all of America's Jewish coastal communities had sanctuaries which they themselves had erected, but it was universally conceded that Charleston's was the largest and most beautiful. Crowds filled it during the Holy Days—many Jews, no doubt, coming in from the countryside—and, if we may believe a rather enthusiastic contemporary witness, the young Jewesses who frequented it were the most beautiful in the world! (The matrons, he sadly records, were just the opposite.) The course of Americanization, as reflected at least in the anglicized and Anglo-Saxon names, had already proceeded apace; the town and state directory included Jews by the name of Barrett, Coleman, Harris, Henry, Hunt, Jackson, Jones, Morse, Pool, Simpson, Waterman, and even Lee—not to be confused with the Virginians of that name. About year 1810, Hannah Adams, anticipating the ultimate conversion of the Jews, sat down to write *The History of the Jews from the Destruction of Jerusalem to the Nineteenth Century*. As she declared in her Preface, "she had spared no exertions in her power to collect authentic documents." As part of her plan, she had written for information to representative Jews in the various towns of the United States. Her correspondent in Charleston was Philip Cohen. Cohen was an educated man, a merchant, who in increasing measure enjoyed the confidence and respect of his fellow citizens. In later years, he became a member of the Board of Health, was one of the commissioners of the Marine Hospital, and, as pointed out above, served as a "secessionist" delegate to the famous Nullification Convention of 1832 when the state threatened to secede from the Union in protest against obnoxious tariffs.⁷³

In his answer, Cohen told Adams: "The Jews in Charleston enjoy equal literary advantages with the other members of the community. . . . the Hebrews can boast of several men of talents and learning among them." Cohen may well have exaggerated; he was trying to put his best foot forward; yet there can be no question that, prior to the 1820's, Charleston Jewry was the largest and most cultured community in the United States. After that time, despite the rise of other cities in the Old Southwest, it still remained the cultural center of Southern Jewry up to the Civil War. How deep, how intense was this learning and scholarship? Among a few, it was certainly impressive.⁷⁴

ISAAC HARBY

From the point of view of knowledge, intellect, sheer learning, Isaac Harby (1788-1828) would appear to have been Charleston Jewry's most learned, most brilliant mind in matters literary. His grandfather, a Moroccan merchant, compelled to flee North Africa, had taken refuge in England where he assumed the name Harby (not improbably a variation of the North African Jewish *Arbib* or *Arby*). A son of the Moroccan refugee migrated first to Jamaica and then settled in Charleston in the 1780's. This newcomer saw to it that his son Isaac received an excellent education. Young Harby was a wunderkind. At fourteen he was translating part of Homer into verse; at sixteen he made his maiden speech in the Philomathean Society, a literary and debating group—the subject of his address: "Whether Moral Causes Have More Influence in National Character Than Physical." In the early days, at least, his writing tended to be precious; he swamped his readers with classical illusions, often in the original. While still a teenager he wrote pseudonymous letters to the press, letters in which he set out to exhibit his brilliance and classical knowledge. This was adolescence undisguised.

To a degree, a man's library often reflects the man. Harby read French and Spanish and probably Italian. He had a number of Italian works in translation; the Latin and Greek classics on his shelves were in the original. English and French works were abundant; Schiller was represented by an English translation of his *History of the Thirty Years' War*. His library included Benjamin Franklin, Joel Barlow (*The Columbiad*), the political *Letters of Junius*, and Dr. David Ramsay's *History of South Carolina*. There were other histories in his library; in fact, he had a little bit of everything. There were works on the French Revolution and Bonaparte. The young Charlestonian admired the Corsican who, as a testamentary legatee of the French Revolution, had brought religious freedom wherever he went. Harby had books on almost any subject, on Masonry, Hindu philosophy, medicine. Timothy Dwight's epic poem the *Conquest of Canaan* and Wollaston's popular *Religion of Nature Delineated* might well nestle side by side. Some of these books were inherited from his father.

When the father died, the seventeen-year-old Harby, the eldest in the family, dropped his law studies and went to work to support a family of six. (He was really not interested in the law.) Essentially a teacher and a journalist, Harby learned to write simply, beautifully, forcefully. In a letter to Secretary of State James Monroe, protesting the dismissal of consul Mordecai M. Noah, Harby demonstrated that he could write powerfully and incisively. In this particular letter, the classically-minded writer restrained himself, limiting his citations to but one Latin quotation from Virgil's *Aeneid* and a short Latin phrase. The life of this gifted man was

marked by a constant struggle to survive. He married early and had nine mouths to feed. He was rarely if ever at ease financially. For years he taught school—he was deemed an excellent pedagogue—playing in the yard with his students during the recreation period, thrashing them soundly in class when he thought it necessary. He loved the classics as a source of “virtue and patriotism.” This man who earned his bread and butter as a schoolteacher and journalist certainly would have preferred to be known as a dramatist. His generation, his loyal friends, genuflected to him as one of the town’s distinguished writers. At the age of seventeen the aspiring playwright showed his *Alexander Severus* to Alexander Placide, the French-born director of the local theatre. Placide told the eager young man the “Englise vas not veri coot.” It had no “incidents,” no adventures, nothing “to catch de people.”⁷⁵

Two years later he wrote *The Gordian Knot, or Cause and Effects*, a romantic melodrama with a complicated plot—but it ended as it should: the lovers ultimately found each other. Though not intended to be didactic, the play did point a moral, for it touched on the abuses of religion whenever a state supports an established church. *Alberti*, a play dealing with freedom, patriotism, and democracy, was produced in 1819. Though the scene was fifteenth-century Florence, the themes reflected the nationalism that followed on the War of 1812. This Charleston litterateur knew full well that a play had to entertain, but he was equally convinced it had to be a cultural vehicle emphasizing the moral and picturing the inner grandeur of the soul. President Monroe, to whom Harby had once written a strong monitory note, came to the second performance; there were a thousand people in the theatre. It was a great day for the author. One of the objections voiced against *Alberti* was that it was written by an American; many in that generation were accustomed to British plays. In the spirit of the new emerging nationalism, Harby proudly called attention to his works; they were American. Though many of his contemporaries praised him, he was no dramatist of note. *The Gordian Knot* was staged once; *Alberti* at least twice. His plays were not stageworthy; they were not good theatre. His style verged on the bombastic; pretentious, inflated speech was in vogue, relished by many.

Harby achieved some distinction as an essayist and as a literary critic. In his day there were litterateurs—in England, too—who valued and respected his writing. A selection of his best essays and criticisms was collected and published shortly after his death. Eleven of his articles were concerned with the national election campaign of 1824; they appeared under the pseudonym “Junius.” Harby, of course, had appropriated this signature from the prerevolutionary *Letters of Junius*, which attacked the British ministers for their approach to the disaffected colonial Americans. Harby wrote on Scott, on Byron, on the actors Charles John Kean and

Thomas Apthorpe Cooper. He took to task a writer in the *London Quarterly Review* who “visits the groves of the Muses, but to trample on their blossoms.” As a lover of the classics—the importance of which was already denied by some in that day—Harby urged their retention in the colleges. Translations? They are inadequate. It is not improbable that the Charlestonians stressed the writings of Rome and Greece for reasons which may not have occurred even to him. The classics were colored with the aura of aristocracy. (Hebrew, too, was classical, but most Jews tended to ignore it; it identified them too closely with the Chosen People.) The classical tradition in England stretched back for centuries, to the early days of its cultural renaissance. Knowledge of Latin and Greek brought status, which appealed to the Southern Jewish literati. Young Jews in the towns and at the state college helped found ephemeral literary societies with Greek names reflecting love of learning: euphradian, metu-logical, philomathean. These young men wanted to be numbered among the elite.⁷⁶

In June, 1828, Harby, a widower, decided to go to New York; he could not make a living for his large family in Charleston. As he told Charleston’s Unitarian minister in 1826, New York was the city of the future. A sister went along with him to look after his brood and to help him with the private school that he established in his own home. He began—and ended—as a free lance writer. One of the last of his essays was a “Defence of the Drama,” which appeared in *The New-York Evening Post*. In this apologia he set out to prove—what many evangelicals denied—that the theatre was a moral, civilizing, instructive institution. The stage reflects the world; it is more than mere entertainment; it is a mental stimulus, a “moving picture, pregnant with truth and animation.” About six months after his arrival in the metropolis, Harby died, leaving behind him an impoverished family. A local theatre gave a benefit performance in order to help provide for the little ones; a volume of selections from his writings was published with the same purpose in mind. Despite his short residence in New York, he had already made an impact on its cultural life. The *New York Mirror* and the *Post* both paid homage to him as a man of vast classical learning, a person of no ordinary taste and intelligence. Today the historian recognizes that this litterateur was no luminary in the world of early American writers despite the praise measured out to him by his contemporaries, Jews and Gentiles. Mordecai M. Noah was more distinguished as a personality, as a politician, as a dramatist, as a journalist—but Harby certainly was a cultured, scholarly litterateur.⁷⁷



CHAPTER TWELVE

ASPECTS OF THE GENERAL CULTURE

OF THE AMERICAN JEW, 1776-1840

THE NORTH AND ITS CULTURE

THE HAYSES, THE TOUROS, THE GRATZES

It was not only in the South that a number of Jews of literary bent were to be found; there were some Jews of cultural stature in the North, too. It would not be difficult to compile an impressive list of educated men and women who spent their lives north of the Mason-Dixon Line; the rank and file of the Chosen People in the North were probably as well-educated as the typical native-born Jewish shopkeepers and professionals in the South. Bear in mind that by 1835 there were about 3,000 town lyceums in the United States, most of them in the North, and undoubtedly there were Jewish members. Not all Central European immigrants were untutored. As yet, there is no definitive confirmation of the statement by Mordecai M. Noah that the Jews of the South were more literate than those in the North.¹

Among the Jews of the North, the Hays-Touro clan stands out. The Hays family came out of Boston in the last decades of the eighteenth century after the Newport community had gone into a precipitous decline. Moses Michael Hays (1739-1805), a man of culture and breeding, was a scion of an old New York family; Hazzan Touro, of Newport, was his brother-in-law. When the hazzan and his wife died, Hays took their three children into his Boston home. The two Touro boys grew up to become very successful businessmen and philanthropists. Neither married, and Abraham Touro, of Boston, the older of Hays's nephews, gave to Jewish causes and evinced an interest in general cultural institutions. Judah Touro, long of New Orleans, the richest Jew of his day in the United States, was an eccentric with few if any pronounced cultural concerns. Their cousin, Judah Hays (1770-1832), Moses Hays's son, was one of the founders of the Boston Athenaeum, a private subscription library. Long

before this, in colonial days, some of Newport's Jews had been members of the town's Redwood Library, the first library building in the provinces. In the early nineteenth century, young Judah Hays was numbered among those who had helped establish Boston's Society for the Study of Natural Philosophy; its members were interested in astronomy, botany, zoology, and chemistry.²

One of the Hayses married into the Gratz family. Michael Gratz's sons and daughters, all native Americans, received a good education as befitted the children of an affluent merchant. Rebecca was the sibling most interested in literature. She moved with dignity and acceptance in the best literary circles, though she herself, so it would seem, left no writings behind her except an occasional prayer and a large body of personal correspondence. Among her friends and admirers was Louisa B. Hart (1803-1874), a native of Easton, who made her home in Philadelphia. The two women worked together in the Jewish charities and in the Sunday School. Though a village girl, Louisa had received a good education in general studies, in Hebrew, and in music. There had been a pianoforte in the Easton house. Louisa's diary and letters show her to have been a woman of superior intellect. Active in a Jewish sewing society that discussed literary matters, this woman was highly intelligent, sensitive, and wrote well. Intellectually, she was on a par with Rebecca Gratz.³

None of Rebecca's five brothers were literati, yet all were interested in the arts and sciences. Simon was a director of the Pennsylvania Botanic Garden and the Academy of Fine Arts. This Pennsylvania academy numbered Moses Levy, the lawyer, among its founders. Hyman Gratz was elected to office in the Academy and was interested in the archaeology of Mammoth Cave, once part of the family holdings. He was on the board of the first American Jewish Publication Society in 1845 and directed that his residual estate be used to establish a Jewish college.

Quite a number of Philadelphia Jews supported the Academy of Fine Arts; one individual, at least, was an exhibitor, a professional artist. Brother Jacob Gratz was on the board of the Apprentices Library; Jacob, college graduate, president of a canal company, and state senator, was also on the board of a local library, the Athenaeum. Like the Academy of Fine Arts, the Athenaeum had many Jewish subscribers. Jacob and Hyman Gratz were both friends of the Library Company of Philadelphia; a local Jew gave this company a Hebrew letter written by the Presbyterian Ezra Stiles to his rabbinical friend, Haim Isaac Carigal. As far back as colonial days, David Franks had extended his support to the Library Company. Benjamin Etting, a kinsman of the Gratzes, was secretary of the Mercantile Library. Ben Gratz, of Lexington, the only brother to leave the East, was a trustee of Kentucky's Transylvania College and helped establish the public library in Lexington. He was admired for his efforts to further higher education in the state.⁴

THE CULTURAL LIFE OF NEW YORK JEWRY

In a sense, the Gratzes reflected the culture of Philadelphia Jewry at a time when that city was the country's preeminent metropolis. In the 1820's, however, New York gradually forged ahead. One of the best known Jews in the synagogal community was Isaac M. Gomez, Jr. (1768-1831). His intellectual abilities were recognized, and when war was declared in 1812, he was called upon to make an appropriate address to the congregation. (Apparently the minister Gershom Seixas, was bypassed on that occasion.) Gomez fancied himself a poet, though what he wrote was doggerel. He did better in 1820 when he published *Selections of a Father*, a literary anthology designed to teach the younger generation the rules of virtue. By that year New York Jewry had already printed a few sermons, eulogies, a travel book, an oration, and a play. This cultural precipitate was anything but impressive, but Gomez's book is worth remembering as one of American Jewry's earliest literary efforts. After all, only a man who had read widely and intelligently could have culled this material. The *Selections* received an enthusiastic endorsement from old John Adams, though the ex-president regretted Cicero's omission and found the material on lawyers was by no means sympathetic. Gomez, both a devotee of the humanities and a committed observant Jew, lived comfortably ensconced in the two worlds of the Jew and the cultured American. Acculturation had certainly not diminished his religious loyalties. A grandson born to a daughter in 1824, marked the sixth generation the family had lived on this continent. Since Lafayette, a friend of Gomez, was then making his triumphal tour of America, the little boy was named Lafayette Gomez Emanuel.⁵

New York's affluent Jewish families were determined to give their children a good general education. It would seem, however, that the cultural emphasis in the North was somewhat different than in the South. In imitation of the Southern Gentile elite, the scholastic drive in the South was in the direction of the Latin and Greek classics and the mythology of the ancient Mediterranean world; the Jews of the North, more pragmatic in their approach, never lost sight of the countinghouse. Seixas, the minister, no man of means in any sense of the term, was determined to give his numerous sons and daughters the advantages that came with schooling. He is, in a way, a good example of the autodidact. He was at home in the literature of England; when young he had immersed himself in writings criticizing both Judaism and Christianity, but no matter what he read, his faith remained unimpaired. Even so, Seixas was never able to write a good sermon, if one may judge from his two published efforts and the manuscript fragments still extant. The man was no litterateur. He was at his best in his chatty personal letters to his daughter Sally Kursheedt in Richmond. Here, in these notes to her, he let himself go; they are so

much more interesting than the long sedate balanced letters which Rebecca Gratz wrote her friends and relatives; they are livelier, more human, more gossipy, more earthy.⁶

THREE JEWISH FEMALE POETS

GRACE SEIXAS NATHAN

Grace Seixas Nathan (1752-1831) was far superior to her brother Gershom as a literary figure; she was more gifted. She, too, had read widely and, it would appear, had some knowledge of Latin and French. Her letters were sprightly, alive; this vivacity was typical of her and Gershom. Her prime cultural interest was poetry; like many in her day, her favorite poet was Byron. Her verse is tender, thoughtful, imaginative. When Shearith Israel purchased a new cemetery on Twenty-first Street, she wrote the following verse:

Reflections on Passing Our New Burial Ground

Within those walls made sacred to the dead,
Where yet no spade has rudely turned a sod,
No requiem chanted for a spirit fled,
No prayer been offered to the throne of God.
There in due form shall holy rites be given,
And the last solemn strain float so high in air
That listening Angels shall bear it to Heaven
And the soul of the just be deposited there.⁷

PENINA MOISE

Grace Nathan enjoyed no repute as a poet in her day, at least there is no known record; none of her verse appears to have been published during her lifetime. The best-known Jewish poet of that day, a younger contemporary of Grace Nathan, was a Southerner, Penina Moïse (1797-1880), well-known to Jewish historians and highly respected because much that she wrote found its way into print. Her poems appeared in Leiser's *Occident* and in the newspapers of Charleston, Boston, Washington, and New Orleans; even more important is the fact that they were accepted by the editors of Godey's *Lady Book* and *The Home Journal*. She was the first American Jewish woman whose poems and hymns were collected in book form: *Fancy's Sketch Book* and *Hymns Written for the Service of the Hebrew Congregation Beth Elohim*. Penina was the daughter of Haitian refugees fleeing in the 1790's from a slave revolt. When the father died leaving the Moïses impoverished, the little girl had to go to work at the age of

twelve to help support a large family. She did fancy sewing, making lace and embroidery. Obviously she had little schooling, but she read a great deal, the best in English literature. Charleston's Jews put her in charge of the local Sunday School.

After the Civil War, if not earlier, she ran a small school. Penina was an excellent teacher; a clever versifier, she taught the children in rhymes. The Charleston Jewish community was very proud of her. She was prolific enough; writing hundreds of poems. Many of her verses are stilted and have little appeal for readers today; she was shackled by the classical traditions which enveloped her. On occasion a spark of beauty was struck by her pen, but only rarely did the Shekinah descend upon her. Some of her hymns are still sung. The following are two verses of a hymn written to commemorate the loss of her only sister.

When I would smile, remembrance brings
A thousand sad and bitter things,
Vexations, crosses, wrongs and woes,
That blighted hope and broke repose.
Heavenly Sire! Holy One!
When shall I say, Thy will be done!

I mourned for one, who like a twin,
Shared every thought that passed within.
"Oh! would that I might die for thee,"
Was echoed in my agony.
Heavenly Sire! Holy One!
I should have said, Thy will be done!

The following are four verses from a poem in a somewhat different vein:

Stanzas

Oh! hide those eyes of violet hue,
Wild passion they inspire;
They beam too fiercely to be blue,
Their dew is lost in fire.

Yet in thine heart eternal snow
The torch of Love destroys;
Long have I felt affection's woe,
But never felt its joys.

I saw thee cull a lovely rose
And place it near thy heart;
I knew its languid leaves would close,
Its fragrance would depart.

In sorrow I behold the flower
On thy cold bosom lie;

I knew 'twould languish there an hour,
I knew it then would die!

Her last years were sad; she was blind and her body was harrowed by neuralgia. Here is her definition of this torment:

Neuralgia, a fugitive from purgatory, who having served as an apprentice in Lucifer's penal laboratory, acquired such proficiency in the art of torturing that, having excited the jealousy of her master, quitted the Satanic institute, and established a patent rack and screw factory, distancing all nerve racking competitors—not excepting the familiars of the Inquisition.

The last words of this pain-stricken old woman were: "Lay no flowers on my grave. They are for those who live in the sun, and I have always lived in the shadow."⁸

OCTAVIA HARBY MOSES

Penina Moïse was a fervent secessionist, as was her younger contemporary Octavia Harby Moses (1823-1904). Even in postbellum years Mrs. Moses held high the banner of the South's Lost Cause. Five of her sons served in the Confederate Army; one was murdered by Union troops after he had surrendered. Octavia was a daughter of Isaac Harby and, like her father and some of her siblings, was interested in belles lettres. She had begun to write when thirteen and was already married at sixteen. The following is a verse from a poem dedicated to her daughter Rebecca on her fifteenth birthday:

Fifteen to-day! With magic power
Remembrance sweeps the past away,
And leads me back to that sweet hour,
When I, too, said fifteen to-day!
In that fresh season all was glad,
Young hope, gay visions brought to view,
While joy in rosy vestments clad,
Lent to each hour her own bright hue.⁹

THE THEATRE

An uncle of Octavia—George Washington Harby (1797-1862)—was interested in the theatre. Washington Harby, as he was known, was far more successful as a dramatist than his older brother Isaac. This is certainly true from the vantage point of the box office. This younger Harby is rarely mentioned in the one-volume histories of American Jewry. He settled in New Orleans sometime in the 1820's, married out—twice, to be exact—and reared a family of non-Jews, for whom he provided by

running a private academy; later, he was employed as a public school teacher. Washington was a gifted man, a popular orator, a recognized educationist, a respected litterateur. The plays he wrote numbered a dozen at least; not one was ever published; some were not even produced. The titles of his melodramas are appealing: *Minka or the Russian Daughter*, *Twenty Years' Life of a Courtesan*.¹⁰

For literary-historical reasons Harby's *Tutoona or the Indian Girl* is most interesting. This blood and thunder drama was performed in New Orleans on February 22, 1835, George Washington's birthday. It was an *American* play. The background is the defeat of the British at Saratoga in 1777, the new republic's greatest victory in the war. The real heroes of this story are the Indian chief Coppersnake and his daughter Tutoona. The chief stands out as a savage ennobled by his love for his daughter, by his consideration for the white captive Mary, and by his devotion to liberty and freedom, a devotion that impels him to become an American patriot. With righteous indignation, he does not fail to hold the white men up to scorn because they have given the Indians rifles and debauched them with liquor. In a way, this drama is an elegy for the Indians who have been cheated and mistreated. As befits a play presented on Washington's birthday, the theme of patriotism is stressed repeatedly: "Let the flag of freedom wave in triumph o'er our heads or droop in funeral folds over our corpses." In a toast to General George Washington the leader of all the American armies, the author adds a Jacksonian touch, "May the yeomanry of our country build thereon a noble structure."

One of G. W. Harby's best plays, adapted from Robert Montgomery Bird's *Nick of the Woods*, dealt with murderous Indians and a brutal white avenger. One suspects that brother Isaac Harby would have thrown up his hands in dismay at a spectacle such as this but the New Orleans audiences loved it. It was a very popular piece and was performed in Natchez, Saint Louis, and Philadelphia. One performance of *Nick of the Woods* was a benefit for the dramatist, who seems to have been frequently in need. On this occasion, in order to give the audience full measure for its money, the producers added the trial scene from *The Merchant of Venice* and even threw in an operetta.¹¹

New Orleans in the 1830's was a wide open town with much interest in the theatre. The enthusiasm of the two Harby brothers for the stage was shared by many Jews. This involvement of the Jews in the drama goes back to colonial times both here and in South America. A dramatist, a native Brazilian and a Judaizing heretic, Antonio Jose da Silva was burnt at the stake in Portugal in 1739. Da Silva was a notable poet and writer. Several decades later, in 1775, the Dutch Guiana Jews set up an amateur theatre of their own after they had been barred by a Christian theatrical society. Jews as performers were appearing in North America in the guise

of jugglers. The first Jew seen on the American stage in legitimate drama was the “villain” Shylock, in *The Merchant of Venice*. That was in 1752 at Williamsburg in Virginia. The pejorative indoctrination was interrupted in the latter part of the century when three editions of Cumberland’s *The Jew* were published in 1795 in Boston, New York, and Baltimore; that same year this comedy about a “benevolent Hebrew” moneylender was produced in Boston, New York and Philadelphia. Jews were among the many liberal-minded citizens throughout the country who were eager to encourage theatrical productions. Moses M. Hays, of Boston, appears to have been one of the leaders of the group which sought to license a theatre in Boston in the 1790’s. The Bostonian argued that plays polished manners and promoted morality.¹²

By the 1820’s, if not earlier, Jews had begun making their appearance in the United States as theatre managers and as actors playing stellar roles. The year 1826 was a productive one for them. In Princeton, New Jersey, Dr. A. Borrenstein published the *Sacred Dramas* of Hannah More, while Da Ponte republished three of his older musical dramas; one of these, *Don Giovanni*, reproduced the text in both Italian and English. That same year, as it has been pointed out earlier, Mathias Lopez edited four plays for publication. In 1830, Gustavus A. Myers, then a young man of twenty-nine, wrote a one-act farce based on a story from the French and called *Nature and Philosophy*, an interesting love story of a young man who had never seen a girl; he had been reared by his father, a misogynist. The play reads well even today. The girl Eliza thus describes a lover to the naive male hero:

A lover, they say, is both gentle and kind,
To the faults of his mistress, obligingly blind.
Whatever she wishes, he flies to obtain.
And absent, or near her, he’s ever in pain.
When she frowns, he is sad.
Oh! then he runs mad.
If she sickens and dies, why without more ado,
He straight must fall sick, and be sure to die too.
With heart aches, and sighing and dying d’ye see,
And that’s what they tell me, a lover should be.

This farce was frequently performed in the United States and England; presumably, the text used was the one prepared by Myers.¹³

SAMUEL BENJAMIN HELBERT (HILBERT, HALBERT) JUDAH

Among the fledging Jewish dramatists and writers of the 1820’s and 1830’s, the most interesting one, after a fashion, was Samuel B. H. Judah (1799/1804–1876). He was certainly not the most talented, but he was

the most interesting because of his determination to become a successful writer. Judah was the scion of an old New York colonial family; his father had been a successful merchant. Between 1820 and 1835, Samuel wrote and published at least eight plays, a dramatic poem, and a "romance." He had managed to secure a rather good education, even though his father had lost his wealth during the days of the Jeffersonian embargoes and the postwar depression that followed the second war with the English. Judah had a knowledge of the classics and a very extensive vocabulary of polysyllables. Between 1820 and 1823, three of his plays were produced, if only for a performance or two in New York. One was also staged in Philadelphia. This is an achievement for a man in his early twenties. In 1822, he wrote a dramatic poem of eighty-nine pages. He sent a copy to former Presidents Jefferson and Adams, and probably to Madison also.

Adams, then in his eighty-seventh year, found this Gothic composition horrible; he admitted that the young man showed marked genius, but urged him to write something agreeable and useful. In the letter to Jefferson, Judah had described himself as only fifteen years of age; at the time that he wrote his poem, he was actually twenty-three. The old man very clearly brushed him off; he did not have to read very far in *Odofriede, the Outcast* to realize it was not to his taste. He turned it over to some of the younger fry in the family and then wrote Judah that "the chill of 80 winters had so completely extinguished his sensibility to the beauties of poetry as to leave him no longer competent either to enjoy or judge them." These charming few lines prove that Jefferson was old, but certainly not senile.

In 1823, Samuel wrote *A Tale of Lexington*, a Revolutionary War play produced on July 4th of that year. Like many other writers of his time, he was a cultural nationalist, eager to further the national literature and to employ American themes. The young dramatist, fully aware of the success of Noah's patriotic plays and their strong appeal, was consumed with envy. Judah believed that the United States was as fertile in genius and learning as England; he wanted American talent to be fostered; the theatre must emancipate itself from England and the continent. Yet, despite his successes, he was a failure—which may well have been due to his style of writing. Samuel Judah had skill and facility, but all his writings were characterized by a bombast that was often ludicrous. A modern critic had said of his writing that it was of the "paleozoic variety." Embittered by lack of recognition as a dramatist, resentful of the success of others, totally unable to gauge his own work, deficient of good common sense, pathetically starved for attention, frustrated, conceited, and determined that people would yet pay heed to him, Judah vented his spleen in 1823 in the publication of an anonymous versified satire in which he attacked over 100 in-

dividuals in the United States, all well-known writers. His booklet was called *Gotham and the Gothamites: A Medley*. The pseudonym he adopted was: Terentius Phlogobombus. In form, the *Medley* followed successful satires then being published in England and the United States. He made little effort to conceal the names of his victims. His verses were not satirical; they were malicious, scurrilous—and boring. Only rarely did he come up with a successful couplet such as the following:

Reforming saints, look that your own heart be true,
Ere you Christianize the Indian, or convert the Jew.

One of the prime objects of his hatred was the successful Mordecai M. Noah, whom he attacked at least ten times. Sheriff Noah, he implied, was himself an unhangd rogue, a “pertinacious scribbler” of “insipid garbage.” Judah’s pseudonym was penetrated; he was sent to jail for about five weeks, but released speedily because of illness. Several years later, 1827, he wrote a pseudonymous romance set in late seventeenth-century British New York. The period was the rebellion of Captain Jacob Leisler. Judah in this long book may well have been influenced by James Fenimore Cooper and his *Leatherstocking Tales*. Judah, too, has his noble savage who says: “May our great Father, who is alike the Friend of the white and the red man, for we are all his children, protect you.” It is not an interesting book; it is not a work of literary merit. Earlier, by the 1820’s, he had studied law and had been admitted to the bar; for a long time he seems to have been the only Jewish lawyer in town. He made a living collecting bad debts. His lack of character and of ability, so we are informed, were such that his peers held him in low esteem.¹⁴

THE PHILLIPS FAMILY

The Judah family belonged to the congregation of New York’s Shearith Israel. Samuel’s father had once been president of the congregation; his successor was Naphtali Phillips (1773-1870). The Phillips family was different; very few of the second generation were in trade. This was a clan interested in the theatre, in writing drama, comedy, tragedy. Some recorded history; some were journalists, lawyers, and politicians, essayists, poets, and fiction writers. Jonas Altamount Phillips, a successful lawyer in what was probably the best Jewish firm in Philadelphia, seems to have been a Hebrew grammarian. His son, Henry M. Phillips, Jr. (b. 1838), was a scholar of international repute. He was a lawyer, mathematician, archaeologist, a philologist interested in the science of language, a translator from the Spanish and the German. In his later years, he was secretary of the American Philosophical Society. The American founder of the family was Jonas Phillips, of Philadelphia, known for two letters he had written.

In July, 1776, he wrote a fellow businessman in Amsterdam describing the revolt of the colonials against the British Empire; in 1787, the Constitutional Convention meeting in Philadelphia received from him a letter asking for religious and political equality for the Jews of his state. He was dismayed that the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776 maintained political disabilities against Jews despite the fact that they were patriots.¹⁵

Jonas's son Naphtali, who had begun as a printer, edited and owned New York's *National Advocate*, a Tammany paper; Phillips, a sachem, was high in Tammany councils. He remained a politician and, when no longer active, was gracefully retired by the Democrats, who provided a sinecure for him in the customs office. He had many literary interests: in 1816, he preached a memorial sermon for Gershom Seixas; he was called upon no doubt because he had married into the Seixas clan. In 1828, he wrote a series of sketches on the Revolutionary War period, a work which was serialized in New York and Philadelphia papers. Originally, the vignettes had been published anonymously by "An Old Philadelphian." When in the last decade of his life he prepared a sketch outlining the history of Shearith Israel, he stood out as one of the very first historians of American Jewry.¹⁶

Naphtali Phillips had a large number of siblings, since Jonas fathered more than twenty children—most of whom survived infancy. Aaron J. Phillips (1792-1847), a younger brother of Naphtali, spent his life in the theatre. Both a manager and an actor, he was best known on the stage as a comedian and for his character roles. Aaron began acting in 1815; in the course of years, he built up a following in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Charleston. In New Orleans, he appeared in a series of monologues of a comic and serious nature, and included some readings from Shakespeare. It was in 1822 that his nephew, Noah, wrote a play for him in which he could shine as the star—*The Grecian Captive*, which dealt with Greece's struggle for freedom. Aaron came riding onto the stage on an untrained elephant, which, to the amusement of the audience and to the discomfort of the orchestra, took time out to "extemporize." Two other Phillipses were also actors and managers: Moses Mendes Seixas Phillips and Henry B. Phillips, the latter known for his portrayal of Isaac of York in a dramatization of *Ivanhoe*.¹⁷

Very probably, the best-known literary craftsman of the immediate family was Jonas B. Phillips (1805-1867). Though he was to produce a volume of poetry in 1836 and was also the author of a tragedy, he was primarily a writer of melodramas and comedies. In 1827 he wrote a series of Gothic stories published anonymously under the title *Tales for Leisure Hours*. When in 1830 New York celebrated the revolt of the French against the restoration monarchy, Phillips wrote a "petite" drama: *Three Days in Paris or the Triumph of Liberty*. The Park Theatre was jammed;

people crowded even onto the stage. He was to write at least eight plays. One was a drama dealing with the heroic Roman general Camillus. In the preface to the play, Phillips, like other American-born playwrights, wrote that his work was an American product and expressed the hope that it would advance the cause of the native literature and help repel English theatrical invaders. A facet of his career that merits mention is that he is probably the first American Jew to publish his songs. At least four that he wrote appeared between the 1830's and 1841. This was the period when Henry Russell, the English composer and singer, was concertizing throughout the country. But writing plays and songs was only an avocation for Phillips; he made his living as an assistant district attorney for the city of New York.¹⁸

MORDECAI MANUEL NOAH (1785-1851)

THE EARLY DAYS

One man in the Phillips clan has been given little mention as yet; he may be deemed the most important member. This was Jonas Phillips's grandson, Mordecai Manuel Noah, undoubtedly the best-known layman in the American Jewish community during the first half of the century. Noah, a fifth-generation American, was a journalist, a politician, a sheriff, Surveyor of the Port of New York, a consul, a playwright, a Jewish community activist, and a proto-Zionist. Born in Philadelphia, he was reared by his grandfather. His father had deserted the family; his mother died when Noah was but seven. The youngster then went for two or three years to the all-day school conducted in New York by Seixas. This seems to have been the full extent of his formal secular and religious schooling. Essentially Noah was self-taught. Very little is known about his life until he was about twenty-six. There were at least fifteen years of struggle until he began to find himself. Most of this time, it would seem, was spent in Philadelphia. The ambitious lad was apprenticed to a gilder and carver, who sent the youngster to Canada selling carved images, the products of the shop. One wonders whether Noah ever became a master craftsman. His was certainly a full life. He busied himself in amateur theatricals and became a young Democratic stalwart; Noah was only fourteen when he gave a Fourth of July oration; the boy was a patriot; his father and grandfather had both served as militiamen in the Revolution. It was probably during these Philadelphia days, that Noah picked up the honorary title of "major." It was, one may assume, a gubernatorial reward for hard work on the hustings. Tradition has it that he served as a reporter at the state capital in Harrisburg. By this time his career was foreshadowed: Noah was to be in the main a playwright, a politician, and a journalist.¹⁹

THE CHARLESTON PERIOD

At the age of twenty-six, Noah settled in Charleston, then the metropolis of the South. He was already a good writer; shrewd, ambitious, he was determined to make a career for himself. He studied law, but as yet had not passed a bar examination. The town looked upon itself as the Athens of the South, but Noah was not too impressed. He had come from Philadelphia, a cultural center, and thought that Charleston was lagging in the sciences and in the fine arts. Identifying with the leaders of the Jewish community, Noah hastened to damn dissidents in Congregation Beth Elohim—he was never to be a flaming liberal. Under the pseudonym Muly Malak, he wrote articles for a local paper. Eager to further himself politically, he became a war hawk in the days preceding the outbreak of hostilities with Great Britain. Actually, he set out to be provocative; he was a young man in a hurry. Attacked as an un-Christian Turk, as a Jew, he challenged his opponent to a duel, but fortunately the seconds were able to arrange an honorable settlement. A second quarrel, this time with a Jew, culminated in a duel in which Noah wounded his challenger. Thus he was able to prove to the world that he was an honorable Southern gentleman—imperative if he was to make a career in politics. His record as an enthusiastic Democratic activist had secured for him the consular post at Riga on the Baltic. A number of outstanding Democrats rallied to his support, including Uncle Naphtali Phillips, the Tammany wheelhorse. Despite his fervent patriotism and his known physical courage, Major Noah did not volunteer as a soldier after war was declared. He was resolved to serve his country politically, not militarily. Because the Continental-Napoleonic wars were in progress, there was no future for a consular officer in Russia-ruled Riga; Noah was happy, therefore, to accept a similar appointment in Tunis on the Barbary Coast. He set out for Europe in 1813, fell into the hands of the British, and when released by them moved on to the Continent, reaching his post finally in 1814.²⁰

CONSUL AT TUNIS, 1814-1815

Why did Noah want such a post? It was a means to an end. He craved influence and power; apparently he could never forget that he had come from a broken, impoverished home. As an apprentice, he was flogged; he said it had been good for him, but this may well be a sentimental *post-eventum* rationalization. The North African consulship was his first real opportunity in life, a chance for status, recognition, and profit. (Consuls customarily engaged in business, but there is no evidence that Noah ever made any money at this job.) While in Tunis, he acted the grand seigneur. Judging from what he wrote in his *Travels*, he did not cultivate the local Jews socially, though some of them were politically powerful.

Noah, in fact, may well have seen more of his fellow Jews than he admitted, for in the *Travels*, an apologia, he strove to demonstrate what he had accomplished as an American civil servant. He reports having been most courteous to the Christians and their clergy in this Moslem state; he took notice of Sundays and the Christian holidays: "I did not forget that I was representing a Christian nation."

Though the consul's prime job was to protect American interests in Tunis, Noah was entrusted with a very confidential mission. He was enjoined to ransom enslaved American sailors in neighboring Algiers, a country with which the United States was then at war. While he was engaged secretly in this special assignment, an exceedingly difficult one, he was recalled by President Madison and Secretary of State Monroe on April 25, 1815. The Washington authorities said that he had ransomed only two sailors, and it was charged that he had spent too much money at this task; his drafts were not honored. In the letter to Noah, handed him by Stephen Decatur in Tunis, Monroe wrote that "at the time of your appointment as consul at Tunis, it was not known that the religion which you profess would form any obstacle to the exercise of your consular functions." For Noah, the situation was fraught with great personal danger; he was no longer a man with diplomatic immunity. If he could not meet the obligations he had incurred as consul, he faced imprisonment in Tunis. With remarkable courage and a great deal of ingenuity, he managed to satisfy his creditors and to return to the United States, but he came back here indignant, embittered. Rejection by his government, after what he regarded as his honest attempt to accomplish the almost impossible, was probably the greatest trauma he was ever to experience.²¹

RECALL AND VINDICATION

Though Noah had ransomed a number of Americans, or men thought to be Americans, there is no question that he had not rescued ten of the enslaved men whom he was called upon to free. The State Department officials resented the fact that he had employed as his agent an expatriate American whom it distrusted. There was no accusation of malfeasance, though they were convinced that Noah had paid too large a premium in discounting his American bills. Noah could well have responded that the funds he expended were less than 10 percent of those spent by Col. Tobias Lear, the last consul to Algiers. It may well be that, according to their lights, Monroe and the President were justified in recalling him, but they could not have been unaware that, by divesting him of his diplomatic status while he was still in Tunis, they were putting him at the mercy of a merciless despot. This was thoughtless and cruel. They knew he did not have the means to redeem himself once they refused to honor his draft. Undoubtedly, there was animus in his recall. Noah suspected

that Col. Lear was behind it all, though there is no proof. Monroe and Madison, too, must bear responsibility for this callous act. Madison was not a competent administrator.

Noah returned in 1816 and set out to vindicate himself. That same year he published his *Correspondence and Documents Relative to the Attempt to Negotiate for the Release of the American Captives at Algiers, Including Remarks on Our Relations with That Regency*. Three years later, he published *Travels in England, France, Spain, and the Barbary States, in the Years 1813-14, and 15*. Both books were apologies for his conduct; both were attacks on Madison, Monroe, and their associates. It was the consul's contention that his experience marked the first time since the adoption of the Constitution that religion was offered as an excuse for restriction on the right to hold office. Noah insisted that he had been dismissed because of his religion. If an American Jew cannot go as a consul to a Moslem country, then an American Catholic cannot go to England, an American Protestant to France or Spain. Jews had earned the privilege and immunities of citizens in two wars with Great Britain. If the United States deprives them of rights, where else can they go! This type of discrimination will put an end to emigration from abroad. If this letter of dismissal remains on record, it will serve as a precedent to disqualify Jews from holding office. Point blank, then, Noah accused the Madison administration of giving "sanction to bigotry"—the very phrase used by Washington in his letter to the Jews of Rhode Island. Noah was making it quite clear that the government had betrayed George Washington himself. Conscience, he wrote, is a private affair between God and the individual. Liberty is very important in America. "We cease to be free when we cease to be liberal." He made his recall a Jewish issue.²²

Within a year after his return, Noah's accounts were settled more or less to his satisfaction. It is probable that Madison and Monroe realized that they had erred in dragging in the issue that a Jew could not serve the United States government as a diplomat in a Moslem country. Neither the President nor his Secretary of State was anti-Jewish. Madison, who had been helped generously by Haym Salomon when the Virginian was a delegate to the Continental Congress, had been quick to acknowledge his indebtedness to the Jew. In 1813, the President had not hesitated to appoint John Hays, a Jew, as collector of internal revenue in the Illinois country; Monroe later appointed the same man Indian agent at Fort Wayne in 1822. Noah's vigorous protestations disturbed them very much; both Monroe and Madison were politicians; Monroe wanted to be president. The Jews in the country numbered less than 3,000 souls, yet this small urban middle-class group was not without influence. Uncle Naphtali Phillips, of the *National Advocate*, would have to be placated; Isaac Harby in Charleston, editor of the *Southern Patriot*, a Democrat and a

Madisonian, rallied to Noah's defense. Noah himself wrote a strong letter indicting the administration for religious bigotry. If its attitude persisted, he wrote, Jews would have to leave this country and go to a place where liberty holds her residence. Tobias Lear, who may have been Noah's *bête noire*, committed suicide in 1816. Frightened at the hornets' nest he had stirred up, Monroe recruited Abraham A. Massias, a Jewish army paymaster, to pressure Harby. Even after Noah's accounts were adjusted, Madison and Monroe were still on the defensive. Noah was about to become editor of the *National Advocate*. Offering Moses M. Russell, a consular post, they assured him that Noah had been recalled solely because of incompetence. The fact that Noah was a Jew, said Monroe, was one of his best recommendations! In a friendly note to Noah in 1818, Madison wrote, "Your religious profession was well known at the time you received your commission, and that in itself could not be a motive in your recal [sic]." Noah, as a Democratic politician, had to work with the administration in Washington, but no matter what he said in public he probably never forgave it.²³

NOAH IN THE GENERAL COMMUNITY

Soon after the Department of State settled its accounts with Noah, he was appointed editor of the *National Advocate*, probably in May or June 1817. Now he was one of New York City's notables. In July of that year, on the forty-first anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, he addressed a congeries of societies, ethnic, charitable, and fraternal. In this discourse, he glorified the Constitution, especially the Bill of Rights, and, like later Civil War orators, waved the bloody shirt. He exulted in the glorious victories of the recent War of 1812-1815—the second war of independence—when the Americans under the Star Spangled Banner had triumphed over the British Navy. The Americans were a race of heroes, this land would yet become the asylum for Europe's unfortunates. Mexico and South America, too, were destined to be free. For these United States Noah foresaw a great future in education, science, literature, and the arts. This was his prophecy three years before Sidney Smith in Great Britain saw fit to deplore the low cultural level of the Americans. Anticipating President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address one hundred and forty-four years later, Noah said: "The greatest struggle should be, not for power or office, but to see who can render the most effectual service to the commonwealth." By 1819, he was a member of the New York Historical Society; in 1820 and a generation later, in 1850, he spoke to the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen encouraging the members in their efforts to provide and maintain a library for apprentices. He was also called upon to raise his voice when the Americans responded to the cry for help from famine-stricken Ireland. He advocated improvements

and reforms in the city's administration; he favored public health measures, good water, charities for the disadvantaged and the helpless. In the course of his life, Noah was to identify himself with many communal organizations; he was recognized as a civic leader by his fellow citizens.²⁴

NOAH AND THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

After a fashion, Noah was also a leader in the New York Jewish community; indeed, he was probably the best-known Jew in the United States. Certainly very little was done in the metropolitan Jewish community in which he was not involved. Major Noah was the favorite Jewish speaker at synagogal dedications and consecrations, particularly if Christians were present. He could do the Jews proud; he could be depended upon, for he was a Light to the Gentiles; he was the self-appointed voice of the Jews to the Christians. It is questionable, however, if Noah was ever part of the Jewish elite which made the ultimate decisions. Affluent Jewish leaders like the Hendrickses, the Josephs, some of the Harts, the Moseses, and the Nathans probably had much more power and much more to say about Jewish life. Noah was never president of Shearith Israel—in fact, he was thrown off the board twice, once at the time of the secession of the Ashkenazim and again at the time of the Damascus Affair. The elite was not happy with the way he sided with the out-groups; he was certainly more open-minded than the Sephardic leadership, for he was a Jewish cultural pluralist; he was willing to give Jews of a different point of view an opportunity to express themselves. Never was he narrow-minded enough to demand that all Jews conform to the prevailing Sephardic pattern. Throughout the decades since his recall from Tunis, his Jewish identification was unquestionably strong. After reading a discourse of Noah's, the Attorney General of the United States, William Wirt, wrote his friend John Myers, of Norfolk, that persecution kept Jews alive; persecution, not Providence, was the key to Jewish survival. There is every reason to believe, too, that rejection had made a good Jew out of Noah.²⁵

Noah enjoyed representing the Jewish community, and the Jews, in turn, were glad to use him. He was admired because he was witty, articulate, because he wrote and conversed brilliantly; he was a fine orator. The editor had a wide knowledge of World Jewry; he knew the names of many of the great Jewish Europeans; he had probably met some of them on the way to Tunis. Noah was something of a cosmopolitan, while most of his Jewish friends in America were parochial. His membership in Jewish organizations was a measure of his identification, but here, too, he was very probably politically motivated; he never forgot that he was seeking power and a following; he was always the politician. Still, one cannot question his sincere interest in secular and Jewish education. Years earlier, in 1821, he had been a protagonist of the 1821 Institution of M. E. Levy,

who sought to establish a Jewish school for the study of the arts, the sciences, and agriculture. Like all Jewish leaders of his generation, he believed in a return to manual labor—for other Jews.

Unlike some of his Sephardic confreres, Noah was sympathetic to the 1825 Bnai Jeshurun seceders; they were, or at least said they were, interested in education, particularly of the youth. He was eager to further Shearith Israel's Polonies Talmud Torah, the Society for the Education of Poor Children, and Anshe Chesed's Lomde Torah Association of which he was the president. Yet, he sent his children to a Christian boarding school in Schenectady, although he was wont to assure his friends and followers that, religiously, Christian schools were not good for Jews. By the 1840's, Noah knew that the school question was *actuel*. Immigrants had been coming in since the late 1830's; schools would be sorely needed. In 1843, he suggested that a Hebrew "college" be established; actually what he had in mind was an elementary day and boarding school. The religious instruction was to be completely traditional. The secular subjects were to include the classics, French, and bookkeeping. German was not mentioned; it had no prestige in the early 1840's as the uncouth Germans poured in. Possibly Noah preferred to forget that his father had been born in Mannheim. It is by no means improbable that, when Noah plumped for an academy, or a college as he called it, he may have wanted to run one himself as a private enterprise; he needed the money. He was interested also in adult education and joined Shearith Israel's Hebrew Literary and Religious Library Association. It was inevitable that, as a journalist, Noah would look with favor on the rise of Jewish newspapers in the 1840's. His relations with the Jewish philanthropies were close; they provided funds to educate the children of the poor.²⁶

As a Jewish community leader, Noah was among those who vigorously protested the persecution of the Damascus Jews; Shearith Israel's failure to play any part in the protest did not deter him. In 1842, he became head of the Hebrew Benevolent Society and remained its president till his death. In 1849 several years after his election, the Hebrew Benevolent Society and the German Hebrew Benevolent Society came together in a common banquet in order to raise funds—in a way, the beginning of the "federation" movement which would blossom in the 1890's. Wealthy Jews came to these fund-raising dinners to give money and to mix with important Gentiles; Christians came primarily to garner Jewish votes and support, though they also recognized Jews as liberal givers. The governor of the state gave a large donation, as did Jenny Lind, the singer, who was here on tour. This annual fund-raising dinner soon became normative with many Jewish philanthropies; it was to last until displaced, to a degree, by the annual drive of the federations. The year Noah died, he was working valiantly to establish a Jewish hospital in New York

City, a difficult task, inasmuch as metropolitan Jewry was in no sense homogeneous.²⁷

NOAH AS THE DEFENDER OF HIS PEOPLE:
NOAH AND THE CHRISTIANS

Noah constantly rallied to the defense of his people. He was annoyed when newspapers identified Jewish malefactors and criminals by religion. Maryland's failure to permit Jews to hold office as late as the first quarter of the nineteenth century grieved him; he wanted the emancipatory "Jew Bill" to pass. He watched with dismay as David G. Seixas was dismissed—unjustly he believed—from his post as head of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. Like all Jews, he deeply resented the gubernatorial and occasional presidential proclamations calling on Christians to celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday with prayer; Noah and his coreligionists insisted that the day was one of thanks and prayer for all American citizens. This *defensor Judaeorum* raised his voice in anger in the 1850's when the United States and Switzerland proposed to sign a treaty which tolerated discrimination against American Jewish citizens in certain Swiss cantons.²⁸

In one respect at least, Noah was a typical Jew: missionaries and missionizing raised his hackles. Whether he was right or wrong, he was convinced, as were many of his fellow Jews, that Jewish converts to Christianity lacked integrity. Editor and publisher Noah forebore to express this contempt publicly, knowing full well as he did that vast numbers of Christians were dedicated to the saving of souls, for them a sacrosanct task. Politician Noah did not want to offend voters and subscribers; they were all his clients. It puzzled him that John Quincy Adams, a Unitarian, was for a time a national officer of the conversionist American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews. Yet Noah, truly realistic, differed from most American Jews in his evaluation of the dominant Protestantism. His objectivity is almost startling; Jews and Christians had much in common; even the evangelical Christian societies were not to be condemned forthwith; they furthered knowledge of the Old Testament. Christianity and Judaism were historically and religiously close; Christianity was a daughter religion; much that the younger faith taught was Jewish; the two could work together. Who knows, Christians might yet become Unitarians or even Jews! However, there was an area where Noah was closer to the Christians than to the Jews. He seems not to have been opposed to current Sunday legislation which aimed to close most retail shops on the Lord's Day. The Sunday-closing law had to be observed, he thought, though he certainly knew that this meant the loss of a business day for every observant Jew. If shops were kept open on Sunday,

Jews would disturb Christians at worship. The law of the land had to be respected.²⁹

NOAH THE FAMILY MAN

Noah's home was that of a typically cultured native American Jew. Some ceremonies were probably observed. Having gone to Hebrew school, he could no doubt read Hebrew, and there is every reason to believe that he kept a kosher home—after a fashion (otherwise his fellow-members at Shearith Israel would have been scandalized). Passover was celebrated; it was an important holiday in his calendar. In September, 1825, Noah went to Buffalo to proclaim the establishment of a Jewish colony and was on the road during the High Holy Days—patently absent from services, but this does not seem to have disturbed him. On Christmas, his children hung up their stockings. When Noah was forty-two, he married; his bride was a Jewish girl, Rebecca Esther Jackson, about seventeen at the time. The London branch of the family approved of the marriage despite the disparity in ages. A relative wrote to Rebecca: "It is better to be the old man[']s] darling, than the young ones drugg[drudge]."³⁰

NOAH, TERRITORIALIST AND ZIONIST

Noah spoke and wrote like a Jewish religionist and was one. (Even in those days only a few Jews were meticulous in observance or in synagogal attendance.) To a degree, of course, his religiosity was superficial; essentially, he was an "ethnic" Jew, strongly influenced by the romantic, political impact of the American and the French Revolutions and very much inclined to believe that everyone—Jews, too!—had a right to life, liberty, and happiness. While still in his twenties, perhaps even earlier, he was convinced that the United States was the best place for Jews, though he wavered between predominantly Jewish settlements and free integration with non-Jews here. He was certainly not adverse to settling Jews together in groups. The United States had grown out of a series of colonies founded on religious, commercial, and philanthropic grounds. Almost as old as these early Christian settlements were those established by Jews in the West Indies and South America during the 1600's. There had been talk, too, in the 1700's of founding large Jewish colonies in North America. During the 1780's, when the Americans were driving out the British, some German Jews contemplated setting up separate enclaves here. Assuming that they meant what they said, they were prompted by the hope of sharing in American freedoms.³¹

By the nineteenth century, this country had begun to shelter diverse colonies, religious, secular, utopian in character. No later than 1816, Jews again began talking and writing of colonizing fellow-religionists here. It

was then that Moses Elias Levy thought of settling Jews on his Florida lands, even though the province was still under Spanish rule. Then, in Germany, came the post-Napoleonic political reaction which culminated in 1819 in riots and in attacks on Jews. Economic dislocation after the Continental wars and the rise of a national religioromantic sentiment in Central Europe touched not only the Gentiles but the Jews also, predisposing the latter to emigration and colonization. That same year, William D. Robinson, a Gentile American businessman, called for the settlement of impoverished European Jews in the Mississippi Valley. There can be little question that Noah, too, was moved by the German attacks on his people. A German newspaper, the *Koblenzer Anzeiger*, reported that he wanted the oppressed German Jews to migrate to this haven of refuge. This much is certain: the following year, in 1820, he presented a petition to the New York state legislature, asking it to sell him Grand Island in the Niagara River as a site for a colony. The legislators were sympathetic in view of the suffering of the German Jews, but took no affirmative action. That same year, responding to a newspaper editorial in the Washington *National Intelligencer* which questioned the value of a rural colony for Jews, Noah thought it might be advisable to settle his European coreligionists, an urban folk, in Newport, Rhode Island. At least let them come here where they would have the right to live wherever they wished; the whole country lay before them. America offered them liberty; here they would be spared the excesses to which they had been exposed in Central Europe.³²

To speed the emigration of European Jews seeking a future in America, Noah hoped that the administration in Washington would give him an important post in Vienna, or The Hague, or Copenhagen, or some other continental city. He was convinced that his appointment would be a visible, tangible guarantee of the opportunities awaiting Jews in this land. Given such a position, he was sure that he could attract wealthy Jews here, men with capital. This mercantilistic plea was but a rationalization; it was imperative for him personally, psychically, to secure another diplomatic or consular assignment—an effort in which he was never to succeed. In the meantime, during the years 1819-1820, Christian conversionists here were talking of a colony for Jewish-Christians, and in 1825, for the purpose of sheltering these converts, they did rent a farm at Harrison, in Westchester County, New York. Noah was aware of what they were doing; they were equally aware of his plans. He continued to reach out in all directions. In 1821, he and a handful of Jewish enthusiasts set out to create a national organization for the purpose of establishing a colony for children and young adults in the West. The prime goal of these devotees was to stop the inroads of apathy and assimilation. In 1825, Noah was back where he had started in 1819. He had conjured up grandi-

ose plans to bring Europe's oppressed Jews to Grand Island. He proposed to set up "a City of Refuge for the Jews" to be called Ararat—reminding everyone of the mountain top on which in the Bible the ark of the primeval Noah, after the deluge, had finally found rest. Here again his travail was in vain.³³

Noah's 1820 petition to the state legislature asking for the purchase of Grand Island, the 1821 flirtation with Moses Levy's Institution, the 1825 Ararat colonial scheme: all these were a form of territorialism, the desire for an autonomous Jewish close settlement in some—any land. This reaching out by Noah was only one phase of his determination to help World Jewry. As early as the years 1811–1812, Noah had already begun to concern himself with the emancipation and survival of Jews overseas. The Tunisian trauma heightened his Jewish loyalties, his "nationalism." True, America was World Jewry's Land of Promise, yet at the same time he thought of settling persecuted Jews, especially those subject to Czarist Russia, in a land of their own, in Palestine. This is Zionism, pure and simple. It is worthy of mention, however, that even before Noah's day in the 1780's, immediately after the United States achieved independence—there were intimations that individuals here in the United States were thinking of the reestablishment of the ancient Palestinian state. In 1784, a Jewish officiant suggested in a prayer, that since the thirteen colonies had achieved independence, it might well be possible for the Jews to regain their political freedom. In the 1790's there were rumors that Napoleon might give Palestine back to the Jews. Seixas, the New York minister, began then to dream of restoration, though his expectations were never unequivocally clear. In 1807, he dared to hope that Napoleon, fulfilling a prophecy in Hosea 6:2, was about to establish the third Jewish commonwealth. It is frequently difficult or impossible to determine whether American Jewish "Zionist" utterances were merely mouthing of standard liturgical phrases or whether Jews of that day actually hoped for a reborn Palestinian state in their own time.³⁴

Nationalism began flourishing in Europe and America in the early nineteenth century; Noah was not exempt from this influence. There were ideological, political, and economic upheavals and ferment in Europe after 1815 and in the Middle East from the 1820's on. Perhaps Noah never knew the phrase "birthpangs of the Messiah," but he might very well have hoped that something would happen or was about to happen, to bring forth a Jewish state. When in 1825 he dedicated the Ararat colony, he renounced it "temporary and provisional." It was the "declaration of independence" of the real state that was yet to be born in the Holy Land. At Ararat, Jews here in the free United States, were to be taught how to govern themselves so that they would know what to do when they finally returned to Jerusalem. Noah, orthodox in his theology,

had no choice but to believe that God would one day gather together his scattered Jews and restore them to their land. Nevertheless, he was quite willing to give God and the Messiah a push. As a territorialist, he was willing for the time being to establish a preparatory colony here in the United States; the ultimate state must of course rise in the Promised Land. That time, he believed, was not far off.

Noah was at the least a proto-Zionist. His belief in an ultimate Restoration was probably influenced by current Protestant concepts; sooner or later God would bring his people back to the land which he had promised them. These Christian hopes for the Return were strongly held not only in the United States but also in England, where they went back at least to 1608. In the mid-seventeenth century the appearance of the Jewish "Messiah" Shabbethai Zevi served only to convince the English Christians that the Restoration was imminent. Easily a dozen works on the subject had appeared in that century; by 1818, books and pamphlets numbered more than thirty-five. Because it meant much to English Christians to convert the Jews of Palestine—thereby proving the superiority of the Christian faith—they established a mission at Jerusalem in the nineteenth century. To cap their enterprise and anticipate their hopes, they installed a convert as Anglican bishop. This was meet and proper. If Jesus should reappear in the long awaited Second Advent, he would be greeted by the bishop, a fellow Jew. To be sure there was more than one reason which compelled English interest in Palestine; they wanted to link the isthmus of Suez with Egypt and India; they were set on keeping the French out of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean basin where they had once been powerful. A Jewish buffer state in Palestine would serve English imperialism and simultaneously fulfill the biblical prophecy of Restoration. All this came to a climax decades later, in 1917, when Great Britain issued the Balfour Declaration.³⁵

There was an active Restorationist in this country, too—Warder Cresson (1798-1860), a Christian religious enthusiast who believed that God was about to gather the Jews together in Palestine. In 1844, Cresson secured an appointment as consul to Jerusalem without pay, but it was almost immediately revoked. In 1848, he himself became a Jew, and changed his name to Michael Boaz Israel. When he returned to Philadelphia, his family sought unsuccessfully to have him certified insane. The Palestine program he formulated in the early 1850's was quite a practical one: agriculture, schooling, small compact family-like settlements—miniscule colonies—with an international Jewish organization to back them up, a sort of proto-Palestine Foundation Fund. Cresson-Israel also wanted to set up a soup kitchen for poor Jews in Jerusalem; feeding them would keep them out of the clutches of the Christian missionaries. Central in his thinking and planning was the importance of teaching the Jews to sup-

port themselves by the ennobling pursuit of farming, but he accomplished nothing.³⁶

Noah in his dream of Restoration had the sympathy of the evangelicals. These religionists were sure that the Jews would be restored to the land of their fathers because of the biblical promises. Ultimately, said these Christians, all Jews will come to Jesus; he will then reappear and usher in the Millennium. (There are variations of this grand design.) To a degree, Jewry went along with this Restoration concept. The Jewish Messiah will yet make his appearance, but there will be no conversion of Jews—it is the Christians and all the nations who will come to Judaism, as the Bible has promised. Though Noah's Restoration hopes were dependent on the Holy One, Blessed Be He, who would one day implement his promises to his people, they could give him a helping hand. With God's help, but also with Jewish muscle and money, and with the benevolence of the Great Powers, the Palestine state would yet rise again from its ashes.

Noah's Zionism actually came to the fore no later than 1818. As has been suggested above, Jews throughout history have had their politicoreligious pseudo-Messiahs who were prepared to reestablish the Jewish state. This desire goes back at least to the first century of the Christian era. In a sense, Noah was a link in that millennial chain. On April 17, 1818, he made an address at the consecration of the rebuilt Mill Street synagogue. A new building was needed; the old one had been erected in 1730 when at the most there were 500 Jewish souls in all of North America; now there were at least 3,000. The editor rehearsed his hopes. The Christian clergy must stop attacking Jews. The Jews here must improve themselves morally and culturally. Let them foresake commerce and go into crafts and farming. The prospects for the Restoration are now excellent with the Turkish Empire about to collapse. One hundred thousand Jews could march on Palestine-Syria, conquer it and establish a state. (This idea of a Jewish army is probably Napoleonic.) And the money to finance this expedition? The Jews are wealthy; they hold the purse strings. As early as 1816, Niles's *Weekly Register* reported that rich Jews were ready to buy Palestine. Noah was going along with the myth that Jewish bankers (the Rothschilds) were powerful; they could and would supply the necessary funds. But, he hastened to add, until all this comes to pass, America is Jewry's chosen land.³⁷

Noah sent a copy of his speech to John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison. In their answers, all three stressed the freedom accorded the Jews in the United States. Adams in another letter expressed the hope that Noah would put himself at the head of this proposed army of 100,000. Jews in the new state would be able to improve themselves culturally and become liberal Unitarian Christians! In another note to the

editor, Adams wrote that he was conscious of the anti-Jewish prejudice that still persisted; he knew several Jews personally; they were fine people. Abraham had given religion to the Christians and Moslems, to the largest part of the civilized world. In writing to Jefferson, Noah stressed the privileges conferred upon Jews. American liberalism is influencing Europe; Jews there are already attaining distinction. Noah wrote as if all Jews here in the United States had already received all rights; he said nothing of the five states whose constitutions still denied them equality. Jefferson in answering Noah was more realistic. There is prejudice. Let the Jew study and acquire knowledge; the consequent cultural improvement will bring him respect. The responses of Adams and Jefferson make it abundantly clear that the Jews of their day were not looked upon as an enlightened people.³⁸

In the 1830's, Noah continued to concern himself with Palestine and its future as a home for Jews. Somehow or other it was hoped that the unrest in that part of the world, the growth of state nationalism in Europe, the July Revolt of 1830, would all afford an opportunity for the Jews to reestablish a state of their own in the ancient homeland. Jews were never permitted to forget Palestine, for whose rebirth they prayed three times a day in their synagogues; messengers from the Holy Land were constantly arriving in search of funds for the poor in the cities and the students in the rabbinical "colleges." These apostles were treated gently; the yeshivah students in Palestine prayed for the end of the Exile, for a speedy Restoration. Humble and impoverished Palestinians were deemed important, for they served God on behalf of those at ease in the Diaspora. Noah befriended one of these messengers, Enoch Zundel, who had tarried in New York for almost a year collecting funds (1832-1833). When Zundel moved on to Philadelphia in his quest for help, Noah gave him a cordial letter of recommendation, though it may be that the major was merely speeding the parting guest, an expensive one. New York businessmen were well aware that, at best, the collections were often consumed by the expenses, sums entrusted to the messengers were frequently misappropriated. Zundel, however, was good to Shearith Israel; he gave the synagogue two pounds of Palestine earth to further the tradition of springling a handful in the coffin at the time of burial. (Many years later, Captain Uriah P. Levy, commander of the Mediterranean fleet, brought back a whole wagonload for the congregation.)³⁹

In 1834, 1837, and 1844, Noah continued to hammer away at the Palestine theme, advocating the purchase of the country by Jews and citing portents that the Restoration was at hand. How much of all this he himself believed is of course impossible to determine. Two of these addresses were made to Gentiles, whom he titillated theologically. In an 1837 discourse, adhering to an old theme, he maintained that the North

American Indians were Jews—descended from the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel. Thus the Scattering was complete; God would now collect his people as he had promised. The conjunction of political circumstances continued to be favorable. The Jews must help themselves; even more it was incumbent upon the Christians to aid the Jews. In 1844, he harangued an audience, many of them Christians: Americans enjoyed their freedom in a land of their own. We have helped restore the Greeks—now give the Jews a home of their own! We have helped the South Americans; Negro freedmen here are being dispatched to Africa, to Liberia; even the Indians have territories of their own in the West. Let the Christian conversionists rally around the Jews and assist them to establish a home in the land of their fathers. Jews can do wonders with the country, but they must have Christian support—without American, French, and British aid, the Russians cannot be held back as they drive south to the Mediterranean and east to the Indian Ocean. Man can effect the Restoration; the Jewish state can rise again through human agency. A Jewish Palestine properly supported and governed can become the richest, most powerful, most advanced state in the world.⁴⁰

The Christians who listened to Noah in 1844 as he spoke in New York's Tabernacle had no choice but to reject his offer of collaboration because he, the Jew, had rejected God, Jesus. Traditional Jews rejected Noah's advice to work closely with the Christians in order to reestablish the Third Commonwealth; they were convinced that the ultimate goal of Christianity was conversion of the Jews. This was also Isaac Leeser's conviction in a lengthy review of the 1844 discourse. What is more, contended the Philadelphia minister, the Christians will never tolerate a viable Jewish state. If indeed Judea is to rise again, it can only be through the agency of God himself. Years later, during the Civil War, Leeser modified his views, possibly aware of the fact that notable European Jews were then thinking seriously of extensive Palestinian settlements. Quite likely adopting some of the Noah's ideas, Leeser ventured the opinion that the Jews could erect a buffer state in Palestine, linking East and West on the highway of the nations. Jews could do a great deal for the Holy Land. They had no other home anywhere. Palestine reborn would bring them the respect of their neighbors. The Exile imposed a physical and moral yoke upon Jewry.

Scarcely more than three years after Noah's appeal to the Christians in New York's Tabernacle, the 1848 Revolutions—the "Spring of the Peoples"—swept through Central Europe. It is by no means improbable that the fall of the Metternich system and the strong resurgence of nationalism may have revived Noah's interest in the ancient homeland. Thus, when a Jerusalem apostle, Yehiel Cohen, appeared in New York and appealed for funds to rebuild a synagogue in Jerusalem, Noah lent a

ready hand. Cohen announced that this was the first Jewish sanctuary to be erected in the city since the rise of Christianity. Noah saw himself rebuilding the ancient temple! In a November, 1848, address, he once more genuflected in the direction of the Christians; Jesus was a reformer, teacher, brother, prophet, but always the Jew, and a good Jew. Noah did not say a word against Christianity or Islam: were not both Jewish in origin? Had they not learned much that they taught from the Jews?. The major had a vision of an ecumenical Jerusalem with the Mosque of Omar flanked by the Jewish Temple and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Christians listened with rapt attention to the good tidings but left in a hurry when the collection was taken up. New York Jews raised some money, but profiting by sad experiences in the past, they bypassed Cohen and sent their funds directly to the responsible authorities in Jerusalem.⁴¹

NOAH THE JEW

Over the years Noah had developed a strong sense of ethnicity. The shock of his recall from Tunis and the anti-Jewish taunts to which he was exposed in his political and newspaper career only heightened his commitment to his people. This loyalty—an amalgam of Diaspora nationalism and Zionism—and his passionate American patriotism were synthesized by him. This is the real core of the man's thinking, of his ideological odyssey. As a confessing Jew, Noah believed that his people would be restored in the fullness of time. Thus he was a Restorationist. Yet, as a man faithful to his fellow Jews and zealous for their survival, he wanted them to set sail for America. Thus, if only in intent, he had to become an American Jewish colonizer, even though the colonization program proved short-lived. As a showman, he made the most of it; he let no one deny him his hour in the limelight. Anything but stupid, Noah was fully aware that he would be ridiculed for his pretensions to leadership. It was not long, therefore, before he abandoned the role of an American colonizer. Then—this was after 1825—he became a Palestine state builder, a Zionist. As an informed journalist, he believed, as did most intelligent students of foreign affairs, that the Ottoman Empire—the Sick Man of Europe—would soon collapse. It was his hope that the Jews could crawl into the interstitial political spaces, that they would take advantage of the rivalries of the Great Powers and set up a state of their own in what had been Ottoman Palestine.

This scenario was actually played out to a considerable degree in Palestine and in World Jewry during the next century. Probing his Zionist motivations further, we may ask: was he sincere? Did he mean what he said or were his "discourses" a public relations device? These are questions which must remain unanswered. What is sincerity? What man in the public eye ever ceased to put his own interests first? Noah enjoyed center

stage. He wrote plays, but in real life was always an actor. Noah faced every situation, confronted every event as if it were a part in a drama in which he played the stellar role. He did want to help Jews overseas. Noah would never have settled in Jerusalem himself—except as president of a Jewish state. Question: Was his emphasis on Palestine as a homeland for persecuted Jews the reverse of his nativist American coin? For he had become a nativist. Would he have preferred to direct Jewish immigrants to Palestine rather than to the United States? This is to be doubted; it is very probable that, notwithstanding his conservative, even reactionary attitude toward immigrants in later decades, he would have welcomed America-bound Jews. He felt for them; he wanted them here; he aspired to be their leader, their voice. What manner of religionist was he? He flaunted his Judaism, playing with it in his appearances before Christian audiences. The editor was at all times a journalist and a politician seeking through his writing and his talk to become the center of attention; recognition for him was every bit as important as the implementation of his plans.⁴²

NOAH AS JOURNALIST

In all American Jewish histories Noah assumes importance because he was a Jewish communal figure of significance. Quantitatively, however, his Jewish activities were minor in his life, relatively inconsequential in his career as an American citizen. Most of his time was spent on the job which provided him with bread and butter—journalism, his first and last love! He had been a full-time newspaperman since 1817, following his return from Tunis. Over a period of some thirty-five years, he edited several papers, dailies or weeklies. Some he owned, though he had to co-opt partners to help him with the financing. He was most successful with the first, the *National Advocate*, which he edited from 1817 to 1824, for Uncle Naphtali. The first papers followed the Democratic line; with the *Evening Star* in 1834, he became a Whig, at least for a time. Noah switched his allegiance, resentful that his fellow Democrats had not taken care of him; they in turn rejected him, because he had not been loyal to the dictates of the party's leaders. *The Union* (1842) was edited by him for less than a year; it was anything but successful. Nevertheless, a prominent Jew, Aaron Levy, hoped that *The Union* would help him in his business as an art dealer. Would his friend Noah give his gallery a puff? "As you have the power of writing men into the presidential chair so well, you can write A. Levy's establishment, 151 Broadway, into more notice where ladies & gentlemen may pass an hour with much interest." Levy was referring to the fact that, as an editor, Noah had helped put William Henry Harrison into the presidency.

From 1843, on Noah edited *Sunday's Times and Noah's Weekly Messenger*. To make both ends meet, he had to do hack editorial work. Noah

always managed to make a living, though he was never very successful financially. His papers never enjoyed a large circulation, although they were well edited, stimulating, and enlivened with human interest material. He amused his readers with wit and an occasional bit of scandal. Editor Noah carried on a feud with Charles King, a politician and editor who was later to become president of Columbia University. King was a very proud man, secure in his family traditions, his dignity, and the unshakable conviction that he was an aristocrat. It must have been with a wicked gleam in his eye that Noah reported how King had appeared at a fancy dress ball disguised as a gentleman and no one had recognized him. The major was never to become one of the great antebellum American editors because he could not compete with a generation of journalists that produced a William Cullen Bryant, a Horace Greeley, a James Gordon Bennett, and a Henry J. Raymond. He could not compete with one-penny papers like the *Herald* of Bennett, an enemy, who did not even have the grace to write an obituary of Noah when he passed away.⁴³

NOAH IN POLITICS

Very few newspapers could survive without political patronage in that day. Only too often they were the instruments of parties or factions. This was apparently true of most of those that Noah edited. It is equally true that he wanted to publish a readable paper, to increase circulation, to make money, but even more he sought recognition; he wanted to hold office. In the early 1820's, he became sheriff of New York County. The fact that a Jew could be appointed impressed James Fenimore Cooper upstate, and in 1828, Cooper wrote: "The sheriff of the city of New York . . . was, a few years ago, a Jew! Now all the Jews in New York united would not make 300 voters." While in office, during an epidemic of yellow fever, sheriff Noah unlocked the doors to the debtors languishing in jail; he did not want them exposed to the disease. Since he was the responsible officer, it is quite probable that he had to pay the debts of those whom he had released, albeit for humanitarian reasons. Apparently the very thought of an infidel Jewish sheriff shocked some Christians. There is a contemporary story with variants: "It would be a pity to have a Jew hang a Christian," said one of the faithful to Noah. To this, he is reputed to have answered, "Fine Christian that had to be hanged." In 1828, when the office became elective, Noah ran and was defeated; others on the same ticket won. Anti-Jewish prejudice seems to have brought about his rejection.⁴⁴

Only once did the major hold a lucrative office and that for a relatively brief period, 1829-1832. Politically, he was unlucky; he does not appear to have been inept, though some of his contemporaries thought he was. His support of Jackson brought him the profitable post of Surveyor

of the Port of New York. In this instance, his loyalty to Jackson, the head of the party, paid off, but he was not reappointed in 1833. He had failed to support the President in his bitter fight against Nicholas Biddle and the Bank of the United States. Circumstances beyond Noah's control made it almost impossible for him to do so; he was not a free agent. Several years later, in 1841, he was appointed a justice of the New York Court of Sessions; he had been admitted to the bar in 1823, but evidently had never practiced law. However, unhappy in his new post, he resigned the judicial office after a very short time. As a judge, he was not permitted to edit a paper; he was a fish out of water.

By the 1840's, Noah was moving to the right. It annoyed him that his tailor could sit next to him at the opera and venture an opinion on Italian music! The man, said Noah, "should be only a judge of broadcloth and neat fit." Noah was an anti-prohibitionist and an anti-Mormon, though he was quick to decry persecution of anyone because of religion. The anti-immigration nativists found a supporter in him; Noah was proud of his multi-generation American lineage. Native-born Americans only should exercise political control; citizenship was a privilege that foreigners should be able to earn only after a generation of waiting. His attack on newcomers was aimed at the Irish, but he did not hesitate to condemn Protestants for their anti-Catholic attacks and for sensational salacious exposures of the Church such as *Six Months in a Convent* and the *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*. In his opinion, it was ironic that the Jews had "to admonish Christians to live together in brotherhood and affection."⁴⁵

Living in Charleston as a young man during the years 1811-1813 certainly predisposed him to the institution of slavery. Later, as a Democrat, he was eager to placate the South and keep it in the Union; he was sympathetic to Southern aspirations. He supported the Texas Revolution and the war against Mexico; he was proslavery, an anti-abolitionist. Was he a racist? From a present-minded point of view, yes! But then this judgment would require historians to dub racist the majority of antebellum citizens in the North; most Americans were simply not ready to abolish the system of black bondage, and in this respect Noah was a typical American. In 1813, on his way to Tunis, he was detained briefly in Europe, where he saw four "Black gentlemen" in a theatre; they were from Santo Domingo. "It would be highly honourable to us," he said, "if our policy in the south could, with safety, hold forth a greater equality of rights to the Blacks." But this early liberal statement was unsupported by his later convictions. Ever since the early 1830's, he had been of the opinion that the Union could be saved only by tolerating slavery. Later, as he sought to win the South for the Whig Party, he was even more vigorously proslavery. For him, the peculiar institution was fully justified; the Bible approved of it; biologically, the blacks were inferior, were they not?

However, he was no secessionist; the Union has to be saved; Nullification was wrong. The major was not hesitant in sharing his political opinions with his readers. In the days when he was editing the *National Advocate*, he once wrote (more or less facetiously?): "I have a great notion to offer as a candidate for President myself; it is time that there should be a Jew President; it would be unanswerable proof of the perfect freedom of our political institutions. . . . I should make a good President." And the platform of this Democrat? There would be no taxes in time of peace, no loans and no sinecures; salaries would be modest; the army would be small; but there would be an adequate navy. All unnecessary offices would be abolished; public agents would be subject to accountability; there would be no large appropriations; the budget would be balanced; men would have to comport themselves with simplicity without any pretensions to aristocracy.⁴⁶

NOAH AS BELLETRIST

With the rise of the State of Israel, many Jews saluted Noah as the first American Zionist. Historians of American Jewry have also emphasized the significance of this journalist as American Jewry's first professional writer, as an accomplished belletrist—this in a generation which produced Isaac Harby, Jacob N. Cardozo, Dr. Elias Marks, S. B. H. Judah, Jonas B. Phillips, Dr. D. L. M. Peixotto, and Penina Moïse. Noah did write well; the irascible John Quincy Adams confided to his diary that Noah was a "sprightly writer." An editor of the *Tribune* (Horace Greeley?) referred to him as "one of the most brilliant, spirited, and graceful paragraphists in the country." Aside from his work as a journalist, as a popular orator who published provocative "discourses," and as a dramatist, what did Noah write? In 1809, the twenty-year-old aspiring litterateur had reissued an edition of the first volume of Charlotte Ramsay Lennox's *Shake[s]peare Illustrated* [sic]. Noah added some critical notes and biographical sketches of the writers whose books had served as sources for Shakespeare's plays. Ten years later, he brought out his *Travels*—the same year he helped establish *The New York Literary Journal and Belles Lettres Repository* and probably contributed to it. Noah's *Essays of Howard on Domestic Economy* first appeared in 1820; they were republished in 1845 and 1847 as *Gleanings from a Gathered Harvest*. Some of the articles in these later editions may not have been his; as a protagonist of the South and its way of life, he also thought it wise to omit an earlier essay in which he had opposed the traffic in slaves.

The Poughkeepsie Casket, a literary journal, contains an article by Noah. One of his literary sketches was picked up and republished in *The Literary Chronicle Weekly Review* of London. He almost became a historian of American Jewry in 1841 when he began collecting material to write an

account of the Jew in the Revolutionary War. What a pity that he did not persist in his enterprise. Apparently none of the data he gathered has survived. Another project of his—there must have been many—was a publication of a *National Volume*, which was to be nothing less than an anthology of the finest writings of notable Americans. As a litterateur proud of his work, he could not fail to be concerned with the problems of protecting writers. In 1837, he joined other men of letters in presenting a memorial to the national government praying for an alteration of the law regulating copyrights. Among the other signatories were S. F. B. Morse, the artist and later inventor of the telegraph, William Dunlap, the playwright, and Longfellow, the poet.⁴⁷

NOAH AND THE THEATRE

Noah will always live in American history as an early dramatist of some distinction. He was no more than eleven, a youngster in New York, when he began to evince an interest in the theatre. Still a teenager, but now in Philadelphia, he became very active in an amateur theatrical group, editing plays for his fellow-devotees and helping produce them. Admission was free. Noah saved his money and bought a season's ticket for the professional theatre. The theatre was for him an institution of social significance, a view which many at that time rejected, convinced as they were that the stage encouraged immorality. Seeing a good play, said Noah, always improved him. The theatre kept youth off the streets and out of the taverns. In 1808, the budding dramatist wrote a two-act historical drama adapted from the French opera, *Leonora*. He called the piece *The Fortress of Sorrento*. It was never produced, but was published—replete with a quotation from Virgil on the title page—by David Longworth, of New York, in his *Dramatic Repository* series. Longworth paid Noah by giving him a complete collection of all the plays in the *Repository*. Thus Noah now had the beginnings of a good theatrical library. Young Noah's drama may well be the first published belletristic work of an American Jew. By 1812, he was in Charleston and, by his own account, cutting a wide swath. There he wrote a melodrama for a very charming actress. It was a "breeches" part. She was bound to do well in it; she was plump and had beautiful golden hair and a dazzling white complexion. He called this play *Paul and Alexis, or The Orphans of the Rhine*, and it was his first play to be produced, first in Charleston, then in New York, and later in London. After its Charleston debut, the play, reworked by others, was given a new title, *The Wandering Boys of the Castle of Olival*. In the next generation, in its new guise, the drama appeared on the stage very frequently and was enjoyed by audiences as far south as New Orleans.

Noah's most productive years as a dramatist were from 1819 to 1822 when he dashed off four plays. The first was a historical drama which he

called *She Would Be a Soldier, or The Plains of Chippewa*—the story of a woman who, disguised as a soldier, followed her lover into camp, was apprehended, and was about to be shot when her sweetheart saved her. The play deals with the battle of Chippewa, one of the few occasions in the War of 1812 when the United States army emerged victorious; by 1866, this drama of adventure and suspense had been produced at least eighty times. Two performances at one time brought in nearly \$2,400, though one may well question if Noah ever derived any financial benefit from this or any other of his plays. When *She Would Be a Soldier* was put on the boards in New Orleans, a reviewer there wrote: "When our country can boast of such writers as Mr. Noah, we see no necessity our importing British literature and British plays by the bale and by the hoghead."⁴⁸

Because the heroism of the American sailors in the Barbary Wars captured the imagination of theatregoers here, one can understand why Noah wrote *The Siege of Tripoli* in 1820. This was a benefit performance for the author, but here, too, he was not to enjoy the fruits of his labor; the theatre burnt down immediately after the show was over. The generous Noah gave his purse to the actors. The same drama was produced in Philadelphia, but under the title of *Yusef Carmalli*. No copy of the manuscript has been preserved. The following year, editor Noah wrote *Marion, or The Hero of Lake George*, a three-act drama of the Revolutionary War. Like Washington Harby's *Tutoona*, it dealt with the battle of Saratoga, where the Americans had compelled Burgoyne and his army to surrender. The play was produced on November 25, Evacuation Day, to commemorate the departure of the British from New York, which they had occupied in 1776. The military showed up in force, helping to pack the house; it is said that a crowd of 2,000 was present. Well over a hundred years later, the drama was revived by the students of Columbia University. *Marion* was followed in 1822 by *The Grecian Captive, or The Fall of Athens*, a play in blank verse about the struggle of the Greeks to regain their freedom from the Turks. In contemplating the brave Greeks, Americans proudly relived their battles with the British. All told Noah was to write about a dozen plays, among them a number which he called "interludes" and which all had backgrounds in American history as their titles eloquently testify: *The Siege of Yorktown*, *The Erie Canal*, *New York State and Its Constitution of 1822*.⁴⁹

Most of Noah's plays were written hurriedly, in a few days, for a special occasion or for a favored actor. On the whole, judging from the number of performances which some of them enjoyed, he was a successful playwright; they were often good box office. A typical cultural nationalist, Noah wished to further American drama in a day when many here still preferred European scripts. Although writers and dramatists in this country frequently adapted productions from European models, most

Americans sought to emancipate themselves from British tutelage in theatrical matters. Men of Noah's generation were to write about 150 plays on the American Revolutionary War alone in the decades before the Civil War. They were thrilled with their own achievements. For Noah, too, the theme of rebellion and freedom was to dominate his dramas; the golden thread that runs through all four plays in the years 1819-1822 was the triumph of liberty, the defeat of tyranny. His plays never failed to point a moral; they were preachy, moralistic; they dealt with justice, heroism, respect if not reverence for women. When, in 1833, cousin Jonas B. Phillips dedicated one of his plays to him, he said that Noah had advanced the American drama. This was true, for the major had furthered the art in every sense of the term. His was an avid interest shared by many Jews throughout the United States; it is an involvement that has persisted to the present day.⁵⁰

NOAH: THE TOTAL MAN IN RETROSPECT

What was the nature of the man, the journalist, the public servant, the playwright, the drama critic, this Zionist, this Jew? He was a fighter like his grandfather, Jonas Phillips, who lived again in the grandson. Noah displayed inner strength and energy; he was audacious, a quick thinker, a clever conversationalist, an excellent orator, a fine writer. In the larger general community, he always had to struggle against odds because of his religion; prejudice against Jews in the early nineteenth century was constant. Without means, though not without friends and family, he learned to survive as a journalist in a highly competitive field. He yearned for a career in politics, but fate was not kind to him; some of his contemporaries thought him a dreamer, naive, not crafty enough to survive. Noah was never involved in any questionable financial deals; within the limitations of his time, class, and professional politics, he was a good citizen, one with strong conservative leanings. Conscious of the American consensus, he believed that Jews must be careful not to violate the religious sensibilities of their neighbors. This was a Christian country.

In no sense was he an eccentric, as some would imply. If he assumed grandiloquent titles, then in this he was no more orotund than the Masons. The orator Noah had a tendency to exploit his Judaism vis-à-vis the Christians, who were almost always theologically prurient; he set out deliberately to cultivate the followers of Jesus; he thought it good public relations, good apologetics, and in many respects it was. Many religious Christians admired him. *The Asmonean* obituary included a quotation from *The Evening Mirror* of New York. Noah, said the editors, was a zealous Jew, but "a practical Christian." In a way he was a real pioneer, for he was one of the first Jews to enter forcefully into the life of the larger general community and yet remain a loyal Jew, active in all things that con-

cerned his people. Every Jew in every decade has to effect a personal synthesis of Americanism and Judaism; this has been going on for three centuries. The confluence of cultures will vary with every individual of course; the emphases are rarely balanced. Stress will be either on the American or the Judaic aspect of one's life. Noah, a loyal Jew, nevertheless wanted to stay close to the Protestants or, more exactly, to the Protestant-tinged American civil religion.⁵¹

Until his death in 1851, Noah was unquestionably the best-known Jewish layman in this country. This was due to his writings, his articulateness, his relationships with Christians. It would appear, at first glance, that the major would have been an integral part of New York's Jewish elite, the group who "controlled" the country's largest Jewish community. This is not necessarily true; one may well question whether he was, in fact, a trusted member of the power structure in the city's Spanish-Portuguese Jewish community. In the eyes of the Christians and of most Jews, too, he was a leader. Was he a great Jew? That is a different question. Great is a relative term. He was competent; he enjoyed high visibility in his own day. From a twentieth-century perspective, Leeser is more important than the New York editor. It was imperative for early nineteenth-century Jewry that there be a Leeser. For the present-day historian, the devout, dedicated Philadelphia minister looms large. There was no one else in his generation to carry on the work which was so essential for Jewish survival. Religiously, Noah was of no real significance.

It is worthy of mention that there is no extensive obituary of Noah by Leeser in the *Occident*. This is very strange. Jealousy? Possibly. It is probable that Leeser did not think too much of the man as a Jew, though he surely realized how important he was as a public figure, as his people's champion. Though not devout, Noah was not a marginal Jew. He sincerely wished to aid his coreligionists, particularly the oppressed who lived abroad. He talked of bringing them here, or if that was not to be, he was eager to see them go to Palestine and live a full life there either as emancipated citizens or in a state of their own. Noah was possessed of a strong ethnic sense, yet the motivations that impelled him were philanthropic, not nationalistic. In essence, in the bosom of his family he was a good husband, kind and generous, a decent human being, but not one consumed with the passion of a great moral ideal. This seems to be the consensus of the Jews and Gentiles who knew him well.

THE GENERAL CULTURE OF THE AMERICAN JEW: A REVIEW AND SOME AFTERTHOUGHTS

American cultural advancement during the years 1776-1840 cannot be divorced from European influence. British North America and the early

American republic were cultural satellites of Europe till the second half of the nineteenth century. Europe in that day was luxuriating in a Golden Age. Europe's Jews, too, after the French Revolution and the Napoleonic conquests, entered into a new cultural world; individuals speedily became eminent as writers, poets, novelists, musicians, economists, publicists, philosophers, orientalists, and physicians. Relatively little of this intellectual explosion is reflected in the general culture either of American Gentiles or Jews. European critics, not unmoved by malice, looked with contempt upon the United States and its literary accomplishments. Even an American intellectual like Emerson once said that "there was not a book, a speech, a conversation or a thought in the State of Massachusetts during the years 1790 and 1820." This is of course an exaggeration, yet it is indicative of the low esteem in which an eminent American could hold the achievements of his fellow citizens. The criticisms were true to a degree. By present standards, the public schools were certainly inadequate; many children received no education whatsoever; two-thirds of the Americans in Vincennes could not read, and students at West Point had to use some French textbooks for lack of English ones. It is estimated that, before the year 1800, fewer than 100 good books had been published in the United States.⁵³

Nonetheless, cultural advances were made in this country during this period—there was a growing interest in medicine; there were many good private academies; colleges and professional schools were making their appearance; institutions of higher learning for women were established. There were hundreds of lyceums, an assortment of libraries for the masses and the elite; newspapers, magazines, literary reviews were published. This was a generation that witnessed the rise of learned societies. People began to manifest skills and interests in sculpture, architecture, music, opera, drama, theatre. There were excellent landscape artists, historical painters, portraitists; possibly as many as 2,500 people sat for Sully. The country had writers, pamphleteers, and political scientists like Thomas Paine, Jefferson, and Madison. This was the period in American history that was to record the rise of utopian colonies, Unitarianism, Transcendentalism. It cannot be denied that most readers preferred English authors to American, but this was also the age when the native classicists of the next generation were beginning to feel their way: Washington Irving, Cooper, Hawthorne, Emerson, Poe, Bancroft, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Bryant, Longfellow, Whittier. Let American historians stop beating their breasts—the United States was in no sense a cultural wilderness. By 1790, there was a foundry in America that could supply typefaces for Hebrew, Arabic, Syriac, and other learned languages. Many Americans were culturally nationalistic, but in a constructive sense, eager to create a literature and a civilization that would bespeak America at its best. For political and

psychological reasons, they were impatient to emancipate themselves from England, to counter the accusation—often enough true—that they were a provincial people.⁵⁴

IMMIGRANTS AND NATIVES

If it were possible, it would be helpful to determine the degree to which the typical Jewish shopkeeper—not the Jewish notables!—participated in the general culture and to compare the advances in learning and aesthetics made by middle-class Jews with those of Gentiles of the same station. Attempting an answer to this question requires a distinction to be made between immigrants and natives. In the early nineteenth century, there were a few university-trained newcomers, particularly physicians. The typical immigrant had very little secular schooling, for very few opportunities had been available back home where Jews were second-class citizens. Had the situation in Europe been otherwise he would not have braved this frontier. Illiteracy, however, seems to have been rare. There were illiterate women and had always been some in this country since colonial days. Even Mrs. Azuby, wife of the Charleston minister (1785-1805), could not sign her name. Still, most immigrants were literate; though a substantial number seem to have been uncouth. Chancellor Robert R. Livingston, a member of the committee which drafted the Declaration of Independence, once asked Rabbi Seixas with whom in his congregation the clergyman could carry on a conversation. The incident implies that the immigrants were relatively numerous and uncultured. Seixas himself referred to some of his flock as a motley crew. There were a few ambitious immigrants who were eager to improve themselves culturally; these men were the men who stood out, who acquired learning, who became philanthropists and Masons of high degree. They raised themselves up, as it were, by their own bootstraps. There were definitely one or two such persons in every town.⁵⁵

The Jewish native-born were determined to pursue secular studies because learning improved one's chance for a livelihood; education enhanced status. In 1779, Mordecai Sheftall, who had been a quartermaster general in the armies of Georgia and was then a prisoner of the British, wrote his wife Frances: "Put the poor children in school that they may not be intierly lost in this corrupt age." Culture among the natives was of varying degrees. Lower middle class Jews sent their children to the various free schools, even though they resented the inevitable Christian orientation; possessing scanty means, they had scant choice. Such Jewish all-day schools as existed were expensive, inadequate—and relatively short-lived. Middle-class and upper-class Jews frequently patronized Christian schools despite their denominational character. The typical America-born

Jew could read and write passably well and even possessed a small library. His secular culture was often in inverse ratio to his commitment to ritual and observance. If a native was strongly influenced by the Enlightenment, its rationalism and skepticism, then as a rule he was less committed theologically; he was a constant reader of secular works. Theologically, Jews were influenced by concepts and phrases emanating from the Protestants, the dominant status group. Protestantism and civil religion were closely related; the Jews nearly always tended to follow the dictates of the latter. The push toward assimilation, however, was retarded by the rejection to which Jews were exposed. In addition, a positive reason driving Jews to resist lay in the many substantial advantages in remaining part of a protective Jewish community and enjoying social-welfare security. Jewish identification was a comforting psychological haven.⁵⁶

There was a tremendous change in American Jewry from 1776 to 1840 where general education was concerned. When the Revolution began, all Jews were still disabled politically, and their education at best was limited to the three R's. By 1840, there were many Jews who were interested in the arts and sciences. Barnard Jacobs, a circumciser and petty businessman, had kept his circumcision records in Hebrew; his knowledge of English was limited. His son Solomon was a highly literate, cultured Virginian, a good writer, and a one-time mayor of Richmond. Acculturation proceeded in the United States with almost shocking rapidity. Was the typical native-born Jewish businessman better educated than his Gentile rival? Available data and methodologies can neither prove nor disprove this. The evidence suggests that the Jew was at least the equal of the Gentile intellectually and culturally. In attempting an evaluation of the cultural achievements of both immigrants and natives, it is advisable to divide the Jews into two groups: the first is the typical Jewish businessman with sufficient schooling to run his shop or carry on his trade. There were others—a minority, to be sure—who were reaching out to improve and advance themselves intellectually. It did not take even a generation to make a generous, respected Charleston gentleman out of a Polish immigrant. This phenomenon would repeat itself constantly in American Jewish history, particularly in the twentieth century when some of the impoverished Russian-Polish newcomers would ultimately become college professors or men of notable achievement in American culture.

Culturally aspiring men in the early national period were interested in the arts and sciences; individuals became officers of scientific societies. Jews were booksellers and publishers, graphic artists, owners of art galleries, songwriters. Jews, almost exclusively males, began attending the colleges and universities, the University of Pennsylvania, Harvard, Yale. A few, but very few, became academicians; denominational schools—as most were—did not welcome Jewish instructors to the faculties of the

arts and sciences until the second half of the twentieth century. In general, however, Jews were slow to matriculate in the schools of higher learning; traditionally, Jewish youth went into trade at the age of thirteen. Colleges offered Jews little unless they were prepared to study law or medicine; by 1840, however, there were quite a number of men in the professions. Writers of a sort now made their appearance. Bibliographies of these decades record sermons, a history of the Florida Indian War, orations, theological works, polemics, apologetics, dramas, Hebrew grammars, an anti-conversionist magazine, legal digests, and commercial compendia. Works on medicine and the sciences, on travel, on poetry, were published; a treatise on economics appeared as well as translations of Old World literature and an anthology of prose and verse.

Individuals prided themselves on the libraries they owned and supported the semi-public library associations. These cultural traditions among Jews can be traced back to colonial days. In writing to a son, Abigail Franks told "Dear Heartsey" (Naphtali) to take off two mornings a week to read, an hour every day at least. After the Jews were accorded political rights, some took advantage of the growing tolerance; opportunities began to open. There were always men, women also, in the towns and villages who were reading; members of the middle class, they found the time to improve themselves. New sources are constantly being unearthed, showing their concern for belles lettres and the fine arts. Adeline Myers, of Norfolk, was an accomplished woman; she wrote beautifully; her brothers, John and Samuel, were much interested in local theatrical productions. The South Carolinian, Philip Melvin Cohen, became secretary and treasurer of the Friendship Literary Society in 1825; Uriah H. Judah (b. 1810), of whom almost nothing is known, was a contributor in 1839 to the *Temperance Talisman*; a kinsman of his, De Witt Clinton Judah, wrote for *The Poughkeepsie Casket*.⁵⁷

The Jewish intelligentsia varied in its religious interests: Rebecca Gratz was over on the right; Leeser was in the center; Noah was left of center; Isaac Harby was on the left. The colonial Jew Joseph Solomon Ottolenghe (d. 1775), a convert to Christianity and a member of the American Philosophical Society, had written on the breeding of the silk worm. Dr. David de Isaac Cohen Nassy, the Philadelphia physician, a member of the same Society in the 1790's and author of a study on yellow fever, was a Deist. As writers, Jews were culturally Americanistic; with exceptions, they felt they owed no loyalty to those lands where they had been deprived of the Rights of Man. They were devoted to America because of what the country had done for them; for the first time in their lives, if they were immigrants, they found themselves free men and women. Even in his role as a political proto-Zionist, even as he talked of setting up a tiny Jewish colony on Grand Island, the messianic Noah was always strongly American.⁵⁸

Noah said, in a note to his 1818 *Discourse*, that the weight of Jewish talent here in this country was in the Southern states. Was his claim true? A case can be made out for the South. It is a fact that there were quite a number of individuals there who studied the classics and modern languages; it is true, too, that the South then sheltered a large percentage of American Jews, probably as much as half. Charleston, in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, was the country's largest Jewish community. Were there fewer immigrants in the South? Was acculturation speedier there? Apparently there was more homogeneity in that region, more acceptance by Jews of the dominant Gentile American mores. Jews in the South deliberately patterned themselves on what they deemed to be the genteel tradition; individuals built up good libraries and ran good private schools; they sought and received civic appointments; they were elected to public office and cultivated their talents in order to justify the municipal and communal honors which they received. For Southern Jewish intellectuals, making a living was of course important, but learning, gentility, the amenities, local patriotism were always high-ranking desiderata. When in 1858 a wealthy Charleston merchant sought a governess, he laid down the following requirements in a letter to Leaser: she must be well-educated, know French, be able to teach music and painting, and possess the ability to cultivate the moral sense among the children. (But, in seeking a governess, this gentleman turned to the North!)⁵⁹

The qualities of the well-bred became part of the "Charleston Diaspora" whose members were found as far north as New York and as far west as San Francisco. Talented Charlestonians like the Harbys, Philip Phillips, and a number of others left for greener pastures. Myer Moses, one of them, went to New York where he found Dr. Peixotto, Isaac Gomez, S. B. H. Judah, the Jonas Phillips clan, and the multi-faceted Noah. There was also a handful of university-trained Germans who preferred to remain in the North. By the late 1820's, New York had become the national metropolis. In the North, the academies and the colleges were better; the number of Southern Jewish students who matriculated in them was substantial. In the South, the Jews admired the landed, "aristocratic" planters; their compatriots in the North patterned themselves on the merchant princes. The emphasis in the North may have been less on learning and more on business and industry; the bourgeois democratic tradition was stronger in that part of the country. To repeat, was Noah right? Was there more talent in the South? The evidence is not conclusive. There was a different type of talent in the North, but there were many cultured Jews there. They seem to have been less partisan politically, to have put less emphasis on the literature of the past; they faced the future with its numerous cultural and industrial challenges.⁶⁰

From the vantage point of America as a whole, what—if anything—did the Jew contribute to general culture during the years 1776-1840? In the history of the United States, the Jews of that day do not stand out as belletrists, as poets, historians, great journalists, technologists, inventors, scientists. Yet, relatively speaking, the group as a whole had made very real advances in the years since Lexington and Concord, advances in literature, music, the arts, law, medicine, the social sciences. In some of these areas, there were some good names; they stand out especially in journalism and in the theatre. By the 1830's, the plays of five Jewish dramatists had appeared on the boards in several cities—and this at a time when Jews numbered less than one in a thousand. It is not too much to say that this urban group was culturally aware and productive.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

REJECTION OF THE JEW: THE STATE 1776-1840

THE SOURCE OF JUDEOPHOBIA IN THE UNITED STATES

While visiting in Charleston, President James Monroe attended a performance of Isaac Harby's *Alberti*. In a way, his attendance at the theatre may be looked upon as an apology by Monroe to Harby. Three years earlier, Harby had written a strongly worded letter to Monroe, then Secretary of State, reproaching him for recalling Mordecai M. Noah. Noah's removal from his consulate at Tunis in 1815 may or may not have been prompted mainly by anti-Jewish prejudice, but there can be no question that hostility to Jews was common enough in America during the early national period. Leeser said that every Gentile, everywhere, hated Jews—a strong indictment, but then Leeser, though only twenty-four at this time, was not a happy man.¹

The sources of American Judeophobia are many. Most Americans were xenophobic, and Jewish apartness invited prejudice; Jews in those days rarely intermarried and were the country's only non-Christians—the only infidels. There were Christians and Jews, too, who believed God himself was responsible for Jewish misfortunes. Some Christians insisted that Jews were being punished for rejecting Jesus; Leeser, reflecting a much older rabbinic dictum, implied at times that God frowned upon his Chosen People because they had flouted His Law. The Virginian Rebecca Samuel, an intelligent observer, wrote that the Jews were the architects of their own fortunes: Jews behaved badly; some of them were guilty of disgraceful conduct as Jewish religionists. The German Gentiles here, added Rebecca, are anti-Jewish which can certainly be documented from other sources. When in 1782 America's Jewish exiles assembled in Philadelphia during the War, they set out to build a synagog. The Reformed German Congregation, Christians, let the Jews know without equivocation that they were not to build their house of worship near the church. But Judeophobia was not a made-in-America product. It was a transatlantic import,

part of the intellectual and emotional baggage of the first immigrants. Its ultimate sources were the New Testament and, even earlier, the Hellenistic mind-set and literature. The Gospels have been—still are—very persuasive as dramatic stories of a good man done to death by his own people. Throughout these narratives, the Jews are pictured as the classical villains. The pious and the not-so-pious read the New Testament and looked askance at the Jews, remembered even after 1800 years as the children of those who had crucified God himself. A caveat: the fact that anti-Jewishness may have many sources would seem to imply that the actual cause cannot be determined with precision.²

THE ECONOMY AS A SOURCE OF PREJUDICE

For some Gentiles, dislike of the Jew was rooted in economic competition. There were always people who resented, exaggerated, and envied the financial successes of their neighbors, particularly their Jewish neighbors. For many, all through this period, the word “Jew” was a code word for the man who gained wealth unscrupulously. In attacking Robert Morris in 1782, Arthur Lee said that Morris had made the public trust subservient to his private speculations and had “become as rich as a Jew.” The Jew was seen as avaricious, a miser, a financial manipulator, a fraudulent bankrupt, a cheat. The 1820’s found children and kindly Americans singing ballads which stressed the greed of the Jew. This negative image was highlighted by the belles lettres of the day. The Jews were depicted as very rich; American papers informed their readers that Jewish bankers had already purchased Jerusalem; they were about to resettle the Jews in Palestine, and once they took over, the Holy Land would bloom again. By the 1830’s, the Rothschild myth was part of American folklore; this clan controlled Europe; its reach extended to Washington. The family was wealth hypostasized. And who was this Rothschild? Among his forebears were Judas Iscariot and Shylock, too! Hamilton’s fiscal policies, wrote a disgruntled Revolutionary War veteran, would make it possible for spies and Jews to ride in coaches!³

POLITICAL PREJUDICE

Economic envy of Jews has persisted till the present day. Remaining anti-Jewish political disabilities were finally repealed in the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century. In some cases, past political discrimination against Jews had been motivated by economic rivalries, religious prejudice, and various forms of sociocultural rejection. Except for a few irritating pinpricks, the federal government and the states, by 1840, had accorded Jews full political equality in all commonwealths except New Hampshire,

Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, and North Carolina. The federal Constitution of 1787 gave Jews all rights on a federal level, a great step forward. The delegates were not unaware that this organic statute would help Catholics, Jews, and other dissenters, though this was not a prime goal for the lawmakers; their principal motivation in the area of religion was to keep peace between warring Protestant sects.

Men like Madison knew that the new federal Constitution did not and could not remove the restraints individual states imposed on Jews and other sectarians. Madison and his friends wanted an amendment to the effect that no state could violate the rights of conscience; religious immunities for all were to be secured against the encroachments of the states. This proposed amendment was rejected in the Senate. Thus the adoption of the Constitution in 1788 was not the last, but actually the first step in the struggle for a more complete political and spiritual enfranchisement of several American religious groups. Article VI and the first amendment of the Constitution protected Jews only on the federal level. The provisions were specific: No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States; Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. In the original thirteen states, still virtually sovereign in their legislation, Jews had to wait a long time before they achieved all rights. The process went faster in the new commonwealths carved out of the transallegheeny lands. The Northwest Ordinance of July 13, 1787, was clear: No person shall ever be molested on account of his worship or religious sentiments. This principle laid down in the Ordinance was ultimately applied to all the new states admitted to the Union. No problem was encountered on the score of granting Jews equality. In all the new lands and new commonwealths, Jews were few in number; most people were unaware of their presence.⁴

Some members of the constitutional convention were willing to tolerate political equality for all religionists on a federal level, but refused to do so on a state level. In *Israel Vindicated*, one of the pseudonymous correspondents wrote:

I confess, dear Isaacs, that I have hitherto been much deceived as to the boasted liberty of conscience enjoyed in this country. When I contemplated the language of the general constitution, which distinctly states, that every citizen is to be held eligible to fill public offices, without regard to his religious opinions, I had no idea that a principle, which all the states had recognized collectively as a leading bond of their union, could have been so easily invaded by *particular states*.⁵

New York was an exceptional state inasmuch as it gave Jews full rights almost immediately; freedom had come to the Jews in the Empire State in a hurry in 1777, but it took a decade to emancipate them in Virginia.

Virginia's 1776 constitution declared oracularly that "all men are entitled to the free exercise of religion" and hastened to add the admonition—no confessional limitation or disability—that it was the "mutual duty of all to practice Christian forbearance." This latter phrase, Patrick Henry's, remained in Virginia's constitutions as late as the twentieth century.⁶

The concepts of the state's Bill of Rights, however, were to find their way into the constitutions of various American commonwealths and into the political vocabulary of some of Europe's liberals. The Anglican church was disestablished in 1779, not even a decade after Christian dissenters in this very state had been persecuted because of their beliefs and practices. An attempt to make Christianity the religion of Virginia and to tax all citizens to support the church of their choice failed. Whether Jews would have been excused from the religious impost is moot. Church and state were now separated. The issue was not fought with any specific group in mind; though Jefferson knew full well that Jews and other infidels would benefit, it was fought out on the basis of principle, and the Jews of the Old Dominion were accorded all rights. This new law was important; its influence was reflected in the new federal Constitution, in the first amendment, and in the political goals of French liberals. French Jewry was finally emancipated in 1790 and 1791; in the following decades, other European lands were impelled to grant rights and immunities to their Jewries which were still laboring under centuries-old restrictions.⁷

Like the other original states—with the exception of New York—Georgia in its first constitution (1777) barred Jews from high office. A few years later, in 1785, Christianity was formally established; all Christian churches, including the Catholic, were to be supported by state taxes. The year before, in 1784, an anti-Jewish brochure had made its appearance—*Cursory Remarks on Men and Measures in Georgia*, published anonymously, distributed at night, and signed *A Citizen*. The Jews, so the author said, have no right to seek redress in the courts; they are aliens. These people have no interest in the welfare of the state; their sole objective in life is to make money. These Jews, who once practiced ritual murder, now want to impose Judaism on the Americans as the religion of the land; they would love to declare Christianity a capital heresy. The author denied that he was intolerant: he numbered one Jewish family among his best friends. It is obvious that he was thinking of the Minises. This sorry screed was answered early in January, 1785, by *A Real Citizen*, the Jew, Colonel Mordecai Sheftall. This Revolutionary War veteran denounced the anonymous author—he surely knew who he was—as a former Loyalist who had been imprisoned for treasonable practices. Under suspicion for anti-Whig activities, the Loyalist sought to condemn recognized patriots by identifying them as Jews. This was the classical diversionary ma-

neuver, the “smear” tactic, although probably ineffective this time since Savannah’s Jews were socially and culturally entrenched. Georgia’s 1789 constitution, adopted shortly after a majority of the states had already approved of the federal Constitution, opened all offices to Jews. The anonymous author of *Cursory Remarks* had complained in 1784 that the Jews were already active in the political process. This is probably true; at times statutory law may merely confirm established practice.⁸

South Carolina adopted three constitutions before rejecting its Anglican traditions and according liberties to Jews. Strangely, the 1776 constitution had been written by a constituent convention that included the Jew Francis Salvador and then proceeded to deny him the right to hold office. A few months later, while fighting for his country and his state, he was fatally wounded by Indians on the western frontier. On the whole, South Carolina, including Charleston, was Whig in sentiment; Jews were notable patriots and good soldiers, yet they had to wait for almost a decade after the fighting had ceased before they received the political recognition which they sought. A month after South Carolina Jews were emancipated, they wrote a letter to President Washington emphasizing the impact of the glorious revolution which “has raised us from the state of political degradation.” The phrase was an extravagant one; they were acknowledging the fact that the federal and some state governments had accepted them as full-fledged citizens.⁹

Several states had adopted organic laws in 1776. Pennsylvania’s new governing statute of that year was more liberal than South Carolina’s which still required a Protestant test for high office. Pennsylvania accepted all Christians; even Catholics could qualify. Democracy was extending itself, although Jews were still excluded from the magic circle. If the electorate was not moving rapidly to the left, that was understandable; the voters were not prepared psychically to reverse the thinking of centuries; they were still rooted in centuries of negative, anti-Jewish stereotypes. The original draft of the 1776 Pennsylvania constitution incorporated no more than a mild theistic test. When this became known there were immediate, indignant protests. Jews, Turks, et al., complained the Lutheran leader Henry Melchior Muehlenberg, would rule this country; America would become another Sodom. Another opponent said that the United States would be “unsafe for Christians.” Still another wrote that America would become an asylum for all the fugitive Jesuits, blasphemers of Christ, and outcasts of Europe. Protestant piety won out, and the final text adopted insisted on a test oath affirming belief in the New Testament.¹⁰

Unhappy to see themselves denied the right to hold office, Philadelphia’s Jews waited until the war was over and in 1783 moved to remedy the inequity. A committee of Jews hired a lawyer to study what other

states had done by reading and analyzing the recently published *Constitutions of the Several Independent States of America*. In December, the committee addressed a memorial to the state Council of Censors, which had been charged to safeguard the liberties of the citizens. The protesting Jews pointed out that the Declaration of Rights assured them of all liberties enjoyed by others, that they had fought to make this country free, that they furthered trade and paid their taxes. The accusation was implicit: this was taxation without representation. If this injustice is to persist, Jews from abroad will not settle here but will opt for a free New York. The December, 1783, memorial apparently accomplished nothing, but important is the fact that the Jews here fought for their rights. Was this the first time that they stood up? No. They had bared their fangs at the bigoted Stuyvesant as early as the 1650's. In January, 1786, some years before Pennsylvania's Jews were emancipated the French minister to the United States said that the Jews, still shackled politically, hoped one day to become members of the state legislature. He was probably right, though no son of Father Abraham had as yet been seated in any state assembly.

In 1787, only New York and Virginia had "emancipated" the Jews, though political equality had also been proclaimed for all future settlers in the Northwest Territory. Jonas Phillips, a Philadelphia stormy petrel, wrote that year to the federal constituent convention, asking it to revoke the test oath in Pennsylvania's 1776 frame of government. Phillips must have heard that the assembled delegates would prohibit any religious test for office and no doubt thought—logically, but incorrectly—that the new federal government would have the authority to override any test imposed by states. (Actually the delegates, meeting secretly, had already adopted an article dispensing with any religious test for federal office.) Phillips wanted the Pennsylvanians to abide by their own 1776 Declaration of Rights. The Jews, he said forthrightly, had been faithful Whigs; they had bravely fought and bled for a liberty which they were now not allowed to enjoy. Obviously, Phillips did not know that the new federal constitution already drafted would not permit the federal authorities to control the political conduct of the sovereign states. Phillips's letter remained unacknowledged; two years later as a Pennsylvania constitutional convention met again, Phillips wrote once more on behalf of the Jews; his letter was laid on the table, but the new test oath of 1790 was one to which conscientious Jews could subscribe.¹¹

Delaware's 1776 constitution, like that of neighboring Pennsylvania, required a Christian test oath for office, but two years after Pennsylvania adopted its 1790 basic statute the three Lower Counties followed suit. Vermont, an independent republic before its admission into the Union in 1791, had already promulgated two Protestant organic statutes. In 1793, a new one was adopted granting full rights to all citizens, including Jews,

and thereby making Vermont the first New England state to assume a non-restrictive approach. But there was no question of the Protestant, Christian sympathies of the lawmakers; this constitution and the two preceding ones called upon all good citizens to observe the Lord's Day.

The emancipatory process slowed down in the 1790's. The Second Awakening, the Protestant renaissance, roused latent religious emotions and prejudices. Religionists, moving to the right, wanted to reserve the privileges of citizenship and office to Protestants alone. The excesses of the French Revolution confirmed Americans in their conservatism and their suspicion of infidels. The undeclared war against France in the 1790's as well as the two wars with Great Britain stimulated an American nationalism that identified good citizenship with white Anglo-Saxon Protestantism. This automatically excluded Jews. The constitution which Connecticut adopted in 1818 was its first, since prior to that time its citizens had lived under a colonial charter granted in 1662. Though no religious constraints were imposed on inhabitants by the new frame of government, it is obvious from the text that its architects were thinking only of Christians. It is not saying too much to maintain that electors in every state could think only in terms of Christians and Christianity. This insistence on the basic, underlying importance of Christianity in the body politic is intimated in a statement made by Daniel Webster in neighboring Massachusetts. When a constitutional convention met there in 1820, the distinguished statesman said that there should be some "recognition of the Christian religion." By 1843, there was no question that the Jews of Connecticut were deemed acceptable as citizens in the full sense of the term. They were then licensed to establish a congregation. It must not be forgotten, however, that, except for a brief period in Dutch New Amsterdam, Jews had never been forbidden in non-Iberian North America to establish congregations.¹²

MARYLAND

Prior to the adoption of Maryland's first state constitution in 1776, a Jew, in theory at least, could have been executed in the colony for denying the Trinity. Actually, there was no problem on this score in a colony which sheltered so very few Jews, although it may be that Jews did not think of immigrating to the settlement because of its intolerant character. The first state constitution declared that no one could hold office who did not affirm "belief in the Christian religion"—which, of course, disabled Jews and possibly, Deists. During the brief period that intervened before the federal naturalization laws were accepted by the state, foreign Jews could not even become citizens of Maryland. Even after 1776, the state had the right—at its discretion—to impose a tax on all inhabitants for the support

of Christian religious institutions; deniers of the Trinity still, in theory, faced the legal possibility of having their tongues bored through for expressing disbelief in this basic Christian doctrine. As late as 1748, the penalty had been inflicted on a Christian convicted of blasphemy. Under the Maryland organic statute, Jews could not serve as jurors, as militia officers, or even take the oath required of lawyers. Until 1847, a black could testify against a Jew, though not against a Christian. Rabbis were not authorized to perform marriages until the passage of the act of 1927, and Jews who worked on the Christian Lord's Day were, of course, subject to penalties.¹³

The handful of Jews in Baltimore had very early begun fighting for full and complete equality. As early as 1797, Solomon Etting and his father-in-law Barnard Gratz had presented a petition to the General Assembly praying that Jews be put on the "same footing" as other citizens. Old Barnard Gratz had experience in these matters. He had a mind of his own. In 1770, he had called the King's message to Parliament "foolishness." In 1783, he had been one of the leaders in the fight to eliminate the religious test required of civil magistrates in Pennsylvania, but all the petitions presented for several years by him and by others in Maryland accomplished nothing. It was not until 1816 that the struggle for equality was again renewed with vigor. By this time, a little Maryland Jewish community was well in the making—there were about 150 Jews. Some of the Jews were cultured, wealthy, and influential; they resented and feared the disabilities that still operated against them. The sons of Israel I. Cohen, who had moved up from Richmond, could have looked forward to any office in Virginia, but in Maryland they could look forward to none. Jews had served in the defense of Baltimore in the War of 1812; they were privileged to fight and die as privates in the rear rank, but they could never hope to be officers, if the letter of the law was actually observed. Despite the requirements of a Christian oath, Reuben Etting had served as captain of the Baltimore Independent Blues in 1798 at the time of the undeclared war with France.¹⁴

That the disabilities which the Jews fought were real and not merely academic shadows was made quite clear in 1823 when Benjamin I. Cohen—one of the numerous brothers of Maryland's most distinguished Jewish family of that generation—was elected captain of the Marion Corps of Riflemen, but was not allowed to assume command. (There was no war in the offing.) Ultimately, eager to retain him, the company decided to await the fate of the "Jew Bill" in the legislature before it elected a new commanding officer. In the meantime, the first lieutenant took over. All over the country, the struggle of the Maryland Jews for civil and political advancement was watched with keen interest and growing sympathy. The *Southern Patriot*, edited by Cardozo, compared Maryland to Germany,

where in 1819 Jews were abused. Noah in the *National Advocate* intimated that the opponents of the bill were friends of the Inquisition. Henry Marie Brackenridge's speech in defense of all those who could not in good conscience take the test oath, delivered in the House of Delegates on January 20, 1819, was published in pamphlet form by the Jews of Baltimore and widely distributed. A Baltimore Jewish boy, not yet thirteen years of age, was awarded the first prize in the local academy as the best student and as the outstanding moral personality of his class—yet, said Brackenridge, he could never hope to grace an office or accept an honor in his native state. Religion, he insisted, is a matter between a man and his God. Persecution because of dissenting religious opinion is tyranny. Disabling the Jew is a violation of the Maryland Bill of Rights of 1776 and the federal Constitution. He pointed to the irony that a Jew—who could not hold the pettiest office in Maryland—could become President of the United States. The Old Testament, he reminded the men in the backcountry, is the foundation of Christianity; Jesus was a Jew.¹⁵

The chief protagonist of Jewish equality, however, in the General Assembly was not the brilliant Brackenridge, whose father had done business with the Gratzes on the Pittsburgh frontier in the 1790's, but Thomas Kennedy (1776-1832). Kennedy, who had come from Scotland in 1796, was one of the choicest spirits in all American history, a merchant, a poet, a songwriter, a journalist, an ardent Jeffersonian. It was this romantic Scotsman, a member of the House of Delegates in 1817, who became the leader in the struggle to pass a bill "to extend to the sect of people professing the Jewish religion, the same rights and privileges that are enjoyed by Christians." He was a pious Presbyterian who knew no Jews personally but sought to give them equality, real essential equality, because of the inexorable demands of patriotism, religion, and morality. Jews who are to be restored by God himself to the Promised Land must be helped not persecuted. The present disabilities placed on them will repel immigrants of enterprise and capital. The bill which Kennedy helped sponsor was introduced December 21, 1818. The Jews, Kennedy was to argue, believe in God, a Maryland requirement; Jews are ready to swear on the Five Books of Moses; the federal Constitution imposes no religious test. This Jew Bill was defeated in the House on January 22, 1819; the vote was 50 to 26. Some newspapers said that this rejection of the Jews was reminiscent of the persecutions in Europe. Despite this defeat Kennedy, Brackenridge, and their associates Colonel William G. Worthington, John S. Tyson, all liberals, persisted in their efforts year after year. The opposition was bitter. A Mr. LeCompte of Dorchester, who voted against the bill, stated that "he did not think it proper or expedient to grant the rights and privileges which we enjoy, to a sect of people who do not associate with us, and who do not even eat at our table." Another

member of the legislature objected to the bill because, "it would encourage the Jews to come and dwell among us."¹⁶

Kennedy and his friends continued to introduce bills but made no progress until 1822-1823. A new version, broader in scope than earlier ones, included all who refused to take a test oath. After pointing out that any denial of political immunities on religious grounds violated both the state and the federal constitutions, Kennedy made the sweeping statement that it was unchristian to do so. He emphasized the fact that a Jew could not be a justice of the peace in Maryland, but could become Chief Justice of the United States. Most other states do grant the Jews freedom, he said, but he thought it the better part of wisdom not to list the commonwealths which were laggard. The 1822-1823 bill, which passed both houses, constitutionally required confirmation at a later session of the legislature. In the meantime, Kennedy, running for reelection, was attacked by a "Christian Ticket." He was called a Judas Iscariot who had betrayed his religion and his God; his own constituents failed to reelect him because of his espousal of the "Jew Bill." Others who voted for the 1822-1823 emancipatory act were also defeated; Kennedy was out of office till 1824.¹⁷

Why were the people of Maryland so opposed to the complete enfranchisement of Jews? It would seem that this opposition was strongly motivated by religious prepossessions. In the *Niles Weekly Register* of September 6, 1823, we have a report of a Benjamin Galloway's objection to any constitutional change in Maryland: "Preferring, as I do *Christianity to Judaism, Deism, Unitarianism*, or any other sort of *new fangled ISM*." Christian Ticket supporters were very probably aware that New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, and North Carolina would not open the highest offices to Jews. In colonial days, Catholics had labored under severer disqualifications than Jewish infidels; it was only in 1776 that the Maryland constitution gave Catholics the right to hold office. It is curious that Mordecai M. Noah believed the Catholics of the state were opposed to Jewish civil equality and so expressed himself in his *National Advocate* until he was corrected by Jacob I. Cohen, Jr. Cohen's letter pointed out that the Catholic Roger B. Taney—later Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court—had addressed the State Senate "in eloquent strains in favor of abolishing test oaths universally." Yet Noah, though a nativist, was no anti-Catholic, for he realized it was but a step to Judeophobia.¹⁸

The specific charge against the Jews of Maryland at this time was that they had crucified Jesus. Apparently little distinction was made between the Jerusalem Jews of the first century and their latter-day descendants in nineteenth-century Baltimore. They were the "enemies of Christianity" who threatened the beliefs of Christians and mocked the very existence of

Christianity; the state would be flooded with Turks and Jews; Maryland would become another Judea; Baltimore, another Jerusalem. Deep in the subconscious of many a bucolic assemblyman was the fear of effete Baltimore urbanites in sympathy with the emancipation bill. Anything the city people were for was automatically suspect, and the plea of the liberals that the Jews were wealthy and heavy taxpayers only confirmed the rustics in their stubborn resistance. The politically tolerant stressed not only the productive character of Baltimore's Jewish businessmen, but pleaded also for passage of the act as a means of stimulating Jewish migration to Maryland—necessary if the state was to meet the growing competition of its neighbors. These were the material arguments, but men like Kennedy and his friends expressed the hope that the passage of the bill would also be a blow to prevalent European political reaction, that its enactment was demanded by the spirit of true Christianity as exemplified in the life and work of Jesus and Paul, Jews after the flesh. America must continue to be the bright example of a land that offered equal rights and immunities to everyone.¹⁹

Passage of the act of January 29, 1823, was the first victory for the Jews and the forces of liberalism; they were eager for its confirmation. Before this time, the Jews had been working behind the scenes. Now they came out in the open. On January 8, 1824, they presented a memorial. This appeal of theirs was couched in universalistic, humanitarian terms; they wanted equality for all—not merely for Jews—who were politically disabled because of dissenting views. In their arguments the Jews leaned heavily on the federal Constitution; they pointed to the evils in reactionary Europe and stressed the importance of the transatlantic West as the hearth of freedom; church and state must be separated. The word "Jew" does not occur in this document. Did these Jews fight shy of it? No! Liberty is not a Jewish matter; it is the concern of all. Unfortunately for the protagonists, the confirmatory act was defeated that year by a vote of 44 to 28.²⁰

Undaunted, Kennedy was now back in the Assembly. Still another effort was made to revise the bill to make it acceptable. The more universal, all-inclusive bill guaranteeing rights to everyone was scrapped. It was obvious that pious Christians were bitterly opposed to freethinkers, and atheists; Jews, however, could be deemed theists, believers. A compromise act was passed on February 25, 1825, permitting all Jews who subscribed to a belief in "a future state of rewards and punishments" to take the oath. (This provision was copied from Pennsylvania's 1790 constitution.) Thus, in essence, a new test oath was proposed, and it was assumed that Jews could take it. Even this halfway measure was passed by a margin of but one vote on the last day of the session, when one-third of the members was absent. It was confirmed the following year on January 5, 1826.

Shortly afterwards, Jacob I. Cohen, Jr., and Solomon Etting, two of the prime supporters of the 1824 memorial, were elected to the First Branch of the Baltimore City Council. Earlier, however, on the very day the bill was enacted into law, Benjamin C. Howard had written to his friend Etting: "The stain upon the constitution of Maryland is blotted out forever, for in the march of the human mind it is impossible to recede." It took twenty-nine years to win the battle. Still not happy with the new test oath, Dr. Joshua I. Cohen fought in vain, in later years, to remove it from the constitutions of 1851 and 1867.²¹

MASSACHUSETTS, RHODE ISLAND, AND NEW JERSEY

Largely unresponsive to the liberal ferment in the Middle Atlantic States, the Bay State moved only hesitantly to the left. To be sure there was as yet no Jewish community in Boston. The Massachusetts constitution of 1780 established Protestant Christianity as the religion of the state; Catholics and Jews were disabled. Discussing the new federal Constitution of 1787, a Massachusetts militia officer shuddered, fearing lest Popery and the Inquisition be established in America. It was not until 1833 that religious tests for office were annulled; all religionists were now under the protection of the law, and Protestantism was in effect disestablished. Rhode Island, like Connecticut, had been governed by a British colonial charter granted in the 1660's; it did not adopt a constitution until 1842. Catholics had been emancipated by statute as early as 1783. The 1790 letter of the Rhode Island Jews sent to President Washington on his Newport visit exulted in the rights which they had received through "federal union." They mentioned that they were not suffering persecution; there was no prejudice, they had liberty of conscience and the rights of citizenship, civil and religious liberty. Nonetheless, they knew full well that they as Jews did not enjoy all these privileges; the State of Rhode Island itself still denied them political equality. This congratulatory address of the Newport Jews to Washington was certainly not without propagandistic intent. The Newport Jews gloried in the American freedoms: "affording to all . . . immunities of citizenship." But for another fifty-two years they were to remain without these very immunities in Rhode Island. Civil and religious liberties were finally granted to all citizens in 1842. The New Jersey constitution of July 2, 1776, prescribed that there be no establishment of any religious sect; everyone was granted freedom of worship, but the important offices were to be reserved to Protestants. A new constitution, adopted at Trenton in 1844, imposed no religious test as a qualification for office.²²

NORTH CAROLINA

As in New Jersey, so in North Carolina, the first constitution, framed by a special congress in 1776, held only Protestants eligible for office. Catholics and Jews were excluded, although there is no evidence that even a half-dozen Jewish families were to be found in North Carolina at that time. In 1788, a state convention was convoked to discuss the acceptance of the proposed federal Constitution. Several delegates were worried lest non-Protestants be elected to high office in the federal government; Governor Samuel Johnston thought there was little likelihood of a Jew becoming president. He admitted that the new federal Constitution might induce Jews to come to the United States, but in all probability their children would become Christians. The Reverend David Caldwell, an important Presbyterian minister, was unhappy that the Constitution stipulated no religious tests for office; this was an invitation to Jews and pagans to settle here in America and might at some future period endanger the character of the United States. Caldwell's prejudices, however, were directed mainly against Catholics. Another delegate said that a Catholic or a Moslem might even become president. In principle North Carolina wanted no state church; actually its citizens took for granted the de facto establishment of Protestant Christianity. In practice, however, they were ready to close their eyes if a qualified Catholic or Jew ran for office; indeed, in 1781 a Catholic was elected governor.²³

In 1808, Jacob Henry, a Jew, was elected to the House of Commons from Carteret County and took his seat without having taken a Christian oath. The following year saw Henry reelected. A gentleman of culture and education, Henry was the native-born son of a German Jewish immigrant, who had in all probability come to the colonies before the Revolution. Joel, the father, came from a "city and mother in Israel," Fuerth in Bavaria. And let no one wonder how a Bavarian Jew could wander all the way from the fine community of Fuerth to the wilds of colonial Carolina. Jews everywhere were then on the move. One of the best known Jews in New York was also a native of Fuerth—Ephraim Hart, an original member of the group that founded the first stock exchange in the city; he was a land speculator and a president of Shearith Israel in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Joel Henry's wife had been a Gentile. By profession, she was a midwife. Her obituary cited Revelation 14:13: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord . . . that they may rest from their labors." (It is difficult to know whether the pun was intentional or not.) Joel's wife lived as a Jewish woman; certainly their son Jacob was raised as a proud Jew. Both father and son seem to have been members of Beth Elohim in Charleston.²⁴

Jacob, the son, lived in various parts of the Carolinas, although his chief seat seems to have been Beaufort, below Pamlico Sound. The fifteen-year-old Esther Whitehurst, the Gentile girl whom he married in 1801, also came from that town. It must have been quite a shock to him, after he had served for a year in the state legislature and had been reelected for another term, to see one of his colleagues rise and, without warning, ask for his expulsion because Henry, as a Jew, was not entitled to a seat in the Assembly. He had refused to take the prescribed oath affirming a belief in the divine authority of the New Testament. Naturally, as a Jew, he could not and would not take such an oath. On the following day, the 6th of December, 1809, after consulting with eminent Christian jurists, Henry wrote a letter to his colleagues in the House of Commons. It is a proud justification of his refusal to take the test oath. Tradition has it that his letter was framed, if not actually written, for him by Chief Judge John Louis Taylor of the State Supreme Court, a Catholic.

In his letter, Henry pointed out that the Declaration of Rights of the 1776 constitution had declared in Section 1, Article XIX, that "All men have a natural and unalienable right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences." Article XLIV of Section 2 also made clear that the Declaration of Rights ought never to be violated on any pretense whatsoever. Its jurisdiction is absolute. Henry went on to say:

Are you prepared to plunge at once from the sublime heights of moral legislation into the dark and gloomy caverns of superstitious ignorance? Will you drive from your shores and from the shelter of your Constitution all who do not lay their oblations on the same altar, observe the same ritual, and subscribe to the same dogmas? If so, which among the various sects into which we are divided shall be the favored one? . . . The religion I profess inculcates every duty which man owes to his fellow men; it enjoins upon its votaries the practice of every virtue, and the detestation of every vice, it teaches them to hope for the favor of heaven exactly in proportion as their lives have been directed by just, honorable, and beneficent maxims.

His appeal shows a reverence for what was finest in the America in which he believed. Other Carolinians—though not a majority of the representatives—shared his liberal views. Years later, his letter was published, with minor omissions, as an address in the *American Orator* where, for a generation, it served to inspire children in the schools—even in those states where the Jews did not enjoy full rights!—and to enhearten Americans devoted to the principle of equality for all irrespective of religious belief. Jacob Henry retained his seat in 1809, but not because his colleagues were impressed with his spiritual vision or the compulsion of his arguments; he retained his seat despite his arguments. They liked the man; that was

sufficient for them. Loath to surrender the anti-Catholic and anti-Jewish clause, the House declared that Section XXXII, specifying that non-Protestants could not hold office in any civil department of the state, meant that Jews, Catholics, and the like could not fill executive or judicial offices, but could serve as legislators. They were forbidden to interpret or execute the laws; they could merely make them—hence Jacob Henry could keep his seat!²⁵

From 1823 to 1835, liberals, with Catholics among the leaders, fought to open all offices to citizens without respect to their religious convictions. The disabilities imposed on Jews and Catholics were openly discussed. Pleas were made on behalf of both; the abolition of the test oath was sought. Citing Jonathan Swift, William Gaston, a Catholic, said, "We have just religion enough to hate, and not enough to love each other." Finally, in 1835 the Catholics were put on the same plane of equality as the Protestants; although the test was reluctantly extended to include all Christians, the prejudice against the Catholics had by no means abated. "Catholicism cannot be recognized as a Christian church," said a Presbyterian about that time, and a convention in Pittsburgh also passed a resolution to that effect. The changes in 1835, however, were of no benefit to Jews, Deists, Quakers, or atheists. In view of the acceptance of Jacob Henry in 1808-1809, why were Jews not fully emancipated a generation later, in 1835? The good will which had characterized the majority of legislators in 1808-1809 was absent in 1835; public opinion, however, forced acceptance of Catholics in 1835. Despite the virulent anti-Catholicism of that decade, democracy was on the march.²⁶

Loyalty to Protestantism still expressed itself in discrimination against Jews and other infidels. Three attempts were made between 1858 and 1865 to give Jews full rights; each failed. In 1858, a committee reported that the clause in the constitution disabling Jews was "a relic of bigotry and intolerance"—and then offered the opinion that "it is highly inexpedient to alter or amend the Constitution by legislative enactment in any particular whatsoever." Dozens of North Carolina Jews fought in the battles of the Civil War; a number were wounded, and some were killed, but the two attempts under the Confederacy in 1861 and 1865 to amend the Constitution brought them no relief. Only in 1868, in a post-war constitutional convention, was a motion emancipating Jews brought up and passed immediately by an overwhelming vote. There was little or no discussion. By that time—it was during the Reconstruction years—all rights had been given to blacks; the legislators evidently felt they could not deny them to Jews. There were fears, fears of the federal government and of the Civil Rights and Reconstruction Acts. The fourteenth amendment was eloquent in its mute implications; the Northern troops stationed in the state were equally convincing. Thirteen freedmen sat in that constitu-

tional convention. As in Jamaica, the blacks of North Carolina were "emancipated" before the Jews. Blacks were already holding important offices; one was a member of the standing committee on the Preamble and Bill of Rights. The only test for office now required was belief in Almighty God. It is moot whether under "normal" conditions the white majority would have accepted the 1868 constitution. The popular vote to adopt that instrument was 93,084 to 74,015; nearly 30,000 registered voters cast no ballot.²⁷

NEW HAMPSHIRE

On August 24, 1865, Sergeant Major Abraham Cohn, of the 6th New Hampshire Veteran Volunteers, was given the Medal of Honor, America's highest award for bravery; he had been wounded at Petersburg. Had Cohn chosen to make New Hampshire his permanent home, he would have been subject to disabilities imposed on Jews by that state. In 1776, New Hampshire was the first American commonwealth to adopt a frame of government; in 1877, it was the last to emancipate its Jewish and Catholic citizens. In the state's first extensive constitution (1784), everyone was assured inalienable natural rights, the rights of conscience, etc. Having said this, the legislators proceeded in 1792 to establish a quasi-Protestantism; Catholics and Jews could hold no important offices. Efforts were made in the mid-nineteenth century to amend the constitution, to delete the word Protestant where it occurred, but the liberals fought in vain. The editor of New York's Jewish newspaper *The Asmonean* asked the Jews in 1852 not to vote for Franklin Pierce because he was from New Hampshire. In 1876, the people finally voted to translate into action their own Bill of Rights and the implications of the Jeffersonian Declaration of Independence. In a statewide vote on a new organic statute, 27,664 opted to delete the references to Protestants; 15,907 voted not to delete them. Thus, Jews were now allowed to hold office. The New Hampshire prejudice, in any case, was not primarily against Jews, but against Catholics; the former had little visibility; they themselves could do nothing or very little to fight for their rights. The whole state had only one small Jewish mutual-aid society of about twenty members; the total number of Jews in New Hampshire then was about 150. The constitution of 1902 exhorted Protestants to support and maintain teachers of piety, religion, and morality, though Jews were exempt from such taxation. As late as the middle of the twentieth century, the people of New Hampshire still retained a clause in their constitution that "every denomination of Christians . . . shall be equally under the protection of the law." Efforts to delete this clause have failed.²⁸

A REVIEW: THE STRUGGLE FOR POLITICAL RIGHTS

For Jews in the United States, freedom was essentially the right to hold office. There was never a need to struggle for freedom of worship. The Jews had always had this privilege in the English colonies and even under the Dutch in New Amsterdam after a brief period of harassment. The political status of Jews in the new United States was improved by the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the federal Constitution. The national government—insofar as its authority reached—and a number of states had emancipated Jews by 1793: New York, Virginia, Georgia, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Vermont. Political emancipation came in Connecticut in 1818 and in Maine in 1820, but the assumption of the legislators in these two states was that beneficiaries would all be Christians. There were very few Jews in Connecticut; there were still fewer, if any, in northern New England. The battle for equality still had to be fought from 1794 to 1877 in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Maryland, and North Carolina. For years, not one of the slow-emancipating states was able to muster a synagogal quorum. Jews stayed away for a variety of reasons. Were the cautious Gentiles here more frightened than the “liberal” states by the excesses of the French Revolution? Post-Napoleonic conservatism, Orthodox Christianity, medieval romanticism were then triumphant in Europe. Here, too, in the United States, there was a religious reaction, a return, a regeneration that strengthened the Protestant churches. The Second Awakening and revivalism were part of this religious upheaval. American nationalism, now growing perceptibly, was identified by many with Protestant Christianity; a xenophobic suspicion of non-Protestants was not uncommon.²⁹

As far as Jews were specifically concerned, no progress was made during the years of Jefferson’s presidency. This may well have been due to the economic distress of the period—the threat of war with England. Jews in the commercial states already had their rights and had no need to push. The early intimations of Jacksonian democracy certainly strengthened the hands of individuals, but the Jews had to wait until 1826 to receive recognition in Maryland, until the 1840’s in Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Jersey, and until the 1860’s and 1870’s in North Carolina and New Hampshire. North Carolina and New Hampshire were constantly criticized as un-American and bigoted; even in conservative England and in the Central European lands, Jews were already becoming full-fledged citizens. Determinative to a degree for these two American polities was the realization that they would have to tolerate Catholics; to many Protestants, Jews were preferable. Question: Did Jews stay away from states where they were disqualified? Not necessarily. They

avoided those states until they became economically attractive. Then they moved in and ultimately acquired all rights. One may well ask, however, whether the Jews, never more than a paltry few, ever won the desired rights solely through their own efforts. Their allies, the political and religious liberals, won the victories; the Catholics and Dissenters also had a stake in disestablishment whether the establishment was quasi or actual.

JEWISH RESENTMENT

While their allies and the forces of history moved to emancipate non-Protestants, what was the attitude of those Jews who had to cope with political curbs? Jews knew the meaning of political rights. They valued what they had been denied for centuries. They were aware of the promises of equality that had been made and, from the American Revolution on, were bitterly resentful of every disability. Many had been soldiers; they had earned the immunities they sought. As an urban literate middle-class group, they did not deem themselves inferior. True, Jews were aware that Catholics, non-trinitarians, infidels, and the propertyless Christian masses also suffered discrimination, but this was no consolation. They objected to the prejudices they had to suffer because of their religion; they resented the test oaths and the quasi-establishment of Protestantism. In a few instances, they were able to help themselves directly—in New Jersey, for example; there, when the 1844 constitution was adopted according them full citizenship, the delegate from Essex County was a Jew, David Naar, the mayor of Elizabethtown. The euphoria of the Revolution predisposed some states to be liberal; from 1793 on to 1877, the process slowed down perceptively. To be sure, the Bill of Rights in several, if not most, commonwealths promised all citizens equality, but, quite correctly, a writer in the *American Israelite* called these rhapsodic paragraphs “Constitutional gush”; after these effusive lucubrations, the constituent conventions settled down and proceeded to disqualify Jews, Catholics, Unitarians, freethinkers, and others as well.³⁰

What was this? Cant? Did the legislators not realize what they were saying? Did they live in a double, self-contradictory world of Enlightenment and Christian Orthodoxy? It was not imperative for constitutions to be consistent or even tolerant. They genuflected toward the future and honored the past. If the states were slow to implement the hopes of the Declaration of Independence, it should not be forgotten that, by 1776, English North America already had a tradition of over 100 years of restrictions imposed upon Jews. Moreover, all Christians had inherited centuries of anti-Jewish prejudice. To ask a typical “establishmentarian” Protestant to accord equality to dissenting Protestants, to Catholics, to non-trinitarians, to infidels, to Jews—this was asking a great deal. Citi-

zens in states where political constraints were in force enjoyed their prejudices, righteously sure of their rectitude. Thus, there was a need for four-revolutions in fourteen states; there were constant struggles between liberals and conservatives. Almost 100 percent of the citizenry never doubted that America was a Christian country; there could be no question about this. The masses as well as the government thought that they were generous and liberal in allowing freedom of conscience and worship to all. No one was totally denied political privileges. Jews could vote, but office holding? That was different. The government and the people changed reluctantly. The overwhelming majority of Americans were rural folk, farmers; Jews were an urban group; the masses looked with suspicion upon city folks; to boot, the Jews were infidels. It was the backcountry farmers and villagers whose resistance to political emancipation for Jews delayed it for decades, in New Hampshire for a century until in a number of instances they were outvoted or outmaneuvered by bourgeois urbanites. If the Jews were ignored politically in many states for years, they were not alone—this, too, was the lot of the moneyless and the voteless Protestant masses. All men may be created equal, but they do not necessarily have equal rights.³¹

THE UNITED STATES, A CHRISTIAN COUNTRY

Most Americans, even though not churchgoers, believed that this was a Christian country, indeed a Protestant country. Legally, formally, actually, under English rule, all provinces were Christian, and the Continental Congress continued the tradition. On occasion, the Continental Congress spoke of the Free Protestant colonies; the members invoked God and Jesus and the Holy Ghost, they appointed chaplains, and on one occasion attended church as a body. The Continental Congress identified Protestantism with true religion, enjoined Sunday observances, and called for public worship, thanksgiving to God, and Christian education. The treaty of peace with England was proclaimed in the name of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity. By the terms of the Northwest Ordinance of July, 1787, in the regions that were to develop into new states, the Continental Congress would make grants of land for schools and for religion, both of which were to be encouraged. That same month, July 27, 1787, when selling huge tracts to the Ohio Company of Associates, Congress required the company to reserve extra land sections for educational and religious needs. The profits from the sale of lands granted by Congress for the support of Christian churches and schools were to be distributed to the churches. The Ohio Constitution of 1802 accepted and incorporated this proviso, and for decades grants were accordingly made to help churches and schools. The distribution of government funds to

churches was finally discontinued because of the problem of multiple rival sects. It was the same difficulty, that of adjusting church-state relations, which made it imperative to incorporate the first amendment into the federal Constitution.³²

The problems of harmonizing Christian religious loyalties with political latitudinarianism, mirrored in the Northwest Ordinance and the first constitution of Ohio, are reflected to an extent in other aspects of the federal government. In 1796, in a treaty with Moslem Tripoli, the United States declared itself a non-Christian country. The treaty, negotiated by Joel Barlow, contained the following sentence: "the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion." This international agreement was approved by the Senate, hence the statement became official. Literally—but not actually—Barlow was right. It is doubtful, however, whether a Christian people can ever maintain anything but a Christian state. Barlow was a freethinker; his few words in the treaty were, in a way, an obiter dictum. The Arabic version of the treaty did not substantiate his statement. Even after the Declaration of Independence and the adoption of the federal Constitution, both of which ignored the Christian character of the country and recognized no religious institution, most Americans believed that the United States was historically, traditionally, practically, and legally a Christian land. This widespread conviction was voiced by Luther Martin of Maryland in a debate on the ratification of the United States Constitution: "in a Christian country, it would be at least decent to hold out some distinction between the professors of Christianity and downright infidelity or paganism."³³

Throughout this period, every legislature opened with prayer; Christian clergymen were regularly invited, Jewish ministers but rarely. The Indian agent Isaac McCoy (d.1846) received the moral support of the federal government in his work as a Baptist missionary to the Indians. In 1826, Thomas Jefferson wrote to Isaac Harby that most of the country's colleges including those which were state or government-supported, compelled all students to take courses in theology. When, in 1829-1833, there were strong objections in the New York state legislature to opening sessions with prayers and to inviting and paying chaplains, a committee was appointed to study the problem. It stated categorically in its subsequent report that Christianity as such was not the law of the land, but in this highly sensitive issue, a compromise finally had to be adopted: payment to chaplains was forbidden, but clergymen were to continue to act as chaplains. An indignant protest against the decision was made by Solomon Southwick, who said of the two active members of the committee that one was a Jew and the other an infidel. According to Southwick, Mordecai Myers, the Jew on the committee, should have remembered that he represented a Christian people: this is a Christian country. Do

Myers and his fellow-committeeman want to expel Christianity? Jews ought to be grateful for what Christianity has done for them; Christians have died to make Jews free!³⁴

Throughout the nineteenth century, important jurists like Chancellor James Kent, distinguished leaders like Daniel Webster, and in 1892 the Supreme Court itself believed that, in many respects, this was indeed a Christian nation and Christianity was entitled to special consideration. The United States was a Christian country, if not constitutionally, then by virtue of its way of life. Jurists, though saying or implying that the Christian religion was part of the common law, hastened to add that, even so, no citizen's rights and immunities were ever to be limited because of religious beliefs or practices. Lawyers, legislators, and clerics liked to cite Lord Coke (d. 1634), that "Christianity was part and parcel of the common law of England." In 1917, English legal authorities—apparently forgetting that they could not erase history—declared this phrase rhetoric and not law. Here in the United States, the devout and their clergy had long insisted that it was law, not rhetoric; they wanted to put God in the Constitution—a Christian God, to be sure. No later than 1863, serious attempts were made to amend the preamble of the United States Constitution. A zealous group, which soon called itself the National Reform Association, worked incessantly in the second half of the nineteenth century to effect the desired change. Similar efforts continue even today; the United States it is contended, must be recognized officially, formally, as a Christian state.³⁵

In 1892, the Supreme Court, in a decision about a case involving a clergyman, made the statement, "This is a Christian nation"—but this, too, was an obiter dictum. Nevertheless, Chief Justice Brewer and his associates never meant to imply that any non-Christian was less a citizen than his Christian neighbor. The American public, however, has never hesitated to make its own pronouncements on this subject. In 1868, North Carolina, in the very constitution that finally emancipated its Jews, boasted that it "was a civilized and Christian state," though in that context "Christian" meant nothing pronouncedly theological. In general, it may be said, most Christians believed that non-Christians in the United States were expected to respect, if not to accept, Christian mores. Christians were the hosts; non-Christians, even though citizens, were required to defer to the overwhelming majority—even to their own hurt. Deference to the religion of the masses inevitably brought disabilities in its wake for Jews: exposure to the charge of blasphemy, social cleavage between Jew and Christian, imposition of unacceptable marriage laws, and, most importantly, compulsory Sunday closing, a severe economic burden to observant Jews—and others—who did not open their shops on Saturday or farm their fields on the seventh day and thereby lost two days a week in the effort to make a living.³⁶

Religion, particularly Christianity, is still recognized as an integral part of American culture and polity, as has been the case since the days of the Pilgrim Fathers and since the Declaration of Independence, which invoked "nature's God." Today the United States government continues to take official notice of religion, above all Christianity: chaplains are appointed, clergymen are given special exemptions, churches (synagogues and mosques, too) and religious charities are tax exempt. Religious festivals are recognized; Christmas is officially a national holiday; the oath required of government officials is religious in nature, and the Sunday laws are still in force in some states. Without regard to legal prohibitions the Bible is still read in many public schools, while the coinage carries the defiant affirmation: "In God We Trust." Despite the fact that no one religious body has more legal rights than any other, Christianity is a protected religion—though not established as such. There can be no question that, historically, the United States is a Christian nation.³⁷

BLASPHEMY LAWS

In colonial days, most provinces had enacted laws against blasphemy; even the death penalty might be invoked for men or women who cursed God or Jesus, or denied that Jesus was an integral part of the triune Deity. In 1658, a Maryland Jew, Jacob Lumbrozo, was arrested and was charged with blaspheming "our Blessed Savior." It would seem that he had engaged in a theological discussion with devout Puritans and Quakers, a debate that he had not initiated. As a Jew, he had denied the divinity and resurrection of Jesus. Later released, he may have escaped punishment by becoming a Christian. Despite the fact that blasphemy laws remained on the books of some states into the twentieth century, there is no record that any other Jew was ever arrested on the charge, which has been defined as showing contempt for Christ, Christianity, or the Scriptures. Blasphemy laws were certainly not enforced against Jews; individual Gentiles were arrested and punished for blasphemy as late as the nineteenth century. The very fact, however, that such laws were on the statute books in 1825 disturbed John Adams very much, and he unburdened himself in a letter to Thomas Jefferson: "I think such laws a great embarrassment, great obstructions to the improvement of the human mind."³⁸

WORSHIP IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Many, if not most, public schools in the United States before the Civil War—and long after too—furthered Protestantism or taught a Protestant type of civil religion reflected in the school curriculum. Sectarian prayers were common—to the despair of Catholics and Jews. Jews objected to all Bible readings in school classes; the Catholics rejected the standard Prot-

estant King James version of the Holy Scriptures. Protests made to the New York authorities elicited the answer that this was a Protestant country. In Massachusetts, as in Maryland, rabbis could not legally perform marriages; they were not deemed ministers of the gospel. The Massachusetts law would prevail until 1892; it is very probable, however, that rabbis ignored these regulations without suffering prosecution. Many states declared incestuous the marriage of an uncle to a niece, though Jewish law saw no wrong in such unions. When Alfred Mordecai was stationed at West Point as a young instructor, he was compelled to attend chapel. These compulsory Christian services did not annoy him, for he would sit in the rear, read a good book, or take a nap. As far as he was concerned, the time was not wasted. In all probability, it would never have occurred to the superintendent at West Point to excuse a Jew from Christian worship services. Compulsory attendance at chapel in most educational institutions was an old tradition which continued into the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries.³⁹

THANKSGIVING PROCLAMATIONS AND THE PROBLEMS THEY INVITED

Because it was proper not only to worship but also to thank the triune God from whom all blessings flowed, Thanksgiving proclamations in the early days were Christian in content. The Pilgrim Fathers first thanked God in 1620; the custom was to spread slowly in colonial America. Post-revolutionary American leaders, mindful that most citizens were not committed, observant Christians, hesitated at times to enjoin them to direct their prayers to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Thus, the cautious Washington did not address himself to the Christian God in the first national Thanksgiving proclamation. For this omission he was criticized by a Massachusetts clergyman; leaving out our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was unpardonable. Another clergyman, David Tappan, Professor of Divinity at Harvard, rallied to Washington's defense. Tappan was ready to unite Christians, Jews, and Deists in a common Thanksgiving prayer. Madison, the liberal, intent on not breaching the wall between church and state, issued such Thanksgiving proclamations, but with misgivings; inviting people to worship was a religious act. This liberal Virginian was also of the opinion that chaplains serving government institutions should not be paid out of public funds. Jefferson, his predecessor, was the only president who refused to issue religious proclamations. He never urged the people to go to their churches, to fast, to pray, or to give thanks. The federal government, so he believed, had no right to meddle in matters religious.⁴⁰

Another Virginian, Governor Henry Alexander Wise (1856-1860), a fiery liberal—except on the issue of slavery—refused on principle to ask his fellow citizens to hold Thanksgiving services. Anything religious was

outside his jurisdiction. President William Henry Harrison, in 1841, expressed a profound reverence for Christianity in his inaugural address. When he died a few weeks later, his successor John Tyler appealed to his fellow Christians to join in fasting and prayer. When Jews protested their exclusion, Tyler wrote a manly letter explaining his lapse. It was not unusual for governors to ask their people to assemble in their churches and thank God for the blessings of the past year. These gubernatorial invitations to pray, though intended to reach all citizens, were often addressed to Christians alone. In the minds of the chief executive of the state, the people were all Christians. Governor Morrill (Morrill) of New Hampshire issued such an invitation in 1824 reminding the men and women to whom he addressed his appeal: "We live in a Christian country." Morrill was a physician and a Congregational clergyman. One may well doubt whether there was any intent to reject the Jews as such; the Jews were so few in number that governors or their secretaries never bore them in mind, but when alerted by angry Jews, most executives hastened to make their apologies. Some of the excuses offered were full and sincere; others were evasive. An occasional erring governor honestly believed that this was a Christian country, constitutionally. Sometimes there was an intimation that Jews would do well to appreciate the tolerance accorded them. In 1812, the governor of South Carolina, Henry Middleton, called on all Christian denominations and their clergy to hold services. When reproached by the Jews, he pleaded that his sectarian appeal was an oversight. A later governor of that same state, James H. Hammond, invited the citizens of all denominations to offer up their devotions to God and his son Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the World (1844). When Charleston Jews protested very vigorously—"We demand our rights"—he refused to apologize, reminding them that this was a Christian land and that their ancestors had crucified Jesus Christ. Hammond was one of the very few officials who refused to make amends; he persisted in disregarding Jewish sensibilities.⁴¹

In 1848, Governor William F. Johnson of Pennsylvania appealed to all denominations of Christians to gather together in Thanksgiving prayer and to supplicate the Redeemer to forgive their sins. The Jews wrote to ask why they were excluded, and the governor hastened to assure them that he had "many personal and political friends" among the Israelites. The following year, New York's Governor Hamilton Fish addressed himself only to Christians. The Jews responded by refusing to hold Thanksgiving services in any of the city's numerous synagogues. Fish's call to prayer the following year in 1850, was more discreet, and this time the Jews responded by opening their houses of worship. Fish ended up as Secretary of State for Grant in Washington and certainly came to know Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase (1864-1873). Earlier, Chase had served as

governor of Ohio, and, in 1856, had addressed the Christian citizenry of the state in a proclamation which aroused the ire of the belligerent editor of the Cincinnati *Israelite*, Isaac Mayer Wise. Chase, a pious Christian, had forgotten that Cincinnati then sheltered the largest Jewish community west of the Alleghenies, but Wise was quick to remind him. Though the two were friendly, Wise, a Democrat, resented a Republican, Chase, talking in terms of “Redemption” when among the German Republican leaders were a number of left-wing Forty-Eighters, some of them atheists. Chase, evasive in his reply, politely adhered to his use of Christian people, but reminded Rabbi Max Lilienthal, who had also voiced his chagrin, that in addressing the Jews a year earlier he had said: “Our creeds are many; our Father is one.” This bland reply certainly did not satisfy Wise. Chase’s proclamation, he said, was “unrepublican”; it violated the Bill of Rights of the constitution of Ohio.⁴²

The governors of different states continued to make their “Christian” appeals well into the twentieth century. The *Denver News* in 1865 warned the Jews in Colorado Territory not to protest; they would do well to bear in mind that they were outnumbered ten to one. Courteous executives continued to explain that “Christian” was a synonym for “civilized.” In the second quarter of the twentieth century the governors of Connecticut and Ohio called on the citizens to observe Good Friday because the “lowly Nazarene” had “rescued the world from utter darkness”; the “teachings of Jesus” would ultimately prevail. On May 2, 1943, with the realization of the horrors of the German Holocaust in mind, a number of governors issued proclamations calling for a Day of Compassion, asking the people to go to church and pray for the Jews of Europe. Was this religious appeal a breach in the wall between church and state? By the second half of the twentieth century, chief executives of the different states were no longer issuing religious proclamations asking their people to fast or feast. It now became the privilege of the President to call on the citizens of all the states to raise their voices in thanksgiving. These national calls to prayer were always couched in general terms; there were now almost 6,000,000 Jews in the country; millions of Jews were voters.⁴³

SUNDAY LEGISLATION

Proclamations inviting Christian citizens to meet in prayer, New Testament readings in the schools, consanguinity laws in conflict with the Hebrew Bible and Jewish tradition, blasphemy laws—none of these vitally injured American Jews. Sunday laws, however, were an everpresent danger, for they threatened the very livelihood of observant Jews, who had already kept their businesses closed on Saturday, the seventh day of the week. Such discriminatory laws were no novelty to the Children of Israel. Many American Jews, originally immigrants, were well-acquainted with

Sunday laws in the European lands of their birth. In seventeenth-century Dutch Brazil, whence the first American Jewish settlers came, and in Dutch Surinam of the 1600's and the 1700's, Jews had been exposed to Sunday-law restrictions. In Brazil, they had to close their shops and their schools, too, on the Lord's Day; the Surinamese even made an effort to keep the Jews from working their plantations on the first day of the week. In New Amsterdam, Abraham De Lucena opened his store on a Sunday, when the sermon was being preached. He was threatened with a fine of 600 guilders, an enormous sum, but there is no record that the fine was ever paid. This was 1655; yet three years later, when Jacob Barsimson, the first known Jew in New Amsterdam, refused to go to court on his Sabbath, no default was entered against him because of his religion; Saturday was apparently recognized as his day of rest. In 1664, James, Duke of York, conquered New Amsterdam and New Netherland. The Sunday laws to which the Jews were thenceforth subject in New York were British rather than Dutch. With the Duke's brother, Charles II, on the throne, the English Parliament in 1676 passed a Sunday law which was to influence profoundly all similar statutes in English North America down to the present day. The British colonies were all juridically Christian, and all of them had Sunday laws which were enforced with punishments which were often severe. In a few colonies, fractious offenders could even be executed, in theory at least. Some of the Sunday offenses were non-church attendance, profaning the Lord's Day, desecrating Sunday by traveling, walking for amusement, performing labor, or engaging in amusements.⁴⁴

Patterning itself on rabbinic law, one of the colonies insisted that the Sabbath began at sundown the preceding evening. The New England poet John Maylem paid his devoirs to this "fence to the law":

in this one act, they think to merit Heav'n,
By taking half a day from six, and adding it to seven.

In 1668, Solomon, a Jew, traveling toward New Hampshire on Sunday, was arrested and no doubt fined. Had he been a Christian, he would have been arrested with equal celerity. In colonial days, the law was directed primarily against Christians derelict in their religious practices. There were then only a handful of Jews in all New England; they were generally ignored, but wherever they were they were always expected to conform to local ordinances. In eighteenth-century colonial New York, so it is reported, a Jew was compelled to accept the onerous job of constable. He resented it and on the Lord's Day, therefore, enforced the laws in all their severity to the dismay of the Christians. Whenever a servant went out to pump water, he confiscated the pail. He stopped all work on that day until the city finally decided that it was the better part of wisdom to

replace him with another constable. Did the Jews in prerevolutionary days protest against the rigorous Sunday closing laws which burdened them financially? There is no record that they did. They would not have dared to do so; they were second-class citizens, infidels, in a Christian land.⁴⁵

Though the federal Constitution and its amendments forbade the “establishment” of any religion in the United States and implied that all faiths were equal in the eyes of the law, Sunday ordinances were enforced. There are no national federal laws with respect to Sunday observance; none was ever passed, though Christianity even today is “established” informally. The Constitution in Article 1, Section 7, does recognize Sunday as a special non-business day. Very few Jews were in the federal service; there are no records of complaint about being compelled to work on Saturday; government marshals—and there was a Jewish marshal—may have been free agents to a degree. The new republic brought little relief to Jewish Sabbath observers in the individual states. The states had inherited their Sunday laws and automatically continued many of them, though modifying them with respect to punishments and penalties. If appeals were made by a Jew after a conviction for a violation of the Sunday laws, most higher courts upheld the decisions already rendered. The number of cases of Jews arrested and fined for violating these local enactments are very few in the early republic. It is very probable, however, that most arrests and trials for infractions have not been recorded or reported. Many Jews kept their shops open on Saturday in order to make a living, thereby of course violating or ignoring their own Jewish day of rest. Some successfully evaded state laws and kept their stores open on Sunday, if only surreptitiously. A few kept closed on Saturday and opened on Sunday, exposing themselves to arrests, trials, and penalties.

A few months after the Declaration of Independence, the grand jury in Charleston, South Carolina, issued a statement condemning Jews for opening their shops and selling goods on Sunday, thus profaning the Lord's Day. What seemed to worry these Christians particularly was not so much the violation of the closing law but the fact that Jews were employing their black slaves as clerks. Several years later, a Richmond Jew was reproached for opening his store on Sunday and selling to slaves. The fear expressed here was that slaves would be encouraged to steal from their masters. The very year that Madison and his associates secured the passage of Jefferson's Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom, this same Madison sponsored a Sunday closing law to punish “Disturbers of Religious Worship and Sabbath Breakers.” In 1788, in a debate on a Sunday-closing bill in the New York state legislature, a liberal-minded member caustically reminded the pious that if Jews were ever to become a majority in the state they could penalize Christians for violating their Sabbath.

Nevertheless, the bill passed, 34 to 5. At Philadelphia, in 1793, Jonas Phillips was fined £10 for refusing to take the oath in court on his Sabbath. This American intolerance stands out in sharp contrast to the action of the often more intolerant Dutch who excused Jacob Barsimson from appearing in court on the Sabbath. In 1816, again in Philadelphia, Abraham Wolf was arrested for engaging in business on Sunday. He pleaded that the Ten Commandments called upon him to work six days a week; Sunday was the first day of the week—therefore, a day on which he was required to labor. The court ignored the defendant's unique plea and reprimanded him for showing "contempt and abhorrence of the religious opinions of the great mass of citizens." Massachusetts in the 1820's still reprinted its laws prohibiting profane music and dancing on the Lord's Day.⁴⁶

By the late 1820's, the Protestant Church had begun to flex its muscles. Fearful of the growth of Catholicism and the coming of the Irish, it set out to keep the United States Protestant. This age of Jackson saw a growing antagonism to Puritan concepts of an austere Sunday: industrialization was developing; workers wanted to relax on their day of rest; Catholics and Central European immigrants had their own concept of a permissive continental Sabbath; secularism, liberalism, and humanitarianism were blossoming. Thus, opposition to the traditional Sunday laws was growing. Faithful Protestants were determined not only to bolster Sunday observance, but also to use their influence to compel the federal government to aid them. By 1828, the devout took action; they organized a General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath. The Union was not modest in its first objective. It launched a major crusade, an attack on Sunday mail deliveries. This drive, which had its roots in Puritan laws against travel on the Lord's Day, was soon in full swing. The 1828 campaign against Sunday mail delivery and in defense of a quiet Sunday continued for almost a generation. The churchmen were set on stopping the transport of mail and keeping the post offices closed on the Lord's Day. That the crusaders were not without influence is documented by their attack on Andrew Jackson, who was said to have started a long journey on a Sunday. Jackson was compelled to defend himself by proving that he had left the Hermitage on a Monday.⁴⁷

In response to a series of Protestant petitions, the Senate referred the issue to the Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads. The committee report was presented January 19, 1829, by its chairman Senator Richard M. Johnson of Kentucky; Johnson also presented a second report in 1830 (by that time, he was serving in the House after having been defeated for reelection to the Senate). Johnson spoke for both committees in rejecting the demands of the churches. Denial of the petitioners' request meant that he and his colleagues had chosen to emphasize the United States gov-

ernment as a civil and not a religious institution; it had no right to interfere in religious matters. All citizens, including Jews and Christian Sabbatarians, had to be considered; Jews were as free as Christians and entitled to the same rights; the Constitution regarded the conscience of the Jew as sacred as that of the Christian. This statement was made at a time when there were not 10,000 Jews in the United States. Not all ministers were opposed to Sunday mail. An Episcopal clergyman, later a New York bishop, frowned on the whole Stop-the-Mail Movement; he was an egalitarian who wanted to keep religion out of politics. One of the main reasons the anti-Sunday mail crusade met with resistance in Congress is that it threatened industry, the fast developing transportation system, and large-scale commerce and business. The churchmen lost out; they forgot to “render . . . unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s” (Matt. 22:21).⁴⁸

Despite the defeat of the congressional Sunday mail bills, Jews in the 1830’s continued to run afoul of the Sunday laws. The Jews claimed certain exemptions because of religious scruples. In Pennsylvania, in 1831, a Jewish plaintiff wanted continuance of a case which was called for Saturday. The judge told him that the law was a superior moral force; the right to be excused lay at the discretion of the court. For reasons that seemed compelling to the judge—no bigot, incidentally—the continuance in this particular instance was not granted. When arrested for keeping his store open on Sunday, Alexander Marks, of Columbia, South Carolina, cited in vain the first amendment of the federal Constitution and its guarantee of religious freedom. The court’s response was that the local enactment under which he was charged served to further law and order and to benefit society as a whole. Another victim, fined for a Sunday sale, was blandly told that he had no complaint, for he was not compelled to violate his Jewish Sabbath. Leiser disclosed in his *Claims of the Jews to an Equality of Rights* that, in 1838, the Jews of Philadelphia were determined to protest to a Pennsylvania constitutional convention, then sitting, against current Sunday-closing legislation. There should be no penalties for any Sabbatarians who worked on the Lord’s Day, the first day of the week; it was unconstitutional to force Jews to observe the Sabbath of the majority. Accordingly, they wrote a memorial on this subject, but at the last moment decided not to present it. It is not improbable that they were frightened by the rising tide of reaction and decided that discretion was the better part of valor. The effects of the panic of 1837 were being keenly felt; anti-black riots were not infrequent, and the Jews may very well have feared attracting the attention of a mob that frowned on “free discussion,” Indian rights, woman suffrage, and abolition. The political climate in Philadelphia at this time was no healthy one, for three months after the petition for civil equality was written, mobs burnt Pennsylvania Hall, which had just been dedicated to liberty and to the rights of man, and then razed a black orphan asylum.⁴⁹

The Protestant churches were never to stop trying to enforce Sunday observance throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On a state level, the Sunday-closing crusade was by no means unsuccessful, for by 1850 forty railroad companies on about 4,000 miles of track had agreed not to run their cars on Sunday. As late as 1894, the highest court in Maryland said that "Ours is a Christian community and the day set apart as the day of rest is the day consecrated by the resurrection of our Saviour. . . . there is all the more reason for the enforcement of the laws that help to preserve it." On Sunday, May 1, 1904, the Baltimore police swooped down on a Jewish home where some girls were busily engaged in a manufacturing process. Hauled off to court in a patrol wagon, they found themselves enjoying the same ride frequently given prostitutes and gamblers caught in a raid. Shortly before 1911, the National Reform Association, the Sunday observance group, published a shaded map in which they showed that every state and territory in the Union, with the exception of two, had enacted Sunday laws of greater or lesser severity. In the more lenient states—about half—concessions were made to Sabbatarianism, both Jews and Christians.⁵⁰

THE SUNDAY LAWS: A COMMENTARY

Sunday-law disabilities puzzled some foreigners who knew America as the land of the free. A German, writing on the United States in the 1790's, remarked: "In a country of universal tolerance, it is strange that Jews are forced to keep their shops closed on Sunday." A few years earlier, in 1788, some Christians, commenting on the standard declarations that a Jew working on Sunday offended his Christian neighbors, answered that a Christian working on the Sabbath offended his Jewish neighbors. Christians throughout the centuries have insisted that the Lord's Day be observed. They failed to recall that their Lord was a Jew who had observed the Sabbath, not Sunday. Some Jews must have smiled sardonically at the thought that the courts traced their sanction for the observance of a day of rest to the Jewish Sabbath and then, in keeping with the Christian church, urbanely and arbitrarily transferring the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week, threatened to punish any Jew refusing to desist from work on a day which had no special sanctity for him. It is not improbable that in some towns and cities the Sunday laws were a dead letter, but more frequently they were enforced, disabling Jews who had already closed their shops on Saturday. Christians argued that this was a Christian country, that it was the duty of the state to assure the welfare of the religious majority, and that this majority had the moral right to exercise its prerogative of passing laws in order to enforce a day of rest. The Jews must not give offense through work or trade by desecrating the holy day.⁵¹

Jews were angry; it was their contention that the Sunday laws violated the first amendment of the federal Constitution and the Bill of Rights of almost every state. They were penalized because the Protestant churches were trying to force Christians to go to church. In their campaigns to keep the first day of the week holy, the churches were supported by many Americans, very probably a majority, who looked upon Sunday as a national day of rest even if they themselves did not attend worship services. The masses, worshipping at the altar of civil religion, were persuaded that Christianity through its chaplains, its holidays, its Sunday rest, was a vital component of the American polity. On the other hand, there were also citizens who set out consciously, deliberately, vigorously, to keep church and state apart and were opposed to any type of legislation that would make Sunday a religious holiday. These were Gentile political liberals and Christian Sabbatarians who feared that the Protestant sectarians were again trying to unite church and state and threaten the very heart of the first amendment. Until the Civil War, the motivation for compelling conformity to the Sunday laws was unashamedly religious; later, the rationale employed to make Jews and others observe these laws was that such statutes were police ordinances to further health, safety, and morals, but this was only a subterfuge; the motivation even today is religious and Christian. In origin, few—if any—of the Sunday ordinances were anti-Jewish; it is equally true that there was rarely any appreciation of the sensitivity of Jewish religionists to this issue. The Jew's answer to the Christian world was that, constitutionally and legally, this was not a Christian country; Christianity was not part of the common law; there was no established church or union of church and state. No state or municipality had a right through legislation to compel conscientious and observant Jews to abstain from work or business on Sunday and thus cripple them economically by compelling them every week to refrain from work on a day which meant nothing to them.⁵²



As late as 1840, four states (shown in shaded areas) did not accord Jews full equality: New Hampshire, Rhode Island, New Jersey, and North Carolina.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

REJECTION OF THE JEW: THE PEOPLE

1776-1840

THE EXTENT OF PREJUDICE, THE WORD "JEW" AS AN EPITHET, THE SMEAR TACTIC

Though Sunday closing ordinances never set out to harass Jews, no one can question that there was anti-Jewish prejudice in all circles of society. When angered by Jewish disregard for the Lord's Day, individual Christians, even the judiciary, voiced a bitterness that was tantamount to Judeophobia. Jews were convinced that they were exposed to bias on the part of some of their neighbors. The Jews who testified to this malaise were the articulate, the cultured, the leaders, the wealthy, often prominent citizens. When Emanuel De La Motta arranged for the cornerstone laying of the Savannah synagog in 1820, he described his fellow-Jewish Masons as "Hebrews"; the non-Masonic Jews became "Israelites." To a degree, at least, he seemed to avoid the word "Jew." By so doing, he and his coreligionists were but reflecting the prejudices of their Christian neighbors. Anti-Jewishness was frequently manifested by employing the term "Jew" as a dirty word. Following time-honored European and Christian traditions, the word "Jew" was a synonym for a cheat. "To Jew," as a verb, was common in American folk parlance. It was frequently applied even to Gentiles. To call a Christian a Jew was to suggest that he was unworthy, a scoundrel. In this sense, it was even employed by Daniel Webster on the floor of the Senate.¹

That Jews believed their neighbors often looked askance at them is amply documented for the early American republic (1776-1840). The postrevolutionary period and the new federal Constitution inaugurated no messianic era. Many Christians continued to look upon Jews as a "hated and despised race," as it was said in 1781. When a sketch of the houses on the Savannah waterfront was drawn in 1786, the artist gave the family name of every Christian occupant; several houses, Jewish homes, were simply marked, "Jews"; they were an ethnic blob. In his memoirs,

the Unitarian minister Samuel J. May, who was close to the Hays family in Boston, relates that the children of his day were taught “to dread if not despise Jews” (ca. 1805). Hezekiah Niles, editor of the *Weekly Register* of Baltimore, opposed the disabilities to which the Jews of Maryland were subject. Jews had to be emancipated politically, he said, despite the fact that they would not labor like other people. When Thomas Oliver Larkin—later, an important California pioneer—was engaged in commerce in the Carolinas during the 1820’s, he believed that the Jews had dispersed themselves so that they could cheat to their hearts’ delight. God has inflicted the plague on New York in the 1820’s because the Christians had elected a Jew as sheriff, said a good Christian. Jews, asserted the author of *Israel Vindicated*, are looked upon as a degraded race. Judah Touro, wrote a Christian admirer, gave most of his fortune to Christians, though he was fully aware that anti-Jewish prejudice was rife. In 1827, Dr. Edward Chisholm, of Charleston, insulted G. P. Cohen, but refused to give him satisfaction, to meet him in a duel, because, so he maintained, no Jew was his social equal. James Gordon Bennett, of New York’s *Herald*, called Noah a blasphemer, a Shylock. The Jews, said Bennett, murdered Christians and used their blood for ritual purposes.²

Because dislike of the Jew was taken for granted, politicians frequently “smeared” their Jewish—and Christian—opponents, merely by identifying them as Jews. It was thought that this device would win votes. This political tactic was not unknown in England; it had been used successfully to frighten the people into revoking the emancipatory Jew Bill of 1753. The English were then warned that if given the vote, Jews through their wealth would seize control of England, establish a Sanhedrin, denaturalize English Christians, and honor the memory of Pontius Pilate, who had crucified Jesus. In the early days of the American Revolution, a Carolina Christian Whig planter was denounced as a Jew by a Tory opponent because he was a good friend of the Jewish patriot Francis Salvador. In the 1790’s, when the Jeffersonians became a political threat, anti-Jewish smears were employed to halt the rise of left-wing Democratic societies. In the late eighteenth century, in New York City, individual Jews had eagerly joined these new liberal organizations; some had become officers; in Baltimore, Reuben Etting served as lieutenant in the pro-French military force known as the *Sans Culottes*. James Rivington, a New York Federalist and a former Loyalist, fearful of a Jefferson victory, denounced the Democrats as Jews, of the tribe of Shylock, wild-eyed French Revolution radicals, atheists, property-equalizing types. This attack was directed against Solomon Simson (d. 1801), vice-president of the local Democratic society and a frequent president of Shearith Israel. Yet Rivington was no “anti-Jew.” One of his best friends was Moses M. Hays, of Boston. Rivington was merely trying to defeat his political opponents.

When he published a general almanac, he included a Jewish calendar listing the Holy Days.³

The rivalry between the Federalists and the Democrats (Democratic-Republicans) reached a peak in 1800 when the Jeffersonians battled for the presidency. Since all is fair in politics, as in love and war, the Federalists seized every opportunity to smear their opponents. John Israel—there is no proof of his Jewish origin—was in 1798 a leader of the Jeffersonians in Western Pennsylvania, in Little Washington and Pittsburgh. He was a printer, editor, and politician. Since Israel was a Jewish name, ergo John Israel was a Jew, and since Jews were all bad, why elect them?

And if they have no faults or vice
You then must make it up with lies. . . .

Israel's editorial office was dubbed "the synagog." One Democrat warned Western Pennsylvania liberals that the Federalists wanted to amend the Constitution to establish Christianity as the national church, thus making it impossible for a Jew ever to become President. Apparently the attempt to smear Democrats as Jews garnered few votes, for the Federalists, nationally, soon stopped their attempts to denigrate their opponents as Jews. A substantial number of the Children of Israel were Federalists. And the Pittsburgh Jews? What was their reaction to these attacks? There is no evidence as yet that there was a single confessing Jew in town. One could be a vociferous Judaeophobe and yet never have seen a Jew.⁴

John Israel's "Jewish" background, if any, remains unknown; there is no question, however, about Israel Israel, of Philadelphia; he was a son of Michael Israel, a Jew. Israel Israel was a Revolutionary patriot and a very active Jeffersonian. The attacks on him as a Jew must certainly have interested him in view of the fact that, thanks to his Christian mother, he was an ardent Christian churchman. Political infighting between the Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans was venomous. In Philadelphia, Joseph Dennie, a Federalist editor, identified his Christian Democratic foes as "canting and cheating Jews." This was good politics. Actually he was no Jew-hater, for the very next year, in reviewing a pro-Jewish play in his *Port Folio*, he wrote: "we praise it for its evident tendency to obviate those unjust and illiberal prejudices which have too long been entertained in every country except this against that unfortunate race of men." *The Gazette of the United States*, a conservative Philadelphia newspaper, attacked the editor of *Aurora*, one William Duane, saying that he was an expelled English clothier whose original name was Jew Aine. William Cobbett, editor of Federalist newspapers in New York and Philadelphia, said that Democrats—Jews—were bent on circumcising all Christians! When Cobbett libeled Dr. Benjamin Rush, the latter sued and won very handsome damages. Cobbett then revenged himself by attacking Moses

Levy, one of Rush's lawyers, an ardent Democratic-Republican. Cobbett represented Levy as using the traditional stage English jargon which presumptively only Jews mouthed. Actually there is no holograph letter extant in American Jewish correspondence reflecting this type of mispronunciation; it had, however, been traditional in eighteenth-century anti-Jewish English dramas and comedies. Levy, son of a Gentile mother and himself a practicing Christian, was a third-generation American; his family had been in the country for about a century. He was a cultured man who was to serve as a judge for many years.⁵

In Philadelphia, Joseph Dennie, then editing the anti-Jeffersonian *Gazette of the United States*, sent "An Observer" in July, 1800, to report the proceedings, when the Democratic Republicans met at the local State House to name their candidates for the state assembly and for the select and common councils. What did this Federalist reporter see on that Wednesday night? A gang of intoxicated, illiterate yokels, miserable wretches, the "refuse and filth of society," "infamous and abandoned creatures," perjurers, and seducers of naive black women, and among them all Citizen N. . . ., the bankrupt Jew, who spoke with a Jewish stage accent. Citizen N. . . . was Benjamin Nones (who had an accent but it was Gallic; he had been born in France). A Revolutionary War veteran with a fine record, Nones had migrated from his native Bordeaux to Charleston in 1777. When the city was threatened by the English two years later, the young alien offered his services as a volunteer in a "foreign legion" and fought the British in the Carolinas and in Savannah; according to the testimony of his superior officer, Nones had distinguished himself by his heroic conduct under fire. After the British occupied Charleston, a large number of the Jewish patriots fled north to Philadelphia, where they helped build Mikveh Israel congregation in 1782. Nones was among them. Back again in Charleston in 1783, he got into an altercation on political issues with a Mr. Baron. The latter, evidently anti-French, denounced Nones as a "French rebel." This phrase, which seemed to constitute a bitter insult, led to a fight in which Nones was almost killed. The Charleston mob—strongly sympathetic to the "subjects of the great and generous ally of America"—went looking for Baron and, had it found him, in its ugly mood, would have made short shrift of him.

Nones liked Philadelphia well enough to spend the rest of his life there. Although influenced by Deism and French thought—he was a Frenchman!—he was no freethinker, for he served as parnas of the congregation for many years, beginning in 1791. He was a merchant, a notary public, an official interpreter in the French and Spanish languages, and above all a good father who reared a family of unusual children. A generation after his death he was still a tradition on Chestnut Street—for his loud, stentorian sneezes. (He never, if he could help it, ever sneezed in

the house itself; he always chose the street, as his startled neighbors could well testify.) Above all, he was a zealous Jeffersonian, a diehard Democrat, and when he was attacked as a Jew, a Republican, and a poor man, he wrote and forthwith carried over to the *Gazette* a spirited reply which its printer, Mr. Caleb P. Wayne, refused to publish. Nothing daunted, the aroused protestant sent his indignant answer to the Philadelphia *Aurora* where it appeared August 13. Here are excerpts undoubtedly polished, one suspects, by an accomplished writer:

I am accused of being a *Jew*, of being a Republican (a political liberal), and of being *Poor*.

I am a *Jew*. I glory in belonging to that persuasion . . . whose votaries have never murdered each other in religious wars . . . I am a *Jew* . . . and so too were Christ and his apostles. . . .

I am a *Republican!* . . . I have not been so proud or so prejudiced as to renounce the cause for which I have *fought*, as an American . . . and which . . . I shall hold sacred until death. . . . I am a *Jew*, and if so for no other reason, for that reason am I a republican. . . . in republics we have *rights*, in monarchies we live but to experience *wrongs*. . . . no wonder we are objects of derision to those who have *no* principles, moral or religious. . . .

But I am *poor*, I am so; my family also is large, but soberly and decently brought up. They have not been taught to revile a Christian because his religion is not *so old* as theirs.⁶

By 1823, Charles King, one of the owners and editors of the *New York American*, was associated with the faction of the Democratic Party that worked to keep Mordecai M. Noah out of the sheriff's office. The fact that Noah was a Jew helped defeat him—it was not, it would seem, the prime cause—and the *New York American* and King joined in the hue and cry against the Jew. There was bad blood between Noah and “Charles the Pink,” as Noah was to dub him. The suave, handsome, cultured gentleman, with his aristocratic background and his fine English Harrow education had no use for the flamboyant autodidact who guided the destinies of the *National Advocate*. King was basically a conservative; Noah, more a Democrat; on local, state, and national issues they were often on different sides of the fence. The editor of the *New York American* not only had a temper, he was also vindictive, for in the issue of Saturday, October 25, 1823, he published an anonymous attack on his Jewish fellow citizens, emphasizing that a Jew was a “Jew” before he was a patriot, and as such he could not properly fill any public post. This was certainly a thrust at Sheriff Noah, who lusted for public office. No Jew, said King, because of his inherent lack of patriotism, had the right to be the editor of an American newspaper; thrust number two at Editor Noah; and, finally, because the Jew was no Christian, he sought to turn one Christian against the other for his own purposes!

The answer to this diatribe came two days later from "An American Jew." One suspects the writer was Noah—he was the man who was directly attacked, and he had the press at his disposal for an immediate answer—but it could have been some other New Yorker. The writer, whoever he was, did not handle "the King" with kid gloves, but raked up his Federalism, his "Toryism," his opposition to the 1812 War, and above all his "traitorous" exoneration of the English who had shot down some rioting American seaman in Dartmouth Prison. But the outstanding theme in this open letter was the bold challenge to King or to anyone who would dare to raise his voice or pen against the principle of civil, political, and religious equality for the Jew as guaranteed by the Constitution. Here on this soil the Jew had struggled hard to achieve equality of rights—even at this date he was far from having accomplished his purpose in several of the states—and he was determined, desperately, to keep that freedom which he and his fellow Jews had won by the sacrifices they had made and the blood they had shed on the battlefields of the land. The writer was bitter, almost hysterical, at this attack on the right of Jews to live like other Americans, and he was resolved to smash any anti-Jewish Toryism before it had even a chance to draw this free and liberal United States down to the level of a still medieval-like Europe. He believed that, for the Jew at least, eternal vigilance was always the price of liberty. Not surprisingly Noah and King supported different candidates in the national election of 1824. In Philadelphia, Zalegman Phillips, a lawyer, and an important Jacksonian, was also active in this same presidential campaign. To lessen his influence, a political opponent attacked him by insinuating that he was a gambler, a swindler, and—like other Jews—determined to cheat and thus "crucify" Christians.⁷

THE IMAGE OF THE JEW IN BELLES LETTRES

STEREOTYPES

To no inconsiderable degree, anti-Jewish onslaughts were prompted by the belief of Gentiles that Jews were an inferior group, culturally, spiritually, and religiously. There is no question that some eminent Americans, Jefferson, for instance, believed that secular learning was not much cultivated by American Jewry. The Jews could have answered—and this would have been true—that there were millions of other Americans whose education left much to be desired. They could have pointed out that, if culturally they were held in low esteem, it was because they were, in part, an immigrant group coming from lands where they had experienced economic, political, social, and educational constraints. The writings that most profoundly influenced Christian attitudes to Jews were the

Gospels. The prejudices emanating from the Christian Scriptures were reinforced by religious poetry, tracts, Sunday School textbooks, novellas, stories, and histories that had been published on this continent ever since the mid-seventeenth century. Church literature occasionally said a good word for Jews, but as a rule children and adults were taught by the churches that Jews disliked and persecuted Christians. The Sons of Abraham were ready, if not eager, to do away with Jesus; their religion, their Law, was a burden; their ritual had no spirituality. Jews could save themselves only if they accepted Christianity. The implication in all orthodox Christian literature was and is that Jews are being punished for rejecting their Savior. In a sense, this notion is implicit also in Hannah Adams's *History of the Jews*, which dates from 1812, and it also explains the myth of the Wandering Jew, doomed to wander till the end of time. This mythical character was a Jerusalemite who pushed Jesus as he carried his cross to Golgotha and staggered under his burden on the Via Dolorosa: "Go faster, Jesus, why dost thou linger?" To which Jesus answered: "I indeed, am going but thou shalt tarry till I come." The Son himself had cursed the Jew. European literature in the form of chapbooks and novels on the Wandering Jew began to be republished here in the United States as early as 1760.⁸

The conviction that Judaism is spiritually inferior to Christianity prompted most Christians to oppose intermarriage with a Jew, usually a woman. Such a marriage would be a *mésalliance*. By the late eighteenth century quite a literature of stories, novels, plays and dramas dealing with this theme had developed. If a hero falls in love with a woman and discovers that she is a Jew, the shock is almost traumatic. Pious Christians, rejecting intermarriage, found a solution in the Jew's conversion. In almost no literary work of this day does the Jewish woman retain her ancestral faith; convinced of the superiority of Christianity, the heroine becomes a proselyte—cheerfully! If the father in those stories is not a miserly villain but a fine human being, he usually has a kind word to say for Jesus. Where intermarriage is tolerated in the literature, it is an unmoneyed Christian, man or woman, marrying into a rich Jewish family; the about-to-be converted Jewish heroine is invariably an heiress. In one novel of 1839, the Jewish woman falls in love with a Christian scoundrel, and when the father will not allow the marriage, she sickens and dies. This theme recurs again in a ballad written in 1899 by the famous songwriter Charles K. Harris, author of "After the Ball Was Over"; he called it "A Rabbi's Daughter." When the father, the rabbi, does not permit his child to marry her Christian lover, she lies down and dies. The song was never to become a best seller. There are exceptions to the stereotype of the Jewess marrying a Christian and embracing Jesus, but they are indeed rare. Such an exception is Charles Brocken Brown's *Arthur Mervyn* (1799-

1800). This is the story of Achsa Fielding, an American Jewish woman who had already once been married to a Gentile. Her father had offered no objection to her first marriage, nor to her second either, both to Gentiles. She is wealthy and assimilationist in her views. This is a very unusual approach for a book written at the time, but it is realistic, for it actually depicts what was then going on in the English-speaking world, in England and in the United States. Intermarriages in which neither the man nor the woman felt constrained to convert were not infrequent; husband and wife remained formally loyal to their ancestral faiths.⁹

SOME STATISTICS

One might think that belletristic works were very influential in shaping public opinion about the Jews, but this is moot. Belles lettres merely maintained and nursed prevailing stereotypes. The real makers of opinion were the churches; millions went to worship services; hundreds of thousands read tracts, which on the whole were unsympathetic to Jews and Judaism. Plays dealing with Jews and Judaism, either read as literature or seen on the stage here in the United States, were few in number. About eighty plays with at least one Jewish character had been written or produced in England since 1584; by 1821, twenty-eight of these had been staged here. A few American plays, in addition, were presented here, but were not produced abroad. Up to 1823, only about five or six American plays portrayed Jewish characters.¹⁰

THE JEW AS SCOUNDREL, BUFFOON, AND SAINT

Plays presented in England during the years 1584–1840 often depicted the typical Jew as a veritable beast. Later in the eighteenth century the Jew, at times, plays a different role; he is often presented as a buffoon, the comic relief, the poor fool who allows himself to be cheated. His stage English is almost unintelligible; every “s” becomes “sh,” a mode of speech persisting into the nineteenth century. To heighten the comedy, Christians very often appear disguised as Jews. Sometimes the role they assume is a serious attempt to conceal their identity; more often, they appear as Jews to titillate the interest of the audience, to amuse theatregoers. Thus two Christians come out on the stage disguised as Jewish old-clothes dealers; each suspects the other to be a Gentile; accordingly they challenge one another to speak Hebrew and respond by mumbling Latin and Greek phrases; the spectators apparently found this very funny. On occasion, Jews appear as decent human beings. As early as the sixteenth century, one London drama depicts the Jew as an honorable person; the Christian is the scoundrel—but, complimenting the Jew, the judge in the play says: “Jews seek to excel in Christianity, and Christians in Jewishness.” More

frequently, even when a decent Jew is portrayed, he, too, exhibits some traits not worthy of emulation. In short, the typical stage Jew was money-mad, cruel, an enemy of Christians and Christianity; his villainy runs the spectrum from wickedness to utter depravity. Very few vestiges of humanity are apparent.¹¹

This histrionic stereotype of the Jew began in 1592 with Christopher Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, whose protagonist, Barabas, the Jew, is a killer, a poisoner, a traitor. The pejorative picture reappears in Shakespeare's Shylock, the cruel, avaricious, vindictive *Merchant of Venice* (1596-1597). This became a popular play here and may have been the very first produced in this country—in Williamsburg in 1752. Shylock was popularized in James Burgh's *Art of Speaking*, an English elocution book reprinted here in many editions ever since the late eighteenth century. Excerpts from the *Merchant of Venice* were incorporated to show cruelty. Publishers frequently reprinted English belletristic works, plays, stories, and novels in which a warped picture of the Jew emerges; he is a social climber, a cheat, a smuggler, a profligate, a moneylender, a usurer, a miser, a crook, a forger. In one of the plays, the Jew sings a song describing how Moses had commanded him to rook the Gentiles. In the Barbary pirate plays so popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Jew is a traitorous enemy of the United States; he is an oppressor of American slaves in North Africa and, even when presented as a friend, is bent on feathering his own nest. American theatregoers were given the pleasure of gaping at weird types. One and the same man was a Methodist minister, a peddler, an informer, and an old-clothesman, and spoke with the traditional Jewish stage accent.¹²

In 1839 John Lothrop Motley published a book, *Morton's Hope*, in which he described vividly a Jew who was fat, vulgar, sneaky looking, baldheaded, and a moneylender. The father of the Jewess in this story was a crook. Motley, a very distinguished American, would later write some famous works, among them his histories of the Netherlands. He was to become this country's minister to Austria and to Great Britain; posthumously, he achieved immortality by election to the American Hall of Fame. In 1835-1836, Edward Henry Durell lived in New Orleans and wrote a book, *New Orleans as I found It*, a work in which he incorporated the story of a Jewish character whom he described in detail. This man, Moses Solomon, hoped to make money selling coffins for victims of the prevailing yellow fever. He himself died of the plague. Before his death, he described how he had shot his own brother, who was trying to murder him. Solomon was an utterly amoral, depraved and vile person. Durell, like Motley, was a cultured man; he had a knowledge of German and French, served later as a judge, and was once mentioned as a candidate for the vice-presidency. It is important to note that men of stature—and there

were a number of them—did not hesitate to write books delineating Jews as contemptible human beings: the implication is that Jews as a class are bad, very bad.¹³

Durell wrote in the 1830's. At that time, political liberalism had become the distinguishing attribute of the American republic. The Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and its amendments were now venerated documents, classical hallmarks in a hopeful new world. The Rights of Man had been promulgated in France; the new egalitarianism was spreading slowly in Europe; by July, 1830, there was leftist political ferment in a number of lands. All this was to touch belles lettres—there would be a new look at the Jew, the “scoundrel” and the “buffoon.” The new literary approach had already documented itself in the last quarter of the eighteenth century when the Enlightenment began to make itself felt. This humanitarian revolution, emphasizing tolerance and justice, was reflected in the German writer Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's dramatic poem, *Nathan the Wise* (1779).

In the early 1770's Richard Cumberland, the English dramatist, wrote two plays; they were typical in embodying unattractive Jews. In 1794, however, he wrote *The Jew, or Benevolent Hebrew*; Sheva, the central figure, a moneylender, is all that is noble; in fact, he is almost too good to be true. This is the first time in generations that a play was written and produced in which the hero was a Jew. Cumberland, seeking to strike a blow at prejudice, lets Sheva expatiate on the plight of the Jews:

We have no abiding place on earth, no country, no home. Everybody rails at us, everybody points us out for their may-game and their mockery. If your playwrights want a butt, or a buffoon or a knave to make sport of, out comes a Jew to be baited and buffeted through five long acts, for the amusement of all good Christians.

Cumberland's play was presented in London in 1794; the following year saw three editions published in the United States, in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York, where the comedy was “performed with universal applause.” Though this phrase was a publisher's puff, the comedy was indeed very popular; numerous editions appeared in a few years. Before 1797, it had been presented also in Charleston, Providence, and Hartford, and theatregoers were to have the pleasure of enjoying it all through the nineteenth and even into the twentieth century.¹⁴

In the 1850's, *The Jew* was produced in German in New York City; before 1900 it was to be translated into Hebrew, Russian, Yiddish, Czech and French. By 1808, however, Cumberland had returned to the almost sacrosanct traditional portrayal of these exotic infidels, for he now wrote a comic opera and a farce with less attractive Jewish characters mouthing their lingo. Still, Cumberland's success with his pro-Jewish play certainly

stimulated others to write in a similar vein. A. F. F. von Kotzebue, influenced probably by the German translation of the Cumberland comedy in 1795, cashed in on the new vogue of a good Jew. Cumberland's *Jew*, said the German playwright, had rekindled his confidence in human kindness. Kotzebue thereupon wrote two plays with attractive Jewish characters; both were produced in English in this country, one translated by John Howard Payne, grandson of a Jew. Payne cut out the minor role of the Jew. Was the translator sensitive to matters Jewish? Following in Cumberland's wake, Thomas J. Didbin, an Englishman, wrote two plays with benevolent, honest Jews. One was a farce and the other a comedy; by 1808, both had been presented here in a number of American cities.¹⁵

The late eighteenth century saw published in this country not only plays, but a novel, too, showing Jews in a good light. In 1807, Royall Tyler, a New Englander who became chief justice of the Vermont Supreme Court, wrote a picaresque novel, *The Algerine Captive*. This work, one of America's first long prose narratives, had two Jewish characters: one was mercenary and treacherous; the other, honorable. In the course of his narrative, the author went out of his way to show the absurdity of the blood libel—especially important since ritual murder accusations were frequent in the late eighteenth century, and Jews were then being put to death in Europe because of this false charge. Yet even for Tyler, Jews were still moneylenders and usurers. There is one thing that he had in common with Shakespeare; neither, it would seem, knew any Jews. There was probably not a Jew in Vermont in the 1790's, when Tyler lived there; he may have seen a few in Boston where he was born. Some Lopezes, Hayses, and Touros still lived there in the late eighteenth century, but no community had taken shape. In 1819, Scott wrote *Ivanhoe*; by 1820, it had already been adapted for the stage. Within a few years, at least eighteen different dramatizations of the novel made their appearance in England and in the United States. The story was popular; it ran true to form; it had a proper, if not a happy, ending; the Jewess did not marry the Christian; the proprieties were not offended. It is strange, very strange, that the classic tolerance-epic of modern times, Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*, was not produced on the stage in English till 1912—and then in an Episcopal church in New York City.¹⁶

THE JEW IN AMERICAN BELLES LETTRES, 1776-1840: A SUMMARY

There was always a great deal of interest in the Jews during this period, despite the fact that or even because most Americans had never seen a Jew. But they knew all about Jews through the New Testament, through Josephus, through sermons heard in the pulpit, through the liturgy, through conversations with fellow-Christians in the missionary societies, and, of course, through Scott's novel *Ivanhoe*. It is almost incredible, but it

is reported that in one year alone, in 1594, at least twenty dramas with at least one Jewish character were written in England; and this at a time when there was hardly a known Jew in the country! In studying the literary image of the Jew in the United States as mirrored in fiction or drama, it is important to remember that the British certainly had a jaundiced view of the Jew, a view which stretched back to the Middle Ages and its monkish chroniclers, to a time of mass murders. This prejudice was not erased when in 1656 Jews were again allowed to set up a religious community in the realm. Great Britain's Jews were not given political rights until the closing decades of the nineteenth century. English prejudice was transmitted here through novels and plays; most dramas and comedies presented on the American stage were of English origin. On the library shelves of the American Antiquarian Association are some 1,150 fictional works published or reprinted in the United States between the years 1800 and 1850. Over 280 have some reference to Jews and their religion, but in only twenty-two do they play a role. The themes are almost monotonous in their constancy: the moneylending Jew is clever and crooked; his daughter will marry a Christian; she will even die on the battlefield with a cross clutched in her hand. Noble Jews are not totally absent, but in general the image reflected in the literature of the period is a negative one.¹⁷

What influence, if any, did these writings exercise? That is the question. It is quite possible that Mr. Simms, of Charleston, might go to a play featuring a Jewish scoundrel, but when he saw Mr. Cohen, Mr. Lazarus, or Mr. Mordecai, he hastened to greet them graciously; he knew they were fine citizens. On the other hand, for some who sat in the theatre, portrayal of the Jew as base and inhuman was accurate. These individuals had no doubt that the evils portrayed on the stage were true to life and justified the contempt with which they viewed these avaricious aliens. The Jews, always fearful, resented the anti-Jewish presentations. It was little consolation to the thoughtful among them that Catholics, too, were constantly under attack or that Yankees were considered "sharper" even than Jews. Jews only knew that they were being hurt; they were annoyed by these literary assaults and stage caricatures, but it was not until the first quarter of the twentieth century that they created a national organization to fight misrepresentation in the communications media. Their B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League was founded in 1913. Then Jews, politically and economically powerful, were able to induce newspapers and news agencies like the Associated Press to stop printing attacks on them. Indeed, as early as the 1790's, with the rise of the new humanitarianism, Gentile litterateurs knew full well that they had been perpetuating denigratory stereotypes which in no sense held up the mirror to actuality. Even though a realistic picture of the Jew was not to be presented for

many decades, writers knew that the nasty Jew on the stage had no relationship to the decent Jew in the pit. Accordingly, some authors in their prologues, or somewhere else, apologized in advance for their aspersions. It is immaterial whether they meant it; they knew their attacks were unfair. Barabas, *The Jew of Malta*, was infamous; when the play opened in the United States for the first time in 1821, there was an apologia in the prologue:

Then far from us long be th' invidious aim
To cast opprobrium, o'er the Hebrew name.

Having made their apology in advance, the producers then proceeded to present this hellhound, the Jew. Mrs. Susanna Haswell Rowson, an American, wrote the play *Slaves in Algiers* in 1794. In the early glow of American egalitarianism, she had to justify her introduction of a Jewish villain. Knowing that the Jewish people would be smeared, she hastened to make clear that the evil Jew is only a symbol in a war. Here is a moral play; she is holding up vice to ridicule, she said.¹⁸

Even in those days, playwrights and producers were not Sunday School teachers; their prime concern was the box office. Whether saints or sinners were reflected in their writings, they attempted to give audiences what the writers thought the people wanted to hear and to see. There was no special animus on the part of the authors; the Jew was merely another puppet to be jiggled for the amusement of the spectator. Dramatists and novelists were convinced that the public was interested in the Jew primarily as a moneybags. The word Jew spelt filthy lucre—filthy because it had been acquired dishonestly. (There may be an element of envy here, since Jewish businessmen had high visibility on the wharves and on Market Street.) Despite the growing political liberalism, the stereotypes of the detestable Jew persisted. Political equality for all? Yes! Of course. No question. The Jew is really different? Yes! Of course. No question. In 1831, James Fenimore Cooper wrote a historical novel he called *The Bravo*, one of whose characters, Hosea, the jeweler and moneylender, is a grasping Hebrew, a knave, greedy and a would-be murderer. Cooper knew that Jews in the United States were making careers for themselves. This pleased him; yet in the ambivalent world in which he lived, he could glory in American freedom and unhesitatingly paint Jews in the darkest colors.¹⁹

Most writers were probably not conscious of the ethical implications of their art; they may not even have been interested. Tom Paine was a great liberal, but in 1775 he exploited the common prejudices in *The Monk and the Jew*, a story in verse in which a Catholic compels a drowning Jew to accept conversion and then drowns him to make sure he will not return to his vomit, his Jewish faith. This is a "comic" story, at least as old

as Luther's *Table Talk*. Christians who disliked or despised Jews could not help but feel that Jews also disliked them. This conviction—incidentally, it may well have been false—was sufficient justification for rejecting Jews. Prejudice was a vicious circle; it preyed upon itself. Jews were unhappy with the prevalence of phrases that smeared them, because they were convinced of the efficacy of indoctrination through the written and spoken word. Shylock had been portrayed on the stage in almost every town in this country, at times by actors as gifted as Junius Brutus Booth. He was very convincing. George Washington in all likelihood saw *The Merchant of Venice* at Williamsburg or Alexandria, Virginia, when it was presented in those towns. It is known that on December 4, 1794, he saw a portrayal of Shadrach Boaz in *The Young Quaker*. Boaz is one of the worst scoundrels ever portrayed on the stage. It would be interesting to know what went through Washington's mind as he watched the play. He knew very few real Jews—a dozen at the most, it would seem. Two were officers, veterans of the late Revolution. Certainly he knew that these men, David S. Franks and Isaac Franks, were not subhuman.²⁰

ATTITUDES OF NOTABLES TOWARD JEWS

Were the great and the notable prejudiced against the Jews? In fact there were few distinguished Americans who did not on occasion enjoy the luxury of making derogatory remarks about Jews. Horace remarked that "Homer himself hath been observed to nod." The historian must note these falls from grace; interpreting them is something else. Eager in 1797 to further a client's interest, Alexander Hamilton, acting as a lawyer, had no hesitation in court in smearing an opponent as "Shylock the Jew." His goal was to win the case. But Hamilton not infrequently represented Jews also; he was by no means their enemy. In his office records, Dr. Benjamin Rush put the word "Jew" after the name of his Jewish clients, but this was a descriptive term, objectionable possibly, but devoid of hostility; it was a non-affective form of identification, at least as old as the medieval charters. True, in the mind of this cultured, distinguished man, Jews were different; he was a pious Christian and very eager to convert them. Tom Paine, Hugh Henry Brackenridge, and Washington Irving, among other writers of the early republic, used phrases or references that were patronizing, if not hostile, to Jews.²¹

Hugh Henry Brackenridge, father of the Hugh Marie Brackenridge who helped emancipate the Jews of Maryland, was himself a liberal associated with John Israel, of Pittsburgh, in the attempt to elect Jefferson in 1800. Yet in his novel *Modern Chivalry* (1792-1818), the elder Brackenridge used uncomplimentary language about Jews. Washington Irving, as a young political hack, attacked a Clinton Democrat as a "little ugly

Jew.” The same reproach was used by the Federalists in Philadelphia in 1800, when they held the Democrats up to scorn. Irving also employed the word “Jew” as a verb, “screwing and jewing the world out of more interest than one’s money is entitled to.” Jefferson deemed Judaism a religion of low order; its doctrines, he thought, were often degrading and immoral. Madison, lending himself to the dismissal of a Jew from his consular post, cited as one of his reasons the man’s religion. Yet all these men were staunch proponents of political equality for all—white—citizens, regardless of religious belief. The Adamses were *sui generis*. Unlike Tom Paine and Jefferson, John Adams was a great admirer of Hebraism: “the Hebrews have done more to civilize men than any other nation”; Abraham had given religion to “the greatest part of the civilized world.” His son, John Quincy Adams, though no admirer of M. M. Noah, the Jew, wrote a strong letter to the English in 1833, recommending that Jews be emancipated. No set of men could be better subjects, he said.²²

When Francis Lieber, the social reformer and political liberal, edited the *Encyclopaedia Americana*, he paid homage to modern Jewish scholars, merchants, and philanthropists, but he did not fail to add that the disabilities to which Jews had been exposed had debased most of them and had encouraged ingenuity and cunning. The Philadelphia sales agents for his *Encyclopaedia* were E. L. Carey and A. Hart, in a way a Jewish firm. In 1837, William H. Prescott in his *History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella* discussed the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and expressed his sorrow at the plight of this unfortunate people. Going on with his narrative, he reported that Jews had maintained a “pertinacious attachment to ancient errors” and had attempted unsuccessfully to propitiate Ferdinand and Isabella with “their usual crafty policy.” It is rather curious that this eminent historian would condemn Jews for trying to save their families and their fortunes and seeking to prevent their expulsion from a country where they had lived for almost 1,500 years and where they had given birth to celebrated cartographers, philosophers, mathematicians, astronomers, and statesmen.²³

Five years before Prescott published his *Ferdinand and Isabella*, Solomon Etting, of Baltimore, sat down to write a letter to a great American, Henry Clay, the well-known Senator from Kentucky and a candidate for the presidency. Etting wrote to find out why, in a public debate in the Senate, the Senator had described a man as “Moses Myers, the Jew.” Etting was nothing if not candid in his letter: “The term, Sir, you used was a ‘reproachful designation.’ Its use is considered illiberal. If therefore you have no antipathy to the people of that religious society [the Jews] . . . explain to me by a line what induced the expression.” At that time, Etting was sixty-eight years of age and was one of Baltimore’s most distinguished citizens. Fourteen years earlier the city had named a street after

him. He had come a long way from the family's humble beginnings in the little shop in York, on the frontier, where he was born in 1764 and where his mother, Shinah Solomon Etting, had charmed Captain Alexander Graydon and John Dickinson, the "Pennsylvania Farmer," by her agreeable singing and her zest for fun and frolic. Young Etting had married Joseph Simon's daughter; when she died, he remained within the Simon-Gratz circle by marrying Rachel, the daughter of Barnard Gratz. His business career and connections brought him first to Lancaster, then to Philadelphia and to New York. Wherever he went, he lived as an observant Jew and joined the congregation. Already as a boy of eighteen, he had learned the art of slaughtering cattle according to the Jewish rite; this implied that he had some knowledge of the Hebrew texts which discussed the laws of ritual slaughter. Etting's last stop was Baltimore, where he first opened a hardware shop, but finally wound up as a merchant-shipper. He made money and during the first decade of the century, stood out as one of the founders of the Baltimore Water Company and one of the enterprisers seeking to establish the Baltimore East India Company, a million-dollar corporation, to exploit the China and Calcutta trade. From 1797 to 1826, he had fought to make the Maryland Jew the equal of all men before the law. Now he was greatly annoyed to hear that a distinguished Senator—whom he knew personally—had referred, disparagingly, to a Virginia merchant as "Moses Myers, the Jew."

What were the circumstances that prompted Clay to make this remark? During the summer of 1832, there was an acrimonious debate in the Senate on the subject of the revision of the 1828 "Tariff of Abominations." The wool, iron, hemp, textile, and other forces of the North and the plantation interests of the South were all jockeying for a tariff bill that would bring each of them a maximum of benefit. Hayne of South Carolina, Clay of Kentucky, and Webster of Massachusetts were among the chief disputants. In the course of the debate, Hayne, a free trader, protested against protectionist lobbyists; Clay, a protectionist, countering that the free traders were tarred with the same brush, denounced one of the Southern lobbyists whom he described as a small man with red hair "flitting" between the House of Representatives and the Treasury department. He went even farther and identified him as "Moses Myers, the Jew." Myers, a third-generation American, was one of the leading citizens of Norfolk; his features have been preserved for posterity in a fine portrait by Gilbert Stuart. A number of Jews were disturbed and distressed by Clay's remarks smearing a political opponent by identifying him as a Jew. Clay's attack was not in accord with the spirit of liberal America. These Jews were certainly resolved not to keep silent nor to shrug it off; the Ettings and the Gratzes had a fighting tradition. Rebecca Gratz wrote at once to her Christian sister-in-law in Lexington, Ben Gratz's wife: "Do,

Maria, when you see Mr. Clay, ask what was meant by an allusion to Moses Myers, the Jew." Clay, we know from Rebecca's letters, had Jewish friends in Baltimore, probably the Ettings. He was close to the Gratzes, to both the Philadelphia and the Lexington branches. The whole clan was devoted to him and was eager to see him become President. Years later, Ben Gratz would serve as pallbearer at the great statesman's funeral. Clay answered Etting immediately:

The remark was intended to describe a person and not to denounce a Nation. . . . I Judge of men not exclusively by their Nation, religion, etc., but by their individual conduct. I have always had the happiness to enjoy the friendship of many Jews, among [them] one of the Gratzes of Lex'n [Lexington].

Generally, Clay's attitude toward his Jewish fellow citizens was friendly enough. A crackpot from Louisville, anticipating the jargon of the twentieth-century racist, even described Clay as a tool of the Jews and wrote a rambling letter to Clay's rival Martin Van Buren pointing out all the machinations of Kentucky Jews and their close relations to Clay, whose son had even married one of these corrupt people. It is true that one of Clay's sons married a Louisville girl reputed to be of Jewish origin. Indeed, many years later, one of Clay's grandsons did marry a daughter of Ben Gratz. Just a year after Clay attacked Moses Myers, Augustus E. Cohen, a young Charlestonian Jew, wrote the Senator expressing his great admiration for him and asking for the privilege of reading law in his office. When, in 1851, the recently negotiated commercial treaty with Switzerland was presented to the Senate, Clay, Webster, and others refused to confirm it because it discriminated against American Jewish citizens: "This is not the country nor the age in which unjust prejudices should receive any countenance," said the Kentuckian. This is the "Jewish" background of Henry Clay. The man was no anti-Jew and belonged to no religious sect but inherited illiberal phrases emerge in periods of stress.²⁴

THE MINIS AFFAIR

One might think that antiquity of settlement is a defense against Judeophobic aspersions, especially against denunciations of the Jew as an alien. The Minis Affair proves that even pioneer Jews—"Founding Fathers," as it were—are not spared. For many Americans, Jews were and are the eternal strangers and newcomers. The Minis family, however, came to Georgia in 1733, a few months after the arrival of Oglethorpe and the establishment of the new colony. Philip Minis (d. 1789) was said to have been the first white male child born in Savannah. In August, 1832, his grandson of the same name, Dr. Philip Minis, shot and killed James Jones Stark

in an altercation. There had been trouble between the two for months. Stark had suggested that Minis name his horse Shylock (Shylock, too, was a moneymaker). He had also referred to Minis as “a damned Israelite”; “he ought to be pissed upon.” There was talk of a duel that was never arranged, and when the two met in a barroom, they both pulled their pistols. Minis was quicker on the draw and killed Stark. In the trial for murder that followed, Minis was found not guilty on January 23, 1833. But why had Stark despised Minis so? Considering the influence to which he was exposed, what choice did he have? A Jew was a Shylock, all that was evil. As a Christian, Stark had learned in Sunday School and church to look down upon Jews and their religion. Many, probably most, of the social and cultural influences that enveloped a typical Christian of that day in Georgia made for a measure of hostility to the Sons of Abraham. Philip Minis, a physician, left Savannah, married one of the New York Livingstons, and from all indications reared a family of Christians. Had he killed a man to defend his religion or his “honor”?²⁵

RELIGIOUS PREJUDICE

Churchgoing Christians were taught that Christianity was the best of all faiths. Other religions, including Judaism, were held inferior and Jews as followers of Judaism were implicitly also inferior. Even non-churchgoing Gentiles—the majority in America—were exposed to and often adopted the traditional anti-Jewish prejudices. Thus, Jews have had their cross to bear ever since the establishment of Christianity. Not unaware of the fulminations constantly issuing from the pulpits of the land, Noah in 1818, delivered a discourse at the rebuilt Mill Street Synagogue in New York; he hoped that less asperity and more tolerance would flow from the mouths of the ministers of religion. His protest was mild, since he knew that there would be many Christians in the audience; “We never arraign the faith of others—let none then arraign our faith.” Protestantism, resurgent, kept pounding. In an 1827 address, the Rev. Ezra Stiles Ely (1786–1861), a cultured Philadelphia Presbyterian minister, called on the Christians of America to establish “a Christian party in politics.” Ely assured his auditors and readers that, if the important Protestant sects would only unite, they could rule the country. None but Orthodox and observant Christians should be allowed to hold office. “The Duty of Christian Freemen to Elect Christian Rulers” is what he called his sermon, and the title eloquently reflected his hopes: “We are a Christian nation; we have a right to demand that all our rulers in their conduct shall conform to Christian morality.” Had this “union,” as Ely called it, been successful, the Jews of the United States would have been in trouble.²⁶

THE MISSIONARY MOVEMENT

The Protestant imperialism of an Ely was important, reflecting as it did the sincere aspiration of a large number of American citizens. The push for Protestant control was not unrelated to a coeval missionary movement which hoped to bring Jews to Jesus and considered it imperative that Jews convert. Why? Patterning themselves on the ancient Hebrews who had taught that there was but one religious truth, the Christians insisted "that truth we possess; it is your only salvation." "For God so loved the world (and the Jews, too) that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Of course, if a true Christian insists on converting Jews, it is because of his desperate and truly sincere desire to "save" them, not to destroy them. Jews must be rescued spiritually for their own sake. This is not enmity; this is affection. Jews are the *testes veritatis*, the witnesses of the truth. If Jews, contemporaries of Jesus, accept Christianity, who can assert that the Jesus story is a myth, a lie agreed upon? The conversion of the Jews could be the final proof of the superiority of Christianity. Prophecy guarantees the conversion of the Jews. After their conversion will come the millennium, then the Second Advent of Jesus and happiness, time without end. Good Christians found it difficult to understand why the Jews rejected Jesus. Did they not realize that, if they persisted in their error, they were doomed to burn in hell for all eternity? Under no circumstances could the Jews be ignored; there could be no millennium without them. The apocalyptic hopes were all in vain; history and religion had no future if the Jews remained recalcitrant; hence the missionary movement.

Missionary efforts to convert Jews to Christianity are as old as Saint Paul. During the Middle Ages the threat of violence was almost never absent from proselytization, but with the dawn of modern times, force was frowned upon among Christians. Dialectic and appeal were favored, particularly in the period following the French Revolution when human dignity and the Rights of Man were emphasized. Around the turn of the eighteenth century, societies to Christianize the Jews were founded in England. The organized American missionary drive had its roots in the England of that day. Even earlier, however, Christians in this country had been busy trying to save Indian souls; some, like John Eliot, Roger Williams, and William Penn, wondered whether the Indians were not the Lost Ten Tribes. Converted Jews had played a part in the history of the Western Hemisphere as early as 1492. It may well be that the first person over the side on October 12, 1492, was the converso interpreter Luis de Torres, needed to speak to the Jews whom Columbus and his Argonauts expected to meet when they landed. Jews were everywhere in Asia. Solomon Franco, one of the first Jews in British North America, arrived at

Boston in 1649, in a day when Governor William Bradford, John Alden, and Miles Standish were still alive. Franco soon returned to London where he served as the Jewish conventicle's "rabbi" and then became a convert to Christianity. The first Jew to teach at Harvard—in 1722—was Judah Monis, a convert, employed as an instructor in Hebrew. There has never been a time when there were no converts to Christianity in this country; a few of them carved out notable careers for themselves.²⁷

All through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries individual clergymen worked to convert Jews. Missionary booklets describing conversionist successes among European Jews were reprinted and eagerly read in the North American colonies and later in the new United States. In 1692, Increase Mather was sorely disappointed when a Jew he was trying to convert refused to see the light. The "hardnd wrech" sailed for Jamaica where he died in his infidelity. Ever since the late eighteenth century, there have been Christian Jewish missionaries in this country. The first was Joseph Heydeck (Heideck, Hideck, Heidek, Hydec), *né* Moses Levi. Heydeck came to the United States in 1787 and preached in Philadelphia and probably in Charleston, too. The latter city was the bridgehead from which he sallied forth to convert the Indians, the remnants of the Ten Tribes; evidently, he had not come here to convert latter-day Jews. Heydeck had a checkered career. Born in Germany in 1755, he became an Anglican in England and a Catholic in Germany; and then once again he turned to Protestantism, but died a Catholic. He labored in the vineyard of the Lord in England; in his later years he made his home in Spain, where he taught Hebrew, wrote several books, and engaged in scholarly pursuits. As was true of a number of other Christian Jews, his adherence to moral and scholarly values left something to be desired.²⁸

In the year that Heydeck called on the Indians of the South to accept Christianity, Joseph Priestley appealed to the Jews in England to embrace the teachings of Jesus. Priestley was a scholarly scientist and Unitarian clergyman, but believed, like orthodox Protestants, that the Jews would be restored to their ancient homeland soon; he hoped, too, that they would first accept Jesus. The Galilean, said Priestley, was the greatest of all prophets, for only he had risen from the dead. Once Jews saw the light, the Gentiles, the heathen, would follow in their wake, and all mankind would thus be brought to the knowledge of the true God. Several years later, in 1794, Priestley came to the United States, where he maintained his interest in bringing Jews into the fold. His approach was low key; in no sense was he a typical professional missionary; he was a man of exemplary character and intelligence.²⁹

By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, missionary groups were already formally organized in New England to convert the Indians, to bring religion to the white settlers on the frontier, and to save the

heathen across the seas by bringing them the good tidings contained in the Gospels. The reaction to the excesses of the French Revolution and the revivalism of the Second Awakening in the late 1790's gave birth to a fervent evangelical spirit. Conservatives fought American Jacobinism. The new crusading Protestantism overwhelmed the rationalism of the Deists, the freethinkers, and the religious liberals. "Reborn" Christians were determined, come hell or high water, to save their own souls, those of their neighbors—and those of the Jews. It was during this wave of religious euphoria, after the turn of the century, that the American Protestant Counter-Reformation brought forth missionary magazines, the American Bible Society, and the American Tract Society. Later, the country was to see the rise of the American Sunday School Union and dozens of denominational colleges and theological seminaries.³⁰

Individual Christian Jews preaching the gospel began to make their appearance no later than the second decade of the new century. With one notable exception, they did not work among Jews. Disregarding the implications of the first amendment, the United States provided substantial subventions to missionary organizations which worked to convert the Indians. Joseph Wolff (1795-1862), a convert, missionary and Orientalist, was active at Philadelphia in 1837. He was already known to many Americans, for his *Missionary Journal and Memoir* had been published here in 1824. During his 1837 visit, he republished an edition of his book describing his conversionist labors in Europe, Africa, and Asia. When he preached in Philadelphia crowds flocked to hear him. It was probably not at all his purpose to devote himself to the conversion of American Jews. The most distinguished Christian Jew to labor in the American missionary field at this time was Ludwig Sigmund Jacoby (1813-1874). After his conversion to Lutheranism in Germany, this young Jewish proselyte came to Cincinnati in 1839 and there accepted Methodism. He became a Methodist missionary, working very successfully among German Christians in the Mississippi Valley. Jacoby, too, was not personally concerned with the task of Christianizing America's Jews. In the course of his labors he published tracts and studies in German on the history of Methodism and, stricken with his last illness, wrote on the power of religion to help those who faced death.³¹

In earlier decades, Hannah Adams (1755-1831) had been very much interested in the conversion of the Jews. No missionary herself, Miss Adams was an educated cultured woman, a professional writer, one of the first of her sex in this country to support herself by her pen. In 1812, her *History of the Jews* appeared. The title page of Volume One bears a quotation from Deuteronomy 28:64-65, which describes the terrible sufferings of the Jews. Was this an intimation—though certainly not a witting one—that Jews would continue to suffer until they accepted Christianity?

The title page of Volume Two reprinted Jeremiah 31:10-28 with its promise that the Jews would ultimately be gathered and restored; there was no doubt in her mind that at long last they would accept the faith which they had rejected for over 1,700 years. Her conversionist hopes are clearly expressed on the last page of Volume Two of the original Boston edition. There is every reason to believe that Adams was one of the Boston women who in 1815 gathered together to send money to the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews. This group was influenced by reports of the success enjoyed by a Christian Jew, Mr. Frey, a missionary to the Jews in England. The following year, Miss Adams wrote *A Concise Account of the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews*. She and her friends then established the Female Society of Boston and Vicinity for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews, the first group which set out in the United States to work for the conversion of Jews, though the money raised was sent to London.³²

That same year, 1816, the movement to “save” Our Lord’s American cousins took on flesh with the arrival on these shores of Joseph Samuel Frederick Frey (pronounced Free). He called himself “Free” because the Apostle John had assured him: “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (18:32,36). Frey’s original name was Joseph Samuel Levi. Born in Bavaria, he received a relatively good Jewish education there and was able, when young, to serve a Jewish community as precentor and shohet. At the age of twenty-seven, he accepted Christianity in New Brandenburg. Frey was intelligent and quick to learn. After he became a Christian, he acquired some knowledge of Greek, Latin, and Oriental tongues, wrote several books, and gradually built up a large library of his own. From Germany he went to England, where in 1809 he helped found the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews. In 1816, after years as a missionary to his former coreligionists, he sailed for America, where he was soon ordained. He was no stranger to the pious here. *A Short Account of Mr. Frey, a Converted Jew* had been published in Hartford about the year 1807. Frey was to have an interesting, if not distinguished, career in the United States, though he was constantly haunted by reports that reflected seriously on his integrity. Shortly after his arrival, he helped some New York ministers organize the American Society for Evangelizing the Jews; the group accomplished nothing. Four years later, Frey and his friends sought a charter in New York for a new organization to evangelize the Jews. The legislators disliked the word evangelize; they feared that the society would breach the wall between church and state, but they did license the more pleasingly titled American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews.³³

The new organization was concerned chiefly with the needs of European Jews suffering abuse or disabilities, which was the case in most Euro-

pean countries. "Melioration" meant that Jewish-Christians or would-be converts could, and should, come to the United States to enjoy opportunities denied them in their homelands. Frey, sympathetic to the blacks suffering in the South, also wanted to "meliorate" their servitude, though he played no active part in the abolitionist movement. Some of the best men—and best politicians—of this country were willing to lend their names to the new group; John Quincy Adams, Elias Boudinot, former president of the Continental Congress, and James Buchanan, as well as the president of Yale and a former head of the college in Princeton were among the directors. For a brief period the American Society spread like wildfire; hundreds of cells were established, even in villages that were never to see an Israelite. Though there was not a Jew in town, Portland, Maine, may have had two conversionist groups. The vice-president of one of them was that famous ascetic, the Rev. Edward Payson, who so belabored his congregants for their sins that some of them—after a Sunday workout—facetiously addressed one another as "Brother Devil."³⁴

Over the years, a vigorous, far-reaching literary program was developed; meetings to convert Jews became a social activity arousing fervent enthusiasm and devotion. Conversionist tracts continued to roll off the presses. Some items appeared in German; a Hebrew version of the New Testament was made available. Hannah Adams's Female Society of Boston and Vicinity for Promoting Christianity among the Jews helped finance a missionary dedicated to the conversion of the Jews in Palestine. (Christian missionaries even succeeded in securing a very generous gift from Judah Touro to aid suffering Christians in Jerusalem.) In 1821, a Philadelphian reprinted a Hebrew translation of a catechism that had first appeared at London in 1689. It is doubtful that many Jews in the United States could read and understand a Hebrew tract couched in theological terminology entirely foreign to them. The American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews began publishing two conversionist magazines, *Israel's Advocate* in 1823 and *The Jewish Intelligencer* in 1837. The catchy titles of these Christian periodicals annoyed Jews, who feared that unwary coreligionists might think them Jewish publications. These missionary papers carried stories of Jews who had become converts. In 1823, Moses Stuart, the authority on Hebrew grammar at the Andover Theological Seminary, preached the sermon when the young Rev. William G. Schauffler was sent as a missionary to the Jews in Jerusalem. Here, too, the Boston ladies added their mite. Three years later, Rebecca Gratz, with something of a glint in her eye, regaled her Christian sister-in-law in Lexington with an account of a zealous Philadelphia matron who had bidden the Jewess to think of her soul and emerge from darkness to light.³⁵

Frey seems to have been an excellent organizer and fund-raiser. He traveled, preached eloquently, and brought in substantial sums of money. One of the prime goals of the American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews was to establish a colony, where foreign Jewish proselytes and novices, fleeing from Europe and from rejection by both Christians and Jews, would find a secluded haven. All these Hebrew Christians and would-be Christian colonists—impoverished drifters, for the most part—were expected to come over at their own expense and to exhibit credentials, a requirement which can only imply that the Society's Christian leaders questioned the integrity and sincerity of the very people for whom the Society had been created. Here, in free America, however, the newcomers would be able to emancipate themselves from the "moral debasement of unbelief in Jesus Christ" and be rehabilitated through the gospel of hard labor on the soil. In view of the strong emphasis on isolation and on the virtue of backbreaking work, one is almost tempted to suspect that the Society was determined to punish these soft-handed denizens of urban ghettos, but if this was so, it was probably unconscious. The effort, in 1820, to bring Jews back to the soil was not to be limited to converts. It was part of a much larger movement, widespread in Europe and the United States among both Christians and Jews, to find salvation by a return to the simple life, the plough. In the American forest primeval, in a land where, presumably, no distinctions were made, all men would ultimately find economic and emotional salvation. "Agriculture," declaimed Noah, "is the cradle of virtues and the school of patriotism." The Society's colony never got off (or more precisely, onto) the ground; the colporteurs who hawked the gospels made no converts, and as early as 1816 the *Niles Weekly Register* blandly informed the Protestants of America that converts would cost about \$100,000 a head. But the hosts who filled out the Society's rosters were happy; their participation gave them an almost euphoric moral and spiritual uplift. They saw nothing incongruous between their efforts to induce Jews to forswear their age-old faith and the solemn admonition of a typical state constitution: "All men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences."³⁶

CHRISTIAN OPPOSITION TO MISSIONS TO THE JEWS

Many Christians were opposed to missionary work; some, the Baptists particularly, believed such activity unscriptural. Of course, most Christian opponents of conversionist activity were in no degree moved by concern for Jews. These Christians had reasons all their own. There were religious associations which adopted resolutions denouncing organized missions: when God dispatched Jonah to call on the sinners of Nineveh to repent, the prophet was not commissioned by a missionary society; mis-

sionaries were working for money, not for God; it was against God's will to employ a human agency to convert either Christians or Jews. As reported above, others said that it was too costly to maintain missionaries; it was all a waste of money. Some of these converts, it was said, reverted to Judaism after the money they had received ran out; converts were crooks out to exploit gullible Christians. Many Gentiles shared the view of an English Christian that the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews succeeded only in making bad Jews into worse Christians. The cost of manufacturing a half-Christian out of a whole Jew would support twenty poor but honest Christian families for twelve months, said another Christian adversary. One would-be wit wrote that, when Christians responded to the conversionist support of the Rev. Hosea Smoothtongue, they gave money in order to conceal their own Jewish style of cheating. Another smart aleck said that Christians cheated by Jewish clothiers ought to organize a society and call it the American Society for Ameliorating the Condition of the Jewed.³⁷

It ought to be borne in mind that the 1816 anti-missionary, anti-Frey polemics, *Koul Jacob* and *Tobit's Letters to Levi*, were either republished or written by Gentiles, not Jews. There were Christians, not necessarily philosemites, who were liberals. They feared the growth of orthodox Christianity; large national conversionist organizations might become politically powerful enough to breach the wall between church and state and establish Protestantism as the recognized national American church. The Jews had a right to their own religion, many Christians believed. These Gentiles would have agreed heartily with Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, the Swiss educator who, on April 7, 1799, wrote Johann Heinrich Daniel Zchokke, the German author, indignantly rejecting the proposal that Jewish children in a Christian orphan asylum be reared as Christians. This was religious prejudice, said Pestalozzi, who ended his note with the suggestion: "Commence conversion with yourself." Many liberals believed that religion was entirely a personal matter; it was un-American to trespass on the religious sensibilities of others. It is this sensitivity that explains the action of the New York state legislature in refusing to charter the American Society for Evangelizing the Jews. An anti-conversionist Englishman, tongue in cheek, offered his own objection to Jewish missions. If converted, Jews would all eat pork, the price would soon go up, indigent Christians would find their staples too costly and would starve to death. An Episcopalian, attacking the Philadelphia Ladies' Society for Converting Jews, said that an Episcopalian would deeply resent it if the Quakers were to try to induce him to leave his faith, or vice versa. Missionary work, he implied, is a form of harassment and will only serve to evoke stronger Jewish loyalties. The Old Testament ethics are excellent; leave the Jews alone; we Americans believe in religious liberty.³⁸

JEWISH OPPOSITION AND ANSWERS TO MISSIONARIES

Jews were, and still are, deeply offended by the overtures of missionaries. In large part, their hypersensitivity stems from the fact that they have no understanding whatsoever of the mystique of Christian theology. The Christian concept of salvation is incomprehensible to them. The drama of Christ, the crucified savior, is for most Jews irrational; they fail to realize what Jesus the Christ can mean to a truly pious Christian. For such a man, salvation is a religious experience completely independent of cultural accomplishments. The true Christian who loves his Jewish neighbor wants him to be "saved"; the Jew who is pressed to apostatize—and who not infrequently is intellectually superior to his would-be converter—receives the invitation to surrender his own spiritual and ethical traditions as a gross insult to his human dignity and his spiritual integrity. It is true that Jewish tradition speaks of a share in the world to come, of piling up mitzvot for the afterlife in the Garden of Eden (Paradise), but Jews, nonetheless—perhaps because of the need to struggle for survival—are characteristically minded to address themselves to the problems of *this* world. Their commonest retort to Christian soul-hunters is: We have an ethical way of life; leave us alone; look after your own Christian sinners.

In answering Christian appeals to convert, Orthodox Jews resorted to exegesis, logic, and history. Exegetically, Jews and Christians stand on the same ground: the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, is "true." Christians, interpreting certain proof texts in Isaiah and Daniel, claim that they document the authenticity and return of Jesus who is God, Savior, and Messiah. The Jews, denying this, maintain that the prophetic verses refer to events at the time of the prophets. Logic? The Jews declare that the concept of the Trinity is irrational; three are one and one is three, is irrational. History? The Jews dismiss the contention that they have been cursed because they rejected Jesus. Obviously, they reply, this is wrong; Jews are prosperous; Jesus has brought war, not peace, to the world; there is virtually no such thing as Christianity; what is called Christianity is but a swarm of sects with different theologies. Let Christians bear in mind that there are numerous converts to Judaism, born Christians who have come to believe that Judaism is a superior faith. Judaism is not moribund; it is alive and vital; it is in the ascendant. Witness the Unitarian movement which is moving theologically in the direction of Judaism. Reacting to the aggressiveness of the missionaries, Jews resorted to apologetics and polemics. They reprinted older English works, prepared new ones, and called on liberal Christians to come to their defense. Conversionist assaults compelled Jews to become literary and articulate. The books and pamphlets, *Tobit's Letters to Levi*, *Koul Jacob*, *Israel Vindicated*, Solomon H. Jackson's *Examination and Answer to a Sermon Delivered by the Rev. George Stanley Faber*, Jackson's magazine, *The Jew*, Levi's letter in *The Correspon-*

dent, and Leeser's *Claims of the Jews to an Equality of Rights* all attest to the fact that the Jews and their friends were determined to oppose the conversionists vigorously.³⁹

If the Jews of that generation had been asked whom they most detested, they would have answered apostates who attempt to convert their former coreligionists. The scholarly Moses Stuart of the Andover seminary, pointed out that a defector from Judaism is called a *meshummad*, and he translated this word quite correctly: one who "ought to be devoted to utter destruction." The Jews did not wish their condition to be "ameliorated"; they did not think that their religion was inferior. On the contrary, they were convinced that no moral revelation would ever supersede the pronouncements at Sinai. The missionary denigration of Judaism was insulting and dangerous; it stimulated prejudice against the Jew who was already frightened and always conscious of the disabilities under which he labored in Europe and in the United States. In the year of grace 1820, there was no country in the world, not even Holland, France, or England, where Jewish citizens were accorded complete equality. The missionary movement was deemed cruel, for through bribery—as the Jews conceived it—children were weaned away from their parents and families were shattered.⁴⁰

The Jews were so prejudiced against proselytization of any type that they were even hesitant to accept converts from Christianity into their synagogues. Following a mid-eighteenth-century ordinance of Shearith Israel of New York City, the Charleston Jews, as late as 1820, adopted the following article:

This congregation will not encourage or interfere with making proselytes under any pretence whatever, nor shall any such be admitted under the jurisdiction of this Congregation, until he, she, or they produce legal and satisfactory credentials, from some other Congregation, where a regular Chief, or Rabbi and Hebrew Consistory is established; and, provided, he, she, or they are not people of color.⁴¹

A generation later, a zealous Jew in Baltimore wrote to President Tyler to protest that General Winfield Scott had presided at a missionary meeting in that city. In his answer, Tyler made it clear that the General had acted in his capacity as a private citizen; every American had the right to freedom and choice in matters of conscience. But, said the President, the government itself did not appear officially in any religious act; in this respect the guarantees of the Constitution would know no diminution. "No religious establishment by law exists among us." This almost pathological fear of missionaries has persisted among Jews to the present day. Despite the fact that in the State of Israel the number of converts to Judaism far exceeds the number of Jews who opt for Christianity, that republic in 1977 passed a law punishing severely anyone who offered material benefits to a Jew in order to induce him to change his religion.⁴²

1977 passed a law punishing severely anyone who offered material benefits to a Jew in order to induce him to change his religion.⁴²

Were missions to the Jews really anti-Jewish? Jews thought so; Christians did not. Christianity, in seeking to convert the Jew, wanted to assure him of everlasting life. All this was on a conscious, overt level, but subconsciously, Christian salvation would have to mean Jewish destruction. Conversion would amount to cultural and religious genocide; Jews would disappear—loved to death! When defections did occur, Jews comforted themselves for these losses with the thought that no self-respecting individual would ever change his faith. But they were wrong. Some defectors from Judaism have been very notable, persons of character and distinction. Practically all Jews would have subscribed wholeheartedly to the following poem written by “An Israelite” in 1850:

When thou canst wash the Ethiopian white,
 Govern the winds, or give the sun more light,
 Cause by thy word the mountain to remove,
 Control the seas, or hurl the bolts of Jove;
 Then hope—but not till then, to turn the Jews
 To Christian doctrines, and to Christian views.⁴³

Thoughtful Jewish leaders believed that the best deterrent to conversion was education. Polemics alone was not the answer; they wanted a more positive approach. Jewish education would produce committed Jews. To reach this goal, they encouraged the writing of textbooks and the establishment of all-day schools, afternoon schools, and in particular Sunday Schools.

MISSIONS TO THE JEWS: A FAILURE?

The endeavor of the American Society for Meliorating the Conditions of the Jews to house Christian Jews in a colony and to encourage the conversion of others was an egregious failure. The number of proselytes to Christianity made by Frey and the Society could probably be counted on the fingers of one hand. The costs in general for supporting conversionists and their charges were horrendously high. For a brief period the American Society was successful in establishing numerous branches, but the enthusiasm soon waned and these local organizations disappeared. The women, who may well have been the mainstay of these cells, turned to other reform causes: concern for prisoners, abolition, temperance, suffrage, charity. There can be no question that missions to the Jews accomplished almost nothing if the prime goal is borne in mind. The Jews summarily rejected all advances of the Christian enthusiasts who would have them become part of the Body of Christ; the mission on the whole was indeed a failure. Yet, the movement was not without its successes,

and these deserve mention. In dozens of societies, members came together as Christians engaged in a religious enterprise—a gain for the Church Universal and a gain for the individual. The social interchange was healthy; it brought excitement into what might otherwise have been a drab existence. Tracts were read, verses in the Bible were scrutinized. This type of inquiry was interesting, stimulating. What a glorious moment in the lives of some of these men or women to be privileged to listen to the preaching of a converted Jew—in the flesh!—a precursor of thousands yet to come to Jesus! By contributing their pennies, these pious Christians were saving souls both here and abroad, even in Jerusalem where Jesus himself had walked in all his glory. These prayerful Christians were enriching themselves spiritually; they were speeding the Second Coming and the Millennium. All this was vitally real and comforting to the handful who actually gathered together in Fishing Creek, South Carolina, and in Shawangunk, New York. Who dares to say that these congeries of devout men and women had failed!⁴⁴

THE EXTENT AND SIGNIFICANCE OF REJECTION 1776-1840

In the decades before 1840, American Jews were nothing if not realistic in evaluating their status in the American polity. They could not fail to know that, comparatively speaking, they were fortunate; yet they were conscious that they would always be suspect because of an anti-Jewish prejudice which could trace its roots back for over 2,000 years. They were aware of the state constitutional restraints still in force, but they were equally cognizant of the fact that, in commonwealths where they had established communities they had been granted full equality in the brief space of thirteen years, 1777-1790. An existing mild anti-Jewish sentiment persisted despite the fact that not only the native-born but even the immigrant Jews eagerly and speedily adapted themselves to the American way of life. Jews resigned themselves to the inevitable; there would always be a dividing line between Jews and Christians; there was little they could do to surmount this barrier as long as Jews called themselves Jews. Religious, commercial, and social prejudice was reflected in the press of the day. Yet, this negative view of the Jew was not always prompted by an affective hostility. The Jewish stereotype in the press was traditional; the association of the Jew with avarice and cunning was in many instances purely mechanical, automatic, superficial. Dr. Philip Mazzei, Jefferson's neighbor and friend, referred to the Dutch people as "the most vile Jews of Europe." Mazzei was a political liberal; "Jew" was a popular word for a Shylock type. Jefferson knew exactly what Mazzei meant to imply. The question is, how significant socially were these gibes? Stu-

dents of early America know that there were often items in the press that dealt with Jews objectively, even sympathetically. Normally, newspapers and magazines did not set out to flatter or to denigrate the “Hebrews”; they were good copy because they were exotic; the story is the thing!⁴⁵

In general, Jews were resentful of any anti-Jewish news item, of any unfriendly act, of any discriminatory law or ordinance. They were wont to exaggerate the prejudice they saw and sensed. If they tended to be somewhat paranoid, it was because they knew that there had never been a generation that had not mourned its murdered dead; there had never been a century without its catastrophe. In 1349, Strasburg celebrated St. Valentine’s Day by cremating alive almost 2,000 Jewish men, women, and children. The iron, the rope, the flame had entered the souls of the descendants of the prophets. They were always apprehensive. Here in the United States, Jewish acceptance of the inescapable was ameliorated by the realization that, compared to their kinsmen in Europe as well as the blacks, the Catholics, the abolitionists, the Masons, and the Mormons in America, their lines had fallen in pleasant places. They were accepted as respectable Americans. It is very likely that, in the 1820’s and 1830’s, Jews here realized how fortunate they were when mobs, often led by “gentlemen of property and standing,” incited the rank and file of society to acts of violence against non-Jewish targets. It was an age when American savagely turned against American for economic, religious, political, and ethnic reasons.

William Lloyd Garrison, the abolitionist, was dragged through the streets of Boston at the end of a rope before being thrown into jail. Anti-abolitionist mobs burnt down an assembly hall in Philadelphia and set a black orphanage on fire. Nothing like this ever threatened American Jews in those unhappy days. Political conservatives turned fiercely against the Masons. Even the Masons themselves did not hesitate to employ the smear tactic. Many years earlier, in an intra-Masonic feud, one group had smeared a rival leader Emanuel De La Motta by emphasizing his Jewish origins. Masonry was suspect, for it had been concocted by Jews, Jesuits, and French infidels, so its enemies said. Early nativists attacked the movement because of its secrecy and ritual, its pretension to antiquity, and—what was even worse—its Jewish founders. Masons, Catholics, and Mormons—so it was believed—were out to destroy the American republic; Joseph Smith, the Mormon leader, was lynched by his righteous neighbors. The masses did not welcome immigrants; hostility to strangers was an American tradition. Anti-immigration prejudice in the 1830’s nourished a nativism which, in the next two decades, was to beget vigorous and powerful “American” parties and singled out Catholics for attack. Christian hated Christian; the animosity against Catholics was open, pronounced, unrelenting. Jews were nowhere exposed to the verbal abuse

showered on American Catholics; they were not the prime targets of prejudice. Long before 1776, hatred of Catholics had become an American tradition honored and cherished by the Protestant masses. A blatantly anti-Catholic newspaper now made its appearance. *Israel's Advocate* and other Christian magazines frequently attacked the Jewish religion; at times, they even printed unkind remarks about Jews, but they never attempted to incite their readers to violence against them; they were not overtly anti-Jewish.⁴⁶

Most hated of the Catholics were the Irish, of whom between 1820 and 1849 over 250,000 came to this country. They were denounced as labor competitors, religious enemies, and subverters of American liberties. In 1834, the Catholic-haters burnt down the Ursuline Convent and school in Boston—though most of its pupils were Protestants. A year later, Protestant militants began to print scurrilous defamatory anti-Catholic works such as Rebecca Theresa Reed's *Narrative of Six Months' Residence in a Convent* and *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*, both of which went through several editions. Ten years after the Boston school was gutted, riots between Catholics and Protestants broke out in Philadelphia. Over a dozen people were killed; about 100 were wounded; two churches were destroyed, and the state militia had to be called out to separate the embattled Christians. The Jews watched all this with dismay; Rebecca Gratz, describing "the scene of war" in 1844, wrote:

Unless the strong arm of power is raised to sustain the provisions of the Constitution of the U. S., securing to every citizen the privilege of worshiping God according to his own conscience, America will be no longer the happy asylum of the oppressed and the secure dwelling place of religion.

If the Jews did not count their blessings they should have done so; they were well aware of the Judeophobic post-Napoleonic reaction in Europe, since so many of them were Central European immigrants. Nationalistic Prussia, romanticizing its Teutonic past, had forbidden Jews to preach in the synagogues and to use Christian given names. Russian anti-Jewish legislation was brutal. Conscious always of the pinpricks of their neighbors, American Jews failed to see how much more fortunate they were than millions of their fellow Americans, black and white, who were under constant attack. The few Jews here were not harassed; they escaped notice; the restless masses had other concerns.⁴⁷

Since anti-Jewish violence was absent, Jews refused to be intimidated by states which might be deemed inhospitable. If they saw a chance to improve themselves economically, they would not and did not hesitate to settle where they were still politically disabled. Jewish newcomers from Central Europe were probably not even aware of existing political disabilities in some of the commonwealths where they made their homes. Every

correct. The United States—the *federal government*—gave to bigotry no sanction. Jews chose to emphasize this blessing. A generation later in 1818, Noah told his people: “for the first time in eighteen centuries, it may be said that the Jew feels that he was born equal and is entitled to equal protection; he can now breathe freely.”⁴⁸

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS ON ANTI-JEWISH PREJUDICE 1776-1840

Writing about prejudice against Jews, Jefferson summed it up neatly in a letter to Noah in 1818:

we are free by law; we are not so in practice; public opinion erects itself into an Inquisition, and exercises its office with as much fanaticism as fans the flames of an *Auto-de-fé*. The prejudice still scowling on your section of our religion, although the elder one, cannot be unfelt by yourselves.⁴⁹

Most likely, the ultimate source of anti-Jewishness in that day was Christianity, with which it came to these shores in the transatlantic crossing. Over here, as in the old country, anti-Jewish prejudice was fostered by the churches and encouraged substantially by the religious and the general press, by the theatre, and by belles lettres of English and American provenience. The Jews who moved furtively through several acts of melodrama were villains; good Jews were hard to find. All agencies and media of communication hammered away at the theme: Judaism as a religion was in no sense comparable to Christianity. Many followers of Christ who had never even seen a Jew were consequently anti-Jewish. The word Jew was a most convenient epithet; some Gentiles were damned as “Jews.” Few people, even the most notable, forebore to use this insult when they wished to besmirch an opponent. For the most part, except in business during the day, or in the Masonic lodge at night, Gentiles and Jews kept apart socially. Intimacies between Jews and Christians are rarely documented. Social rejection, however, was not necessarily Jew-hatred; Gentiles, like Jews, wanted a postprandial social life of their own. The Jews were sometimes deemed untrustworthy in the world of commerce, though economic envy and rivalry during this period did not make for conflict. The Jews were too few in number.

Many citizens in the early days of the republic believed that Jews were not entitled to political privileges despite the promises that prefaced almost every state constitution. Jews were not Christians; this was a Christian country; Protestants only, it was contended, were entitled to full rights. Israelites must defer to the will of the Christian majority. Out of respect for Protestantism, the dominant American faith, Jews were not permitted to do any business on the Lord’s Day, Sunday. Conscious of the

of respect for Protestantism, the dominant American faith, Jews were not permitted to do any business on the Lord's Day, Sunday. Conscious of the promises inherent in the great political documents of the early years, Jews were indignant when they faced religious insensitivity, bigotry, and prejudice in a variety of guises. The state governors had no right in their public proclamations to address themselves to Christians alone. Jeffersonianism was never accepted as a Sinaitic revelation, even while the great Virginian was still alive; ultimately, however, it was to make political inroads which benefited Jews among others.

In 1826, Maryland Jews were finally permitted to take a test oath acceptable to most of them; four years later, they suffered a setback when the legislature refused to charter the Scattered Israelites, *Nidhe Yisrael*, Maryland's first Jewish congregation. The grant of such a patent to a religious organization was normally an automatic matter, but an exception was now made in the case of the Baltimore Jews. It may have been that the legislators, as they intimated, felt that the Jews aspired to own too much church property; it may have been that the no-sayers of 1826 were still disgruntled at the thought of Jewish enfranchisement; it may have been that the petition of the members was disregarded because most of them were poor "Dutch" immigrants; the outstanding "Sephardic" names of Etting and Cohen were conspicuously absent. In any event, whatever the reason, they were not granted a charter at first, but these German immigrants were not bashful in seeking rights which other American religionists received without question. They persisted, and before the month was out, the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation was officially recognized by the state.⁵⁰

In a notable picture, "Christ Rejected," Benjamin West, the American-born expatriate, painted Jesus white and the High Priest who condemned him black. White is beautiful; black is ugly. (Apparently it was of no concern to West that his patron in Italy had been the artist Anton Raphael Mengs, a born Jew.) The Jews in the United States never doubted that the current prejudices directed against them were no real threat to their well-being. They were witnesses that egalitarian rhetoric sometimes overtook even bigots; the illiberals were entrapped in every state by its Declaration of Rights. Most vexing for the Jews was the missionary literature and religious bustle of apostate Jews. The writings and sermons of these latter-day apostles enraged Jews because of their attacks on the Jewish religion, which was denounced as a faith devoid of real spiritual quality. If this were true, then Jewish martyrs throughout the centuries had all died in vain. One way or another, Jews learned to live with these irritants. They saw clearly what was going on all around them; they fought back against infringements on their political participation and against prejudice, but rejoiced in their relatively full acceptance into American

life. In 1856, the North Carolina Supreme Court decided that Universalist Christians were incompetent to testify in a court of Justice. This sort of bigotry Jews were spared.⁵¹



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

ACCEPTANCE OF THE JEW, 1776-1840

INTRODUCTION

Constant suspicion dogged the Jews. They were often deemed different; they were rejected. The slights, snide remarks, and refusal to emancipate them politically, might lead one to the conclusion that American Jewry was in a sorry state. This would be a false conclusion. True, anti-Jewish prejudice was the continuum underlying Jewish-Christian relations, yet it was transcended by a complex structure of mutual tolerance and acceptance. Despite rejection, there was acceptance. The very fact that evangelical Christians were more than ready to convert Jews is some indication of "acceptance." A racist Judeophobia was absent.

POLITICAL ACCEPTANCE

The grant of full political rights in some states and most privileges in the other states documents acceptance, willingness to integrate Jews. Resulting economic advances made for further acceptance of the Children of Israel; Americans had a profound respect for the successful and the affluent. Unlike Europe, America knew no national, no federal sanctions for anti-Jewish hostility; on the whole churches, too, were reconciled to political equality for all religious groups. Everyone talked of the United States as a haven and an asylum for the poor and oppressed. Did this citizenry mean what it said? Who knows? At all events, immigrants kept coming in; indeed the gates were to remain open till the first quarter of the twentieth century. Most Americans were ready to accept Jews as citizens, as human beings entitled to all immunities. Ever since the Revolution, some newspapers, editors, and correspondents had insisted on rights for Jews; notable defenders rose up to speak on their behalf. This was particularly true when the Maryland Jew Bill was being debated. In North Carolina, the

legislators connived illegally at the retention of a Jew in the state legislature; good will, not law, was determining. In 1843, a Georgian bragged that, in his hometown of Savannah, an alderman, a state legislator, the city judge, the sheriff, and the Collector of the Port were all of the Jewish faith. Numerous Jews were elected or appointed to municipal, state, and federal offices, particularly in the South—all this before 1840. As early as 1795, New York's Sampson Simson wrote to the Jews in China: Are you in "exile"; are you suffering? Do you have security? Here in America we enjoy great peace. The facts bear him out.¹

RELIGIOUS ACCEPTANCE

Jews were accepted despite the fact that they were the only non-Christians, in the country. Even the blacks, slaves, were Christian, nominally at least. Religiously, this was a Christian country. Good Dr. Benjamin Rush prayed for the day when Jews would unite with Christians and devoutly turn to Jesus, their common and universal Savior. Jews and Christians were part of the same olive tree. Unfortunately, said the evangelicals, the Jews were a branch broken off, but they could be grafted on again. When, in 1773, the visiting Palestinian Sephardic rabbi Haim Isaac Carigal spoke in Newport, the governor and the leading judge of the province sat through a long sermon in Spanish. They could not understand a word he said, but they could enjoy his exotic multicolored garb; they could admire his beautiful long beard; the rabbi was a man of striking appearance. After the establishment of the American republic, Christian notables—governors, supreme court justices, bishops—were nearly always present at synagogue dedications or Jewish celebrations of civic concern. This attendance by the governing elite was tantamount to recognition of Judaism as a licensed faith, a *religio licita*, one might say. Invariably, the Christian visitors said that they were delighted and professed to have been edified. On such occasions it was not unusual to read an English prayer; the main address would be delivered by an educated Jewish layman—in English, of course. When, in early nineteenth-century Savannah, Jews assembled to entreat their Creator to abate the rigors of the prevailing yellow fever, the mayor reminded all present that Jews and Christians had but one God in common. On a somewhat similar occasion, a Philadelphia newspaper reminded the assembled Jews and Christians that they were all the children of a common eternal father. On the Jewish frontier, in Cincinnati, the Queen City of the West, over fifty Christians contributed liberally to build the first transallegheeny synagogue. The dedication address was given by Joseph Jonas, the community's founding father; the audience, he wrote to a Jewish editor, was thrilled when "the sweet voices of the daughters of Zion ascended on high in joyful praises. . . ." And, when in

financial trouble, a Philadelphia Christian church turned for help to a Jewish philanthropist in Germany.²

In general, Jews as religionists were accepted as part of America. Of course the disparateness of Judaism was recognized; on occasion, however, it was treated as a religion entitled to the same privileges as Christianity. Americans of culture were as a rule courteous to Jews, even though most Christians had scant respect for Judaism as a faith and were repelled by its exotic forms of worship. Individual Christians were tolerant of the Jewish dietary laws, particularly if the practitioners were friends. When one of the younger Sheftalls was apprenticed to a Christian lawyer, the indenture specified that the Jewish youth was to be free on his Sabbath and his Holy Days. In the early years of the Revolution, the New York authorities excused a Jew from performing military service on his Sabbath. On one occasion Jews were permitted to build a sukkah in the yard of a Christian institution. Like his Christian clerical counterparts, Gershon Seixas was invited to serve as a trustee of Columbia. To be sure, the time had not yet come for Jews to be invited to preach in Christian churches; for this the Jew would have to wait till the late 1860's. "He who hates another man for not being a Christian is himself not a Christian. Christianity breathes love, peace, and good-will to man;" thus a Carolina writer during the final days of the Revolution. In 1829, a Virginia editor wrote:

Why should Christians despise and condemn the people of Israel? They worship the same God and draw religious instruction from the same Holy revelation. . . . "Religion is left free as air and unbounded as the ocean."³

CONVERSION

On occasion—rare, to be sure—Christians were eager to become Jewish communicants. These were generally pious Christians who believed in the literal inspiration of the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament; they wanted to share the promises made to God's chosen ones. Most converts to Judaism were men or women who sought marriage to a Jew; conviction and commitment were probably secondary in most of these cases. The larger number of these would-be converts, or actual proselytes, were women, some of whom had been living with Jews in common-law marriages. One such Christian woman had to wait twenty-one years before she was fully accepted for conversion. Shearith Israel of New York was most cautious in admitting non-Jews into the fold; using specious excuses, it urged applicants to go to Europe for a ritually authentic conversion. Other American congregations, particularly the immigrant congregations, were less intractable. It may well be that Shearith Israel was socially

motivated in its rejections; it was in no hurry to welcome Christian-born strangers.⁴

AMERICAN NOTABLES AND AMERICAN JEWS

American notables were sympathetic to Jews and their aspirations. Presidents of the United States accepted them, not because they were Jews but because they were American citizens. Ideologically, the country's leaders had no choice; their personal philosophy compelled them to maintain that the Jews were fully entitled to all rights and privileges. Actually, in matters of worship, the Jews gained nothing from the Revolution. Under the British, in the colonies, Jewish religious services had never been proscribed. When the Founding Fathers wrote of religious freedom, they meant that in principle adherents of Judaism were entitled to the same *political* rights as Christians. Religion, or the lack of it, was no bar to equality. Presidents were Janus-faced. They were the children of their age; some of them may not have been without anti-Jewish bias, and on occasion this prejudice seeped out; as chief executives, however, their image of themselves in the world following on the Declaration of Independence and all that it implied, culturally and intellectually, compelled them to champion egalitarianism. They were fully conscious of the role history had assigned them; they were loyal to this picture of themselves as harbingers of a glorious new world of "equality." These concepts almost threatened to intoxicate them. All presidents during this period, from Washington to Van Buren, had relations with Jews personally. For the most part they knew Jews through letters exchanged with them. Van Buren and Noah worked together, not always harmoniously. From the point of view of party and faction leaders, Noah could be difficult. Van Buren had a number of Jewish admirers, among them Samuel Hart, of Philadelphia, a brother of the well-known communal worker Louisa B. Hart; their father, Michael Hart, the Easton pioneer, had once entertained Washington as he passed through town. Jackson, too, had his devoted Jewish followers, none more loyal during the Nullification struggle than Colonel Chapman Levy, of Camden, South Carolina. John Quincy Adams, it would seem, was not enamored of Noah, yet he praised Jews; they were good citizens. As libertarians, Madison and Monroe had both fallen from grace when they recalled the Jew Noah as United States consul in Tunis; yet, as is amply documented, both of them, like Washington, Adams and Jefferson, were unreservedly committed to the enfranchisement of all Jewish citizens.⁵

Jefferson knew more Jews, and knew more about Jews, than any other president of that day. Of all the Founding Fathers, he was most concerned about their status. In 1776 he had made an unsuccessful at-

tempt in Virginia to emancipate Jews, Catholics, and non-Protestants. Jefferson deplored the laws which still disabled American Jewish citizens. He was honest in his efforts to treat Jews as equals; this sincerity is shown by his willingness to consider a Jewish-born lawyer as his attorney general. The elder Adams was no admirer of Jews, yet he wanted all Jews, wherever they were found, to be admitted to all privileges. "This country has done much. I wish it may do more." Was he conscious of the fact that the Massachusetts Jews of his day were still second-class citizens? The Bible, he once suggested, ought to become America's basic law book. It was his hope that the Hebrew language would be taught, along with Greek and Latin, in a Quincy school whose establishment he envisaged. Washington had done business with Jews since 1758, at the time of the French and Indian War; there were Jews among his officers during the Revolution, and after the war, a Jewish merchant entertained him socially. Washington's official relations with Jews really began after his inauguration, when the Jewish communities of America, separately or conjointly, congratulated him on his election to office. His several answers reflected his attitudes toward them: Americans accept one another despite their religious differences; everyone here is treated as an equal; this is unparalleled in the history of nations. Borrowing a phrase from one of the Jewish letters which he received, he emphasized it through repetition: the government of the United States gives to bigotry no sanction.⁶

THE PHILADELPHIA NOTABLES AND THE LOCAL JEWS

Courtesy to Jews by American notables was exemplified by Benjamin Franklin, who was in constant touch with them. Franklin, generous to many churches, made no exception where Jews were concerned. When the Philadelphia Jews built their first sanctuary in 1782, many Jewish businessmen, refugees from the British-occupied coastal cities, were living in town and contributed generously, but after the peace was signed, they returned home and left the Philadelphia remnant holding the bag—the mortgage. The postwar depression worsened conditions. In that emergency, congregants appealed to their Christian neighbors for aid: "Come over and help us." "Enlightened citizens . . . will subscribe generously towards the preservation of a religious house of worship." And so they did, beginning with Benjamin Franklin in 1788. Other notable Philadelphians contributed, including an outstanding Catholic—a signer of the Declaration of Independence—and a Lutheran. The Lutheran was John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg. What a miracle the Revolution had wrought! The father, Henry Melchior Muehlenberg, America's best known Lutheran, was bitterly opposed to the enfranchisement of Pennsylvania's Jews; the son, also a clergyman, gave money to what the father would have called a "synagog of Satan." If the Jews were allowed to hold

office, Muehlenberg *père* had once said, the state would become another Sodom. In this instance, Hansen's Law should read: "What the father wishes to remember, the son wishes to forget."⁷

THE ACCEPTANCE OF JEWS BY THE GENERALITY

Like the notables who set the tone, many American Gentiles did not wish to subject Jews to disabilities because of their religious convictions. Influenced by European Deistic ideas, by the Enlightenment, democracy, and the expedient need for tolerance in a multireligious society, the new national government preached the gospel of religiopolitical liberty for all. Here and there, individuals were even vehement in their insistence that all religionists must be equal before the law. In New Hampshire, William Plumer—later a United States Senator—raised his voice unsuccessfully against the Protestant Christian clauses in a proposed state constitution; he pleaded for complete religious freedom for all citizens, which would, of course, have included Jews.⁸

Though eager to convert Jews, an English poet who lived in Philadelphia in the 1780's pleaded for unlimited toleration for them and emancipation for Negroes; another Philadelphian, the merchant and political economist Tench Coxe (d. 1824), emphasized the fact that here in America the "Hebrew Church" as well as numerous Christian sects were welcome. A third Pennsylvanian, the English-born scientist John Priestley, lamented that the Jewish faith had been grossly misrepresented and abused. Judaism, too, he said, is of divine origin and is infinitely superior to all other religions of equal antiquity. Speaking in London in 1792, the American leader of the Universalist Church, Elhanan Winchester, pointed out that, in the United States, all denominations were on an equal footing. There was no bigotry here; America had taught the world that giving the Jews privileges was not a dangerous experiment, but a good idea. The Catholic Bishop of Charleston, John England, who never forgot that he had suffered discrimination in his native Ireland, gloried in the emancipation of Maryland's Jews. A Virginia Quaker, corresponding with Isaac Leeser, treated him with deference in 1829 as he sought information about Judaism and early Christianity. That same year, another Virginian, also a Quaker, carrying on a literary debate with Leeser in a Richmond paper, did not question that Jews were as moral as Christians: Jews, too, are God's children. God loves them all, and those Jews who lead the good life will be accepted by Him. This Christian apologete protested that he did not wish to perpetuate prejudice; he was no proselytizer; he wanted Jews to love their neighbors as they loved themselves.⁹

WHY GENTILES WERE INTERESTED IN JEWS

The prime source of Gentile interest in Jews was not religion or egalitarian ideology; it was sheer curiosity. There were few Americans who did not want to know more about these exotics whose faith was already over 1,000 years old when Jesus walked the streets of Jerusalem. Christians wanted to know all about these relics who had miraculously survived twenty centuries of merciless persecution. Writings on Judaism, on Jewish customs and history, were not uncommon. The curiosity, to be sure, was rarely if ever divorced from religion, for it was the Jews who had given birth to Christianity. Interest in Jews was heightened, too, by the conjecture that the Indians were the Lost Ten Tribes. This identification was religiously important; if the American Indians were the Lost Ten Tribes, and if the Restoration of the Jews was about to take place, then Jesus himself would speedily reappear! The Second Advent was imminent! Christians frequently visited the synagog; clergy read Jewish periodicals, and almost everyone enjoyed Scott's *Ivanhoe*. Over 2,500,000 copies of that novel were sold; Rebecca the Jewess was an attractive character.¹⁰

An abiding curiosity about Judaism, the faith which had nourished Jesus, was reflected in the numerous edifying publications that dealt with the Jewish religion, with its relationship to Christianity, and with the hope—rarely absent—that the Jews would yet accept God's only begotten Son. The early nineteenth-century professional writers on religion attempted to be objective in evaluating Judaism. Most of them scrupulously avoided vituperation; an exception was James Wilson, pastor of the Second Congregational Church of Providence, who wrote that Jews were "cruel, degenerate, idolatrous," the very "picture of human depravity." Reading books on Jews and Judaism was, in a way, a form of acceptance. Interest in Jewish infidels had never flagged since the first of them arrived in Boston. Christians were inordinately concerned with these living witnesses to the New Testament, the more so if they had never seen one in the flesh. These were the very people who had given birth to Christ himself. Christian curiosity was stimulated and satisfied by books and magazines, especially those of a religious nature. People read stories about Jews, descriptions of ancient Palestine, and, of course, Josephus; the *Wars of the Jews* was reprinted here as early as 1719. Inquisitive Gentiles purchased histories of the Hebrews and the Jews, books on the Old Testament, grammars on Hebrew and cognate languages, plays about Jews, works on the Restoration, brochures and tomes on the Wandering Jew. There was no dearth of pamphlets by the conversionists—and the anti-conversionists, too.¹¹

Not only Jews, but American Christians also read the London publications of David Levi on Judaism, its ceremonies, its Hebrew language.

They even read Mendelssohn's *Answer to Deacon Johann Kaspar Lavater*. When Gershom Seixas's Thanksgiving sermon appeared in print in 1789, Christians were enjoined by the publisher to read this work which "breathes nothing but pure morality." The inhabitants of Keene, New Hampshire, a county seat 100 miles or so northwest of Boston, could boast in 1795 that a local printer had published a chapbook dealing with the *Counterfeit Messiah*, the picturesque Shabbethai Zevi, whom Jews had ecstatically accepted in the 1660's as the man who would lead them back in triumph to the Promised Land. Seeking to cash in on the success of his earlier philosemitic comedy *The Jew*, Richard Cumberland published *The Jew of Mogadore* in 1808. Nadab, the new hero, was a kindly, charming, benevolent and courageous Jewish moneylender, among whose chief goals in life it was to help the poor, the enslaved, the unfortunate; he was a humanitarian whose charities knew no bounds of religion or national origins: "Children, you see there is a power above us, and whether we be christian, mussulman or jew, a good man's prayer will find its way to heaven." As early as 1784 in her *Alphabetical Compendium of the Sects*, Hannah Adams dealt in some detail with Judaism. Later, in her two-volume *History*, republished twice in London and even translated into German, Adams pointed out that Jews, too, had furthered knowledge of the true God; it was they who had founded the Christian church and had written both the Old and the New Testaments. The *History* —so it would seem —was written to satisfy the curiosity of Christians, to fortify their faith in Christianity, and, possibly, to intimate to Jews that their sufferings would cease if they accepted the Son of God.¹²

Histories and reference books concerning themselves with Jews or containing detailed data on them were rolling off the presses. Among them was Thomas Brown's *History of the City and Temple of Jerusalem and of the Ruin and Dispersion of the Jewish Nation* (Albany, 1825). Despite his own conversionist goals, Brown was sympathetic to these historic unbelievers. Reminding his readers that Jews had been abused for centuries by Christians, Brown vindicated the Jews. The United States, he wrote, has given them rights; this is the only country that has never persecuted them. Organized conversionist efforts? They are expensive and a failure. It is true, he admitted, Jews are disliked here too, but they are as moral as others; they are champions of freedom, talented men whose qualities shine forth when they are treated as human beings. Here he was quoting the Abbé Gregoire, a hero of the French Revolution. Another book that appeared at this time was John Marsh's *An Epitome of General Ecclesiastical History* (1827). This work, dealing with all religions, also included a brief history of the Jews, some statistical data on them, and a concise disquisition on the Lost Ten Tribes. In 1830, an American edition of Charles Buck's London *Theological Dictionary* was published in Philadelphia. Like

Brown, Buck expressed his admiration for the Jews, who had persisted despite persecution. The Jews must be led to the baptismal font but only through love; under no circumstances are their liberties to be abridged or their consciences forced.¹³

That same year, Henry Hart Milman's *History of the Jews* was republished in New York by Harper. With this edition, pirated shortly after the original appeared in London, Milman made his bow to America. His was the most popular of all the chronicles of the Jews to appear in London and in the United States. Though the biblical records of the Hebrews are replete with barbaric deeds, he suggested, it must not be forgotten that the Jews were chosen by God and that they were the precursors of Christianity. Charles A. Goodrich, in his *Religious Ceremonies and Customs* (1834), described Jewish forms of worship and recounted Jewish travails through the ages. It was in 1834, too, that a novel was published rehearsing proof of the authenticity of Jesus and his disciples: *Sadoc and Miriam*, directed, however, not at the Jews, but at the doubting Christian Pharisees and Sadducees of the nineteenth century. In the New Orleans of the 1830's, the synagogal officiant Manis Jacobs delivered two lectures on Jewish ritual and on the origins of Christianity; one of the talks was in French, the other in English. Jewish expositions of this type, addressed to Christians, were to be exceedingly rare; this is very probably the first such instance in the history of Jewish-Christian relations here in the United States.¹⁴

THE GENTILES ACCEPT JEWS

Did respect for the biblical Israelites and interest in the Hebrew language make for a sympathetic approach to Jews? Many Christians studied Hebrew seriously; there were certainly more Christians than Jews conning paradigms and declensions. Christian lovers of the Holy Tongue had been assembling libraries of biblical and rabbinic classics ever since the seventeenth century. Some of the Hebrew teachers employed by Christians were Jews; Christians frequently turned to them for instruction in the language of the Old Testament. Joseph Smith, the Mormon leader, hired Dr. Daniel L. M. Peixotto and James (Joshua) Seixas to give his followers some knowledge of this sacred tongue. Ezra Stiles, who taught Hebrew at Yale, delivered a commencement oration in that language in 1781. He had urged his students to study Hebrew and especially the Psalms, assuring them that they would hear these very songs of David when they passed through the gates of Heaven. Too much time was spent studying Greek and Latin, said Dr. Benjamin Rush. The clergy would be better served by the study of Hebrew and of Jewish antiquities. Jefferson, Adams, and Franklin, sitting as a committee hoped to use the theme of the escape of the Israelites across the Red Sea as the design for the great

seal of the United States, though their suggestion was rejected. Jews, for their part, did not fail to appreciate Christian esteem for biblical tradition. Congratulating Washington on his election as president, Newport's Jews identified him with the biblical Daniel and Joshua—with the administrator and the warrior. Charleston Jews, in their letter to the great Virginian, assured him that they would number him with their heroes of old, from Moses to the Maccabees. Thus the Jews forged a Hebraic link to the chief executive; he had now become a spiritual scion of Jewry; they had virtually adopted him.¹⁵

All this interest in Hebrew and in the references to biblical worthies is interesting, but there is little, if any, evidence that it predisposed Christians to Jews or to post-biblical Judaism. The Christians could maintain with justice that the Old Testament was as much their book as it was the Jews'. Protestant Christians at least read the Bible; Jews only rarely did so. Yet, surely thanks in part to the interest in biblical literature, there *was* a new approach to Jews, a new and effective climate of opinion. American citizens were sympathetic to their Jewish fellow citizens because of the growth of tolerance both here and abroad. New national states in Europe, economically motivated, insisted that their sovereignty superseded that of the church. For the emerging mercantilist governments, taxation was more important than salvation. In a world of nascent capitalism, the Jew was needed, hence emancipated; the motivations for emancipation, when probed to their depths, may have been little more than rationales to exploit the commercial capacities of these urban businessmen. Elements of the new egalitarianism were reflected in the organic statutes of the new American republic and in France as well. When the French moved to emancipate their Jews, the news was greeted with enthusiasm in the United States. The Jews were conscious that they were living in an era of great change.¹⁶

The churches and the masses were shedding some of their prejudices. This age would witness the rise of Universalism among American Protestants. The Catholics, too, were benefiting from the new tolerance; they began building houses of worship. In Charleston, the beautiful new synagogue of the 1790's was erected near a Catholic sanctuary. The Catholics certainly voiced no objection, but in Europe, especially in Catholic lands, this would have been most unusual; it would have been looked upon as a reproach to Christianity. In one of her interesting letters to Maria Edgeworth, Rachel Mordecai Lazarus pointed out that an Episcopalian woman had given her brother, a Jew, the task of building a church. He was her executor. The new tolerance then distinguishing the United States is amply attested to by the fact that Rachel's father, an observant Jew living in a town where there were no other Jews, had conducted a successful boarding school for Christian children. Warrenton, North Carolina, was

evidently glad to accept Jacob Mordecai. Gentiles as well as Jews were present when Isaac Harby spoke at an anniversary meeting of Charleston's Hebrew Orphan Asylum. On the report that two Palestinian Jewish messengers had arrived in Philadelphia seeking funds to redeem enslaved Jews in Hebron, the editors of the *Pennsylvania Packet* urged Christians to be generous: "mercy is twice blest . . . it blesses those who receive and those who give."¹⁷

At a time when there was not a known Jew in Vermont, liberals there raised their voices to protest a Sunday law that made for intolerance. American political liberalism was deemed by many a commodity worthy of export. America is a land which Jews can call their own; God will not be angry with the United States for welcoming and protecting Jews, said the Universalist clergyman Elhanan Winchester in 1792. Dr. Rush confided to his "Commonplace Book" in 1812 that, when a patient, Mr. Jacob M. Bravo, had died, his widow paid his medical bills. This was probably the first time in Rush's experience that a family had honored a bill after the patient's death: "Mrs. Bravo was a Jewess. Blush Christians." In Cincinnati, Joseph Jonas reported that people came from a distance of 100 miles to talk to the "holy people of God." Conversionists, too, could be admirers of Jews. Dr. John H. Livingston, president of Rutgers, was an officer of the American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews, but he saw no reason to confine converts to Christianity in a separate colony of their own. Jews make good citizens, he wrote; they are eminently respectable, an industrious people. They have a right to enjoy the same privileges as Christians. "The spirit of religious liberty has molded us all into affectionate forbearance and mutual friendship."¹⁸

In 1837, a missionary journal reprinted an article from a Boston newspaper. If there is anything wrong with Jews, the writer had said, it is because of what the Christians have done to them. Jews have a beautiful home life; their husbands are faithful; Jews are generous, religious. Around 1750, generations before the Bostonians had sung the praises of the Jews, three men gathered in Savannah and formed a Union Society to help unfortunates. The three were a Protestant, a Catholic, and a Jew. In the early 1800's, the American editor David Longworth republished Robert Southey's *Letters from England*; the Southey book denigrated Jews, but Longworth insisted that Jews in this country had no resemblance to those attacked by the English poet. Longworth had nothing but praise for Jewish Americans; they were respectable, amiable, lofty citizens. You cannot punish Jews today for what happened in remote centuries, wrote a Virginian in 1829. The Jews who had survived centuries of persecution were a courageous people. Let the Jew be viewed with awe, sympathy, reverence: this is *his* country as much as another's.¹⁹

Under the code duello, only people of equal social station could respond to an insult by undertaking to kill each other. The acceptability of the Jew in early American life is authenticated by the fact that he was *salonfaehig*, "fit for good society," which meant that in duels, meticulously arranged encounters, it was perfectly proper for Jews to kill Gentiles and for Gentiles to kill Jews. Thus, in order to live honorably, even Jewish gentlemen did not hesitate to shoot one another. With exceptions, Jews were accepted as worthy antagonists, as members of the peer group. When Dr. Edward Chisholm refused to meet G. P. Cohen, of Charleston, because he was a Jew, Cohen branded the Gentile a coward, pointing out that the constitutions of both South Carolina and the United States made it unequivocally clear that all citizens were equal irrespective of their religious commitments. Young Mordecai Noah wrote Uncle Nathali Phillips that he had wounded a puppy by the name of John Canter, who had challenged him. Noah said that he was cool and comfortable during the encounter. His victim was a Jew, a portrait and miniature painter. In the duel between Captain James Barron and Commodore Stephen Decatur, the pistols used were borrowed from one of the Myers brothers, of Norfolk, but after the Decatur killing, Rebecca Gratz commented sadly that the Americans were a "barbarous people." August Belmont was wounded in a duel in 1841 and carried the injury on his body as long as he lived. There were three Levys in Camden, South Carolina, and all had fought duels. One of them, Mordecai M. Levy, merchant, state legislator, an unsuccessful candidate for Congress in 1836, fought two duels on behalf of his friend Colonel Rochelle Blair. The latter was married and had a family; Levy at the time was not. Years later, now a married man himself, he named one of his daughters after the colonel. Writing to her sister-in-law in Lexington in 1830, Rebecca Gratz reported that an arrogant German, a Gentile, had forbidden Isaac Moses (b. 1807), a nephew, to ask a certain woman for a dance. Moses, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, responded to this demand by flogging the insolent foreigner. When the German challenged him, Moses answered that the man had been whipped and was no longer privileged to kill or be killed.²⁰

ASSOCIATIONS

As far as is now known, Jews of equal cultural and social standing were not excluded from associational institutions. Jews seem to have been members of numerous socioliterary groups, particularly in the South, where such societies flourished. It is not known whether any of these associations were social clubs, pure and simple, where only intimates met. A Savannah resident boasted that his fellow Jews were numbered among

the founders of every charity and literary society in town. There is no question: the Jews were everywhere, in the philanthropic organizations, the orphan-aid groups, the mutual-aid associations, the cavalry troops, the Academy of Fine Arts, even in a mineralogical society. Apparently, foreign birth and humble origins were no bars to membership. No one would seem to have been more active in Richmond's Amicable Society than Joseph Darmstadt, a former Hessian sutler. After his capture by the Americans, he was sent as a prisoner to Charlottesville; following his release, he settled in Richmond, where he became a successful merchant, respected and beloved—by the women, too—if only because he was the town's prankster. His store had its never-failing coffeepot which made it a social center on cold mornings when Richmond's elite forgathered to market.²¹

There were many other associations where Jews made their presence felt; political societies like the Columbian Order and, of course, the ethnic organizations patronized by the English, Germans, or French and their friends. One of the Charlestonians belonged to the Seventy-Six Association, which met on the Fourth of July and listened to a patriotic oration, then duly forwarded it to Thomas Jefferson. Grateful for election to the Virginia Historical and Philosophical Society, Richmond's Rabbi A. H. Cohen gave the group a small mineral collection and Prescott's three-volume work on Mexico. Solomon Cohen, of Georgetown, South Carolina, was treasurer of the local Library Society, which subscribed for newspapers from the major American cities and from London, too. The library had about 1,000 volumes. In 1801, at the age of twenty, Rebecca Gratz devoted herself to social welfare work in the larger Gentile community. Because of her skills, her culture, her literacy, and her social status her contribution was important. She was respected by all; there was probably not a drawing room in Philadelphia which would not have welcomed this gracious woman.²²

MASONRY

The whilom Hessian sutler Joseph Darmstadt was Grand Treasurer of Virginia's Masons in 1790, when John Marshall was the Grand Master; when Virginia's Masonic meetinghouse was to be knocked down at auction because of a builder's lien, Darmstadt advanced the funds to save it. Masonry had been brought to the colonies from England in the early eighteenth century; by that time, London Jews were already members in some of the lodges. It is not improbable that there were Jewish Masons in Oglethorpe's Savannah of the 1730's; they were certainly admitted into the Georgia lodge in the 1750's. By that decade, indeed, Jews were Masons in a number of the colonies. Masonry took an important step forward

in the 1760's owing to the work of Moses Michael Hays, a Jewish merchant and probably the most innovative of all Masons in the America of the colonial and early national periods. Hays had gone to England in 1760 and there, it would seem, became enamored of the movement. From that decade on, despite their small numbers, Jews began to play a role of some consequence in American Masonry. In 1768, Hays was appointed Deputy Inspector General of the Rite of Perfection for the West Indies and North America. By virtue of the authority vested in him, he nominated eight Deputy Inspectors General in 1781 to carry on the work in the United States and in the Caribbean Islands. All but one of the men he then licensed were Jews. What his deputies accomplished is yet to be determined. In 1788, Hays, now a Bostonian, became Grand Master of the Massachusetts Grand Lodge, succeeding Dr. John Warren, one of the founders of Harvard's medical school. When, in 1791, Hays was re-elected Grand Master, he chose Colonel Paul Revere as his deputy. The two men knew each other well; Hays had been helpful to Revere in one of the latter's business ventures. It is worth noting that the Jewish Masonic leaders in America seem all to have been religionists, untouched by the radical and skeptical trends that had come out of revolutionary France. There were two French lodges in Charleston, both frequented by Jews; undoubtedly some of these men were refugees who had fled when the blacks revolted in the Caribbean; some may have come from France. Before 1841, Jews had served as Grand Masters of state lodges, not only in Massachusetts, but also in Rhode Island, Virginia, Kentucky, and Illinois. Abraham Jonas, a friend of Lincoln, was elected Grand Master in both the two latter states.²³

WHY JEWS ENTERED MASONRY

Jews could not help but be flattered by the fact that Masonry took over the traditional Jewish dating of the creation of the world. According to that doctrine, God brought the universe into being just 3,760 years before the appearance of Jesus. Jews like others, were entranced by stories of brotherhood both implicit and realized in this attractive secret order. There was a wide-spread belief that Masons helped one another in moments of danger. The myth—if that is what it is—has attached itself to several Jews. When arrested and threatened by the British during the Revolution, Israel Israel saved himself by giving a Masonic sign. Captured by pirates in the Mediterranean, Solomon B. Nones, a consular officer, escaped with his life when the Masons among the corsairs discovered that he was a member of the Order. It is practically impossible to verify such stories, but Masons did take their vows seriously.²⁴

Jews found in Masonry an organization which taught and practiced the principles of toleration and social equality. It was one of the few insti-

tutions, outside of the synagog, where the human dignity of the Jew was given recognition and where he could hope to meet people of culture and intelligence on a plane of equality. To be sure, Jews were not unaware of the personal, commercial, and social advantages to be garnered from membership. They soon discovered that Masonry embodied in itself all the aspirations of English rationalism and French humanitarianism. They saw it as an aspect of the new Enlightenment. For the Jew, Masonry was one of the chief links to a larger world which he yearned to embrace but which, at times, still kept him at arm's length. Unless we understand this, we will never realize what Masonry meant to the socially starved Jews during the period of an emerging civil and political emancipation. Many were insecure immigrants; Masonry was a world of fantasy; it was good for their ego; the mouth-filling titles pleased them no end. Masonry demanded no religious sacrifice; Jewish clergymen were frequently active members. Religiously, Masonry was universalist; its code was moral, one Jews could readily accept. This is why Jews so often invited Masons to participate in synagog dedications. In the larger towns, Jews hastened to become devotees of this cult; in some places they became its leaders and its propagandists. For a time, it would seem, they had taken over certain branches of the movement. Isaac Harby said point blank in 1825 that it was the Jews who had "disseminated the beautiful institutions of Masonry, that universal link of brotherhood." Early American Jewry would have taken seriously the couplet which satirized Masonry in 1787:

For in a moment, all sects, Christians, Turks,
Gentiles, and Jews
The feelings of nature, pride, malice, and prejudice
lose.²⁵

GENTILE PHILANTHROPY TO JEWS

More and more evidence is emerging that the relations between Jews and non-Jews were often most cordial. In 1802, Charleston's General Christopher Gadsden, a Revolutionary War veteran, gave the local congregation a gift of some classical rabbinic works, three volumes of the Mishnah and two volumes of the writings of Maimonides. Gadsden had learned Hebrew while imprisoned by the British. Accompanying his gift was a gracious note expressing his admiration for the Jewish community and invoking God's blessing upon them. The General was a political liberal interested in disestablishing the church. In the first annual report of the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society of Philadelphia in 1820, it was disclosed that the largest gift or donation received by this organization had come from the estate of a Christian. In this same city of Philadelphia, the

members of the United Hebrew Beneficent Society said frankly that they would welcome donations from persons of every religious sect. Charleston's Reformed Society of Israelites turned to Christian friends when it collected money for a synagogue, and in 1830, when the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation published its first constitution, it announced that it had received funds from Christians who would be gratefully mentioned in its prayers. Christians joined Jews in petitioning the Savannah authorities for a free lot for a sanctuary; the Richmond council gave the Jews a cemetery, and when the Savannah synagogue was destroyed by fire, Christians helped to rebuild it. When, in the early 1840's, the Orthodox and the Reform Jews of Charleston went to court to settle their religious differences, one of the litigants employed Christopher G. Memminger, a local Christian lawyer. Memminger charged no fee, since, he said, this was a religious matter. Years later, after Memminger had become Secretary of the Treasury in the Confederacy, the Union General Benjamin F. Butler referred to him as a Jew. It is possible that this was guilt by association, for the Secretary's courtesy to the Jews was probably no secret. And it may well be that General Butler dammed him because he was foreign born, a "Dutchman," and in charge of the South's finances. Money was a Jewish business!²⁶

Individual acts of friendship and kindness by Christians to Jews were numerous. Seixas had many Christian admirers. One Albany family was close to him; the Seixas children called these Christians Uncle and Aunt. Another Albanian—Dunbar was his name—had once heard the hazzan chaunt the service on Yom Kippur. Impressed, Mr. Dunbar sent Seixas a barrel of very good cider. Seixas sent all of his friends a sample of this delicious brew, but, fearful that they would besiege him for more, he withheld the fact that he had a whole barrel hidden in his cellar. When Quartermaster Mordecai Sheftall was in prison and later exiled by the British after they captured Savannah, his Christian friends rallied around him. One family sent him three gallons of the best Jamaican rum, a great comfort to the unhappy man.²⁷

MUTUAL RESPECT, FRIENDSHIPS, INTIMACIES

There is no question that encounters in the Masonic lodges between Jews and Christians made for tolerance, for formal acceptance at least. In most instances, certainly, friendships between Jews and non-Jews developed outside of Masonic circles. Jews in general patterned themselves slavishly on the Gentiles about them. Eager to conform, possibly overeager, the Jews were uncompromisingly American in their habits. They went hunting with their hounds, sported double-barrelled deer guns, ran with the fire engines, flocked to the watering places, dressed, ate, and gestured like their neighbors. Intimacies were inevitable in small towns and villages

where no Jewish community was ever established. This had been true since colonial days. The individual Jew had to live with Gentiles; in a way he became one of them. It is not without interest that Jews and Christians developed close personal relations in preemancipation times, when the former were still denied political rights. Obviously, social equality and friendships were not predicated on the privilege of voting or holding office. The eighteenth-century Frankses and the Lopezes were juridically second-class citizens; yet the Frankses, of New York, were accepted everywhere; the aristocratic Christian Pollocks, of North Carolina, were house guests of the Lopezes in Newport.²⁸

Christians who came out of the Rivera and Lopez countinghouses in prerevolutionary and Revolutionary days respected and admired their employers. Evaluating the character and conduct of these notable Rhode Island merchant-shippers, a Christian, quoting Jesus, enjoined his Gentile readers: "Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke, 10:37). After Aaron Lopez drowned, Ezra Stiles eulogized him saying that he was "the most universally beloved by an extensive Acquaintance of any man I ever knew. . . . He was my intimate Friend and Acquaintance." At Stiles's request, Lopez and Rivera had made available to him a portrait of the Palestinian rabbi Haim Isaac Carigal. Stiles, president of Yale, hung the portrait on the walls of the College library; the Christian clergyman cherished his friendship with the Sephardic scholar from the Holy Land. Thomas Jefferson had no illusions about the abilities of the somewhat unstable Colonel David S. Franks; nevertheless, he befriended the former army officer whenever he could and lent him money when he was in need. Apparently, Franks was a not infrequent guest at the table of this great American. Hazzan Seixas and John Christopher Kunze (d. 1807) were good friends. The Rev. Kunze, said to have been a fine Hebraist, undoubtedly hoped to refine his knowledge of the Sacred Tongue by associating with the hazzan of Shearith Israel. William Wirt, an attorney general of the United States, who was close to a number of Jews, discussed the Jewish problem with one of the Myerses, of Norfolk. When army officer Alfred Mordecai went abroad, General Winfield Scott gave him a most cordial letter of introduction to an American living in Paris.²⁹

A Christian might well document his affection for a Jewish friend by naming a child after him. This seems to explain why Andrew Jackson's first Secretary of the Treasury carried the name Samuel Delucenna Ingham. The original Samuel De Lucena was a well-known Jewish merchant of the Revolutionary War period. Gratz Van Rensselaer, a writer, and Benjamin Gratz Brown bear witness to the affection of Christian families for the Gratz clan. Brown, named after Rebecca Gratz's brother, was to become a United States senator, a governor of Missouri, and a candidate for vice president in 1872 on the Liberal Republican ticket. Benjamin

Gratz's brother-in-law was the influential politician and editor Francis Preston Blair, Sr. (b. 1791). Blair was wont to refer to the Gratzes as his "Jewish relatives" and, in a letter to a Jewish friend, denied vigorously that he harbored any anti-Jewish prejudice. The land promoter Aaron Levy and the politician and later governor of Pennsylvania Simeon Snyder were intimates. Obviously, Snyder picked up his Hebrew-Yiddish phrases from his confidant; the word *chammer* is so much more expressive than jackass. Rebecca Gratz had a host of Christian friends; she was close to Washington Irving, James Paulding, the writer and Secretary of the Navy, the Fennos, the Hoffmans, and the New York Verplancks. The Unitarian clergyman, reformer and abolitionist Samuel J. May spent weeks as a child in the hospitable home of Moses M. Hays, and at night before bedtime the maid in the house or the Hayses themselves would stand by as the child recited his Christian prayers.³⁰

Recapitulating the attitude of Gentiles to Jews here in the United States, it is patent that during the years 1776-1840 the Children of Israel were a constant challenge to the curious and the learned. On the whole, this was a friendly interest. It is obvious, too, that Jews were widely accepted in the young republic: their business talents were recognized; men of culture and integrity were elevated to office by the franchises of their admirers. The political tone in the country was set by the Virginia presidents and by the Adamses and their advisors. The generous, all-embracing policies of the Founding Fathers were supported by a small but influential group of Gentile journalists, Christian clergymen, and others convinced that political liberalism was the very essence of republicanism and that it was an article for export. The Jews in the United States were better off than any other Jewish group in the world; no Jewish community elsewhere enjoyed the political freedom and the social relations which characterized American Jewry.

THE JEWS SEEK ACCEPTANCE IN A CHRISTIAN STATE

By 1840, twenty-one of the twenty-six states had given Jews full political rights; actually, there were very few Jews in the remaining five states whose laws denied them high office. In the states that counted, Jews were accepted as peers by their fellow citizens. America was home for the Jews here, and this is why the newcomers among them continued to bring their friends and families here. These non-Christians, in every way integrated into the body politic, were indistinguishable in their loyalties from all others. The world was watching an America that dared for the first time in Christian history to give Jews equal privileges and immunities. The spectacle of Noah, the Jew, exercising a sheriff's authority in New York, one of the great cities of the far-flung American republic, aroused

much interest and curiosity. It was even noted in 1826 by Dr. Ferdinand Philippi, a Grand-Ducal Court Councillor in Saxony, who wrote a three-volume *History of the United free States of North America*. This, he pointed out, was a land, which granted religious freedom to everyone and dared even to make a Jew sheriff at a time when the English were still debating vigorously whether the Catholic Duke of Norfolk should even be permitted to carry a gilded stave in the presence of the Protestant king. Philippi might well have added that, in the England of the 1820's, no Jew could hold an office of any significance.³¹

THE JEW AS A GOOD CITIZEN

The Jew of this period wanted to be a good citizen, and on the whole he was. Jacob Pinto, a long-time resident in New Haven, joined with his neighbors when they petitioned the state to incorporate their town. The gravamen of their complaint was that they could make no living farming; they wanted to become a corporation with full powers to enact laws and to regulate commerce; they wanted a jurisdiction of their own, wharves, courts, and police, too. When Governor George Clinton returned to New York after the city had been evacuated in 1783 by the British, the returning New York Jewish Whigs wrote a congratulatory note to the chief executive. These exiles were also glad to be back home after their travels! With hope that the village would grow, Michael Hart, of Easton, joined his fellow citizens in sponsoring an ordinance to stop horses and swine from running at large. As forward-looking citizens, Philadelphia's Jews supported an innovative deaf-mute home, called for a new water system and additional wharves, joined a library association, and helped pay for an experimental balloon ascension.³²

Richmond's Israelites frowned on gambling houses, but petitioned for canals and railroads; one of Richmond's natives, Jacob I. Cohen, Jr., presided over the Baltimore committee appointed to celebrate the centennial of Washington's birth. Charleston Jews played important roles on the local political stage. There were few honors they did not receive, few offices they did not grace. They were commissioners of the free schools, of the poorhouse, of streets, lamps, and markets. Among them was a weigher in the customhouse, a steamboat inspector, a city marshal, a town treasurer, an assistant assessor, and a member of the Board of Health. Jews served in the South Carolina house and senate, as militia officers of high rank; one of them was a state treasurer. In the hinterland, they were mayors and city councillors. Abraham Tobias is worthy of mention, not because he was a notable Jew but because his career is typical. An accountant, he became a successful merchant and participated actively in the politics of nullification. By the 1830's, he was the director of a bank, a

member of the Board of Health, a commissioner of pilotage, and an honorary guard when the body of John C. Calhoun lay in state.³³

Question: in proportion to their percentage in the Jewish and general population, did Jews in the South hold more offices than Jews in the North? Were they more eager to serve? Were they better citizens than their coreligionists in New York and Philadelphia? Such questions are easier to ask than to answer. This much is known: Jews in the South were eager to serve the general community; they sought recognition; they wanted to be accepted. Did they feel that, as non-Christians, they had a lesser status in the eyes of the public? Yes! A question all Jews had had to resolve in their minds ever since they landed in the mid-seventeenth century was this: Did they want to maintain their traditional medieval separatist corporate system, or did they want to participate in the larger polity and become one with all others? It was a problem that had confronted the Jews at least since they returned to Cromwellian England. In the 1790's, many Amsterdam Jews did not want to surrender their communal autonomy; they did not want to lose their "minority rights"; they had no desire to exchange their chartered privileges for a new unitary type of citizenship. It was otherwise in America: with the possible exception of the decade under the Dutch in New Netherland, Jews here never sought to live as a disparate withdrawn group. Under the English and later the Americans, the Jews were integrated into American society. The hope for complete citizenship was always their goal in the early republic; the Jews wanted to be in the mainstream of American life.³⁴

JEWES ACCEPT THE UNITED STATES POLITICALLY

Not improbably, the prime motivation pushing many Jews to turn to politics was the realization that for the first time in their Diaspora history, they were accorded equal rights. This they appreciated fully. Francis Salvador, of South Carolina, assumed the responsibilities of a citizen in 1776, even though as a Jew he was still subject to disabilities; he sensed that, despite his non-Christian origin, there was a future for his kind here, a future that had been decisively denied him in his native England. It is a pity that he was fatally wounded in battle that year and did not survive until 1790 to read Washington's message to the Jews of Newport:

The citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy—a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship.

Many Jews enjoyed politics, because they were partisans with strong convictions; some sought office because it offered a livelihood and was a respected vocation. Jews wanted to be respected; all of them had been sec-

ond-class citizens; authority and power were psychological needs. Every native-born American Jew could hope one day to become president.³⁵

The Jews of this period were very active on the hustings and at the polls, probably more so than in the late twentieth century. In a sense, they were Federalists, grateful to the national government that granted them all rights and cherishing the hope—a vain one—that the liberal federal Constitution would override state disabilities. For reasons that are not quite clear—the sources are sparse—Jews who voted the Federal ticket were not too visible. Were they few in number? One would think that the many Jewish shopkeepers and merchants would have identified with the Federalists, the party of strong central government and of business. Many did, but substantial numbers, even men of wealth like Solomon Simson, of New York, were Democrats. Aaron Levy, the land entrepreneur, was a Federalist, his wife was a staunch Democrat, though of course as a woman she had no vote. It may well be that solid Jewish businessmen were unhappy, watching their fellow Federalists besmirch the opposition as the party of Jews, Negroes, and the unwashed masses. Some Jews did belong to the radical Democratic-Republican club. The published evidence would indicate that Jews as a group were not committed to any one party or any one faction, and later, like their fellow citizens, they were to be Democrats or Whigs. One man, a Charlestonian who would make a career in politics in the North, was a temperance advocate, a reformer, a nativist. This Jew was anything but typical.³⁶

Jews in Georgia, it would seem, were active politically years before they were constitutionally eligible for office. Obviously, the moment the Jews obtained the franchise and the right to hold office, politicians would pursue them, for it was assumed that they voted en bloc. Mr. Christopher Knight, a Charleston delegate to the 1790 constitutional convention in South Carolina, received the support of the local Jewish community and gratefully sent the congregation fifty guineas. The president of Beth Elohim, Jacob Cohen, a veteran of the late war, returned the money with a polite note informing Knight that the votes of the Jewish community were not for sale. Both in the North and the South, Jews threw themselves wholeheartedly into the 1800 campaign that was to usher Jefferson into the presidency. This was a bitterly fought contest with a great deal at stake. When a Federalist in Charleston accused the Jews of voting as a group and agitating in their synagogues for Jefferson, the Jews issued a vigorous denial: they would not “prostitute the Temple of the Most High for electioneering purposes.” One may hazard a guess—and this is only a guess—that, despite their interest in a strong central government, many Jews were Jeffersonian republicans and thus strongly pro-French since the French seemed set on emancipating all Europeans. Except for those Jews in France or under French control, no European Jew at that time enjoyed

full political rights. American Jews always identified themselves emotionally with their rightless fellow ethnics abroad. Here in this country, many Jews hoped that the Democratic-Republicans, the party of the people, would bring full rights to the Jews in every state.³⁷

Though Mordecai M. Noah tended to shift his political allegiances, he and most other Jewish journalists were Democrats. Within the party, editors Harby, Cardozo, and Noah sided with the faction that furthered their personal careers. When, in 1828, Harby went to New York, the metropolis of the future, he may have hoped that the party would take care of him as a Democratic stalwart. An ardent Jacksonian, he wrote on the general's behalf in the *New York Evening Post*, glorifying Jackson as a paragon of all virtues, a cultivated man, generous in nature, the very soul of truth. Lawyer Zalegman Phillips, of Philadelphia, was far more influential than Harby. He ran unsuccessfully for Congress, attacking corruption and the money machine. For Phillips, Jackson was an American Cincinnatus, who would defend the rights of man, provide universal suffrage, and save the country from a coalition of evil aristocrats and demagogues. Jewish liberals were thrilled in 1830, when they heard the news from France of the overthrow of the restored Bourbons and the rise to power of Louis Philippe. In the great celebration then mounted in New York City, Noah, Dr. D. L. M. Peixotto, Uriah P. Levy, and the banker J. L. Joseph, were among the sponsors and leaders. Myer Moses published a detailed description of this event, *A Full Account of the Celebration of Said Revolution in the City of New-York*, and the playwright and poet Jonas B. Phillips wrote a drama and an ode for two of the local theatres. Throughout the 1830's, Jews turned more and more to politics as they reacted to the partisan issues of the decade. Nationally, so it would seem, most were followers of Jackson and Van Buren; certainly these two were able to recruit enthusiastic Jewish votaries in a number of the large cities. One of Van Buren's Jewish devotees lauded him for his defense of the poor and for his leadership in the battle against the oppressive money power. In a somewhat similar vein, the Florida Democrat David Levy (Yulee) came out with a strong attack on the banks and other debased institutions. On the banks of the Ohio, Joseph Jonas was acclaimed "The Father of Cincinnati Democracy."³⁸

NULLIFICATION

When the accusation was made in 1832, at the time of the Nullification controversy in South Carolina, that the Charleston Jews wanted to be represented as a body, by a Jew, in a state convention, eighty-five Charleston Jewish citizens indignantly denied the charge. No one, they said, controlled their votes; they voted as they saw fit. This was true, for the Nullification Affair split the Jewish community as it did the state. Two

political factions emerged in South Carolina; both opposed high tariffs, pleading for free trade and less national domination—the one party, the Nullificationists, maintained that the state had the right to nullify national legislation which it deemed deleterious; the other party, the Unionists, did not accept the principle of nullification and certainly not of secession, a threat voiced by some of the radicals. A convention meeting in Columbia in October, 1832, to discuss the national tariffs of 1828 and 1832, declared them null and void in South Carolina. Four of the delegates were Jews; two were Nullifiers, two were Unionists. Three of the four had no Jewish followers, for they and their constituents came from the backcountry, where Jews were scarce. One delegate was a Charlestonian, who had been elected by Nullifiers. This is not to imply that the majority of Charleston Jews were Nullifiers; indeed, it may well be that more local Jews were Unionists, for they were business-minded and wanted adequate banking facilities with national controls; their interests were commercial.³⁹

The Charlestonian who voted for nullification in 1832 was Philip Cohen (d. 1866). As a good citizen eager to serve the larger community, he was active on the Board of Health and at the Marine Hospital; like many other Jewish Charlestonians, he was an officer in the militia. His fervent devotion to South Carolina became a family tradition; his granddaughter Eleanor rejoiced in 1865, when she heard of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. The Reform Jew Colonel Myer Jacobs also voted for nullification. Unlike most other Jewish Charlestonians, he was no shopkeeper or practitioner of a profession; he served the federal government as a customs officer. Too old to bear arms during the Civil War, he volunteered for the home guards. Philip Phillips of Cheraw in the Chesterfield district, voted with the Unionist minority. Not much later he left the state and moved west, to the new cotton lands of Alabama. There he continued a legal practice that was ultimately to bring him to Washington, where he became a prominent counselor-at-law.⁴⁰

Were these Southern Jews, these “colonels,” if you will, a different breed than the Northern Jews? Were they of a different peoplehood? Did these Jewish sectionalists pursue a different way of life than their Northern coreligionists? Superficially, yes. They stressed loyalty to their state; they were proslavery; they emphasized Southern concepts of chivalry; they adhered to the code duello; they were free traders; they set their faces against the encroachments of the federal government. All this may have been merely a defense of their agrarian interests as they reacted to their fear of Northern political and industrial domination. As businessmen, they knew that their farm customers wanted cheap supplies. The acceptance of the Southern way of thinking is reflected in the letter of a German-Jewish immigrant who landed in Charleston in the spring of

1832 when the clash over the hated tariffs was at the fever point and nullification appeared imminent. The writer was Samuel Maas (b. 1810), a native of Mannheim. He quickly became aware that dissension and even secession were in the offing. Though realizing the need for protection for American industries, he was opposed to high tariffs. His German liberal background and his respect for certain English economic teachings made him a free trader. Maas, while still in Europe, had watched with interest the July Revolution in France; he was a political liberal. He had been in this country but a few weeks when he wrote his parents in Mannheim, Germany: Why should we pay taxes to support our Northern brothers?

There is no question that individual Jews in the South were regional patriots, sectionalists. In part—possibly in large part—the Jews, native and foreign-born, wanted to conform to the prejudices of their neighbors. Yet, from the very scanty evidence available it would seem that Southern Jews bore no hostility whatsoever to the Jews of the North. Later, as the South became fearful of its national influence, after sectionalism became secession, and when war was declared in 1861, Jews continued to go along with their neighbors. Long before this, loyalty to the state, to South Carolina, had become marked. When, in 1847, a toast was proposed to “our” palmetto banner and “our” palmetto regiment at a banquet of the Hebrew Benevolent Society, “the cheering was most deafening.” Those were the days of the war with Mexico, which surely had its patriotic effect.⁴¹

PATRIOTISM AND WARS

At this same banquet in 1847, the Hebrew Benevolent Society also proposed a toast to the President of the United States. Most Jews, like most Gentiles, were national patriots. How did their patriotism express itself? Jews were in the process of becoming American nationalists no later than the 1760's, when the trouble with the mother country became acute. By the early 1770's, this loyalty to America was fully developed; in 1783, the members of Mikveh Israel informed the Pennsylvania authorities that Jews were entitled to equal rights because they had suffered for their attachment to the principles of the Revolution. When, in 1800, Sampson Simson read a Hebrew oration at Columbia's commencement exercises, he reminded his audience that the Israelites had risen up “like one man in the cause of liberty and independence.” Earlier, in 1783, when young Sheftall Sheftall wrote to his father informing him that Congress had ratified the provisional treaty of peace, he said: “We are delivered from a cursed proud nation.” Virginia Jews reminded their state's legislators that when, in 1807, the British had fired on the *Chesapeake*, the Jews were foremost among those who seized arms to defend their country. Then

came the War of 1812. Young Jews in New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston responded to the call for volunteers. A substantial number from families of affluence were officers; some were in elite militia units, especially artillery batteries and cavalry troops, organizations, incidentally, that were as much social as they were military. Others were non-commissioned officers and soldiers of the line.⁴²

A Hollander by the name of Isaac De Young, age sixteen, enlisted as a common soldier and fought in almost a dozen engagements during the War of 1812. When standing guard at Fort George, he refused to let his commanding officer, the later General Winfield Scott, pass, because the latter would not give the countersign. That took courage. De Young also served at Fort McHenry in Baltimore. Captain Abraham A. Massias fought a much larger force of British invaders in Georgia, during the War of 1812. When the captain made his will, he asked Charleston's Beth Elohim to serve as trustee for funds bequeathed to a niece in St. Thomas. He was always close to the Jewish religious community and made provision for the synagog as long as it remained Reform. His testamentary legatee, however, was a Gentile. U. P. Levy, the man who was one day to become the ranking officer of the American fleet in the Mediterranean, served as a sailing master in the War of 1812 until he was captured by the British. Many Americans during this unhappy war gave it no support; there were others, like Grace Seixas Nathan, who were not unconscious of the desperate need to reopen the channels of trade, but whose belief in the justice of this struggle left little room for half-hearted support. When things looked bad on the New York frontier in 1814, she wrote her niece Sarah Kursheedt:

I cannot for the life of me feel terrified. Besides I am so true an American, so warm a patriot that I hold these mighty Armies and their proud arrogant, presumptuous, and over-powering nation as beings that *we* have conquered and *shall* conquer again—this, I persuade myself will be so. And may the Lord of Battles grant that it may be so.⁴³

Many Jews served in the Second Florida War (1835-1842). These were in the main cultured Charlestonians, who, fired by Greek and Roman classical traditions of the glory of battle, sought fame in the Indian wars. Some of them, no doubt, saw military service as an opportunity to attain public acclaim in a hurry; they were mistaken, for the war was misbegotten. The exaltation of patriotism was not exhausted by shooting at one's enemies. Haym Salomon considered it a privilege to lend money without interest to an impecunious delegate to the Continental Congress; Da Ponte, the librettist, wrote an Italian hymn commemorating Washington's birthday. Rebecca Gratz, ardent in her regard for George Washington, deplored that few people celebrated his birthday, or did so by giving a dinner and

getting drunk. Patriotic parents reflected their love of country in the names they gave their offspring. One of the Savannah Sheftalls numbered three notables among his children: a Henry Clay, a Benjamin Franklin, and a Thomas Jefferson. During the War of 1812, Harmon Hendricks, the New York businessman, subscribed for a total of \$58,000 in government loans—a most substantial purchase in a war looked upon with disfavor by many. In 1821, Lt. Colonel Aaron Levy, of the 9th Regiment of Artillery, celebrated the Fourth of July in the village of Caldwell, New York, at the south end of Lake George. Levy, a canny entrepreneur, combined business and patriotism on this occasion by dedicating a tract of land in which he had an interest. A Protestant preacher opened with prayer; church hymns were sung; the Declaration of Independence was read; a minister preached, but the oration of the day was delivered by Colonel Levy. Following the benediction, the newly laid-out tract was given the name Mount Levy. After a band played, and the men, women, and children marched, hundreds of participants, including veterans of the Revolutionary War, sat down to a dinner under a bower of laurel and evergreen. They were all Colonel Levy's guests.⁴⁴

WHY WERE JEWS PATRIOTS?

Love of country, a theme to which Jews frequently addressed themselves, can be summarized by citing the views of three Jews who flourished during the 1790's. In Philadelphia, Dr. Nassy, a naturalized American who had returned to his home in Surinam, wrote a defense of Dutch Jewry in which he said that the United States had given the world the first example of liberty and equality; in Charleston, Jacob Cohen, president of the congregation, said that the American Revolution and the Constitution had saved the Jews from degradation and oppression. Writing to her mother in Germany, Rebecca Samuel, of Petersburg, Virginia, said: "Jew and Gentile are as one. . . . You cannot know what a wonderful country this is for the common man." In 1820, Dr. Jacob De La Motta asked an audience: "On what spot in this habitable globe, does an Israelite enjoy more blessings?" The Jew was immensely pleased with the privileges accorded him. The American Gentile was not as euphoric; under the British, he had long enjoyed rights as a citizen. Most Jews, however, were immigrants or the children of immigrants; Europe was very much with them; they were just emerging from "intolerant bigotry."⁴⁵

Here in the United States, they were immeasurably better off than the Jewish masses under the Romanovs and the Ottoman Turks. Carl Schurz once pointed out, correctly, that immigrants were more patriotic than many natives. Writing to Hannah Adams in 1811, Philip Cohen, of Charleston, had epitomized the why of Jewish patriotism in a single sentence: "It is but natural that people who for ages have groaned under the

impolitic barbarity and blind fanaticism of Europe should inhale the breath of freedom with delight." Jews split on political issues, but they were one in their love of the country which had done so much for them; this was "our country," "our city," "our people," "our fellow citizens." God himself has brought us to this land of milk and honey; this is the land of promise. Answering a Judeophobe in 1778, a Southern Jew had signed himself: "A Real *American*."⁴⁶

SLAVERY AND THE JEWS

Except in the realm of religion, where Jews were loathe to make significant concessions, Jews "accepted" the United States; they wanted to be loved. They dressed, thought, acted, and lived like Gentile neighbors of their own social class. They adopted the mores of the Gentiles. In the South, they were grandiloquent in their respect for women. Slavery? On the whole Jews accepted this institution without question. In the 1770's, in the North, Rivera and Lopez, of Newport, had been known as slave importers on a substantial scale; after Lopez died, his father-in-law Rivera continued to dispatch his slavers to the African coast for cargoes. With Rivera's retirement in the late eighteenth century, there were no more Jewish slave importers, but by the early decades of the next century a few Jewish merchants limited themselves primarily to the buying and selling of slaves. After 1840, large scale wholesalers began to make their appearance. In the North before 1800 and in the South all through this period, slaves were stocked as a commodity by Jewish shopkeepers and merchants. An advertisement of Abraham Seixas speaks for itself. As was his wont, he resorted to doggerel to puff his wares:

He has for sale
Some Negroes, male,
Will suit full well grooms.
He has likewise
Some of their wives,
Can make clean, dirty rooms.

Petty Jewish shopkeepers catered to the Negro trade—to the dismay of some of their fellow citizens. Encouraging and tolerating black customers was deemed an incitement to theft. All through the eighteenth century, into the early nineteenth, Jews in the North were to own black servants; in the South, the few plantations owned by Jews were tilled with slave labor. In 1820, over 75 percent of all Jewish families in Charleston, Richmond, and Savannah owned slaves, employed as domestic servants; almost 40 percent of all Jewish householders in the United States owned one slave or more. There were no protests against slavery as

such by Jews in the South, where they were always outnumbered at least 100 to 1; discretion was held imperative if they were to survive. But very few Jews anywhere in the United States protested against chattel slavery on moral grounds. What is true is that individual Jews were distinguished by their kindness to their slaves, as is well documented in a number of instances.⁴⁷

Even prior to 1848 and the coming of German Jewish political liberals, there were Jews interested in the manumission societies, but their numbers was pitifully small. The protection of blacks was among the primary aims of these associations, though manumission advocates were not always sympathetic to the human situation of the slaves and the members of these societies were not necessarily abolitionists. Baltimore's Solomon Etting was a member of the Maryland Colonization Society, which aimed to ship freedman back to Africa; Etting himself owned slaves. Members of manumission organizations were not thinking in terms of an American multiracial society. Still the freeing of slaves by Jews was by no means unusual. The motivations were diverse. Some bondsmen were emancipated during the lifetime of the master, or by testament, as a reward for loyal service, for care during an illness, for friendship and devotion. Many of the women emancipated had obviously been their owners' mistresses; some of them had borne their masters children; in a few instances, testators acknowledged their parentage. Two educated and cultured blacks, Francis Louis Cardozo, Sr., and his brother Thomas Y., may have been the children of a scion of this Charleston clan. Not infrequently, the mistress, the common-law wife, was a freedwoman, often a mulatto.⁴⁸

Inasmuch as manumissions were frowned upon in some Southern states, testators circumvented the law by providing special treatment for slaves. They made liberal bequests to them; heirs were enjoined never to sell them and were urged to treat them with lenity; these slaves were to be accorded many of the courtesies enjoyed by freedmen and freedwomen. Jacob I. Cohen and Isaiah Isaacs, the well-known Richmond merchants, partners for years, both manumitted slaves in their wills. Isaacs stipulated that the men and women to be freed were to receive a generous supply of clothing; Cohen left money to these servants but specified that if any of them preferred to remain in bondage, they were free to choose their own masters. The money from their sale was to be invested by the municipal authorities and the interest used to buy bread for the poor on the Fourth of July. It is apparent that both Cohen and Isaacs were not untouched by the egalitarian doctrines of Thomas Jefferson's Virginia. Isaacs prefaced his manumissions with a familiar phrase: "Being of opinion that all men are by nature equally free, etc." One of the witnesses to an Isaacs codicil was Dabney Carr, Jefferson's nephew.⁴⁹

BLACKS AS FRIENDS

Close friendships between Jews and blacks were not altogether unusual. Sampson Simson, the New York lawyer and philanthropist, was known for his sympathies for blacks. David Brandon, of Charleston, in his will probated in 1838, asked his family to be kind to his servant, a free black, the "best friend I ever had." The dour New Orleans businessman and philanthropist Judah Touro was very generous to "a free woman of color," but in this instance there is no reason to believe that she was the white man's mistress. One of his executors and a beneficiary in his will was Pierre Destrac Cazenave, who had once served Touro as a confidential clerk and friend; Cazenave was a descendant of blacks. Another New Orleans Jew closely associated with blacks was Leon Godchaux (1824-1899). This immigrant, a native of Lorraine, landed in the Louisiana metropolis no later than 1840. Over the years, he became a successful clothing manufacturer and sugar planter, at one time owning fourteen plantations, 60,000 acres of land, and eight sugar refineries. He is said to have been one of the largest sugar producers and the largest taxpayer in the state. Associated with him as his friend and adviser was a West Indian, whom he had met on board ship when he sailed from Le Havre. His friend, like Cazenave, was descended from blacks. Every coin has its reverse side. Despite the good treatment accorded slaves by some Jewish masters, there were others who abused them. This assumption seems warranted by the fact that slaves fled from Jewish homes as readily as they fled from bondage to Gentiles.⁵⁰

CONVERSION OF BLACKS

Unlike the Jews in Surinam and possibly some of the West Indies, American Jews did not encourage their slaves to accept Judaism. On occasion, black servants here observed Jewish rites and were even buried in Jewish cemeteries, but the Charleston and New Orleans congregations deliberately excluded blacks from membership, whether they were free or slave. The reasons are obvious; blacks had no social status; they were identified as bondsmen. Fearful of their own acceptance, Jews would do nothing that might endanger their standing in racist America; with rare exceptions, Southern Jews were careful to conform to the prevailing attitudes toward slaves and slavery. It would have been surprising if Jacob N. Cardozo, the journalist and economist, had not defended this peculiar Southern institution. Jews in the South knew full well that there was a slave problem, but like the people about them, they did nothing to come to grips with this evil. Though Captain Uriah P. Levy wanted to abolish slavery, his wish did not deter him from running his Virginia plantation with slave labor.⁵¹

As did their white fellow citizens in the South, Jews, too, lived in fear of servile revolts, a dread reflected in a letter that Samuel Maas wrote to his family in Germany. The rebellion of Nat Turner and the Virginia blacks erupted only a few months after Maas landed in this country. The insurrection struck terror into the hearts of the slaveholders of the South; no one felt safe. A tense atmosphere already prevailed when the intelligent and impressionable young German Jew arrived in Charleston to live with his uncle, an affluent merchant. It took Maas only four weeks to be convinced that blacks had to be watched, disciplined, and, if necessary, ruthlessly punished. Slavery he agreed, was a sound institution; the Southern economy was built on black labor. The black made an ideal workhand, for only he, stemming from the torrid African lands, could tolerate the humidity, intense heat, and backbreaking labor of the Carolina lowlands. Undoubtedly, Maas was influenced in his views by his uncle and by the luxury of the well-appointed home with its massive silver service and numerous, obsequious slaves ready to respond to his slightest nod—all this impressed Maas mightily.⁵²

The Friedman brothers, of Tuscumbia, Alabama, took a great risk when they helped some blacks free themselves clandestinely. The Friedmans were not abolitionists; abolitionists were hated; very few Jews dared to align themselves with this group of reformers. In 1828 Samuel Myers, of Norfolk, seems to have been one of the rare exceptions. Myers, an idealist, was interested, too, in the solution of the eternal Jewish Problem. Rachel Mordecai Lazarus was fully aware of the evils of slavery, but, after a fashion, defended this institution in her correspondence with Maria Edgeworth. Rachel contended that the black under chattel slavery was no worse off than the European who suffered under wage slavery. Rachel's son, Marx E. Lazarus, a socialist, was in 1860 opposed to slavery, to any form of oppression under which blacks or whites labored. Yet, when the Civil War broke out, this humanitarian joined the Confederate Army, not because he had changed his views, but because as a Southern nationalist, he was determined to save his country from the tyranny of the North.⁵³

JEW'S ACCEPT GENTILES SOCIALLY

Fitting into a slave society was obviously not too difficult for Jews who had settled in the South or had grown up there. Jews had no choice but to accept the social system of the masses who enveloped them, for with the exception of Charleston, they were but a tiny fraction of the population in every other city of the South. They were pleased to be integrated into the American body politic, even though they were often perilously close to the periphery. As it has already been pointed out, they joined the

Masons, gave to all good causes, and relaxed with their Gentile friends in some of their leisure activities. Jews were members of almost all societies, whether sociocultural, mutual-aid, or philanthropic. They were quick to invite Gentiles to formal synagog celebrations and sent their children to church oriented private schools, but certainly were glad when Jefferson's new college in Virginia announced that it would not require theological readings of the students. Because Jews were eager to be like their neighbors, they expected their hazzanim to be Jewish versions of the classically educated Christian clergymen. Leaders of Charleston's Beth Elohim wanted a minister with the capacity to "stamp an additional degree of dignity and responsibility upon our congregation."

In general, social relations between Jews and Gentiles were not of an intimate nature; eighteen hundred years of contention were not easily bridged. Yet, individual Jewish businessmen developed good relations, even close relations, with Gentile clients. While in exile in Leicester during the Revolutionary War, the Riveras made some good friends. Letters exchanged during this period testify that Jews and Gentiles cemented friendships. In Leicester, Ezra Stiles called on the Riveras and was rewarded with a half-dozen bottles of wine. Jacob Rivera and Stiles had known each other in Newport for many years, though in the privacy of his diary the erudite Christian still identified the generous Rivera as a "Jew merchant." Jews went to balls in the small towns and to the more fashionable and exclusive assemblies in the cities. Rebecca Franks, a daughter of David Franks, the army purveyor, was one of the belles of the Meschianza fête, when the British occupied Philadelphia during the Revolution. A Philadelphia Jewish merchant was a dinner guest at the home of Washington and Nancy Shippen. Nancy's circle included General Washington, the Penns, the Chews, the Pinckneys—and the Frankses.⁵⁴

Were the Loyalist and Whig branches of the widely ramified Franks clan accepted because they were marginal Jews? In this instance, yes, but it is equally true that in many towns and cities, observant and even committed Jews were welcome guests in the best homes. Moses Myers was one of the managers of the elite Norfolk Assembly in 1817. Benjamin I. Cohen's fancy dress party of February 2, 1837, was one of the highlights of the social season in Baltimore. The putative model for Walter Scott's Rebecca, the Philadelphian Rebecca Gratz, was an Orthodox Jew who moved in the most select circles. She was entertained in the home of Henry Clay and numbered some of the country's most eminent politicians and litterateurs among her friends, even though, wherever she went, she observed the traditional dietary laws. Speaking of Jews in 1818, Noah said: "generally, they mix and commingle without any distinction." Noah may have erred on the sanguine side.⁵⁵

NAMES

The adoption of American names is one of the indicia of acculturation, of the Jew's attempt to identify with the Gentile society in which he lived. The seventeenth-century Spanish-Portuguese Pardos changed their name in North America to the English equivalent, Brown. A North Carolina businessman anglicized his Jewish name—whatever it was—to Laney, but the official records naively refer to him as “a Jew.” Hyam Levy became Higham Levy; Israel Baer Kursheedt, a German-born talmudist, was known as Barry to his intimates. Haym M. Salomon's daughter Debra wanted to be called Delia; her husband, a convert or possibly even a born Jew, was Thomas Washington Donovan. Debra-Delia had one brother with the given name Benjamin Franklin; another was Samuel Napoleon. John D. Jackson was the clerk of Congregation Bnai Jeshurun in the 1830's. After Nathan bar Gershon had been called to the Torah in New York, he immediately resumed his civil name, William Warner. In 1832, Warner, no longer a youngster, volunteered to nurse the sick during the fearful cholera epidemic. Philadelphia's Mikveh Israel records the following names of members: Allen, Florance, Jones, Mitchel, Phillips, Hunt, Arnold, Roget, Coleman, Gardiner, and King. When John Maximillian Dyer came to America in the early nineteenth century, he called himself Philip Heim; when he left Germany, his name had been Imanuel Gershon Feist. The first change had come because of the Napoleonic conscription laws; the last change had been prompted by desire to compliment a Christian friend in this country. Before 1824, Jews bore the following names in the Charleston Jewish community: Lewis, Morris, Pool, Simpson, Waterman; Moses Hyams's middle name was Kosciusko. Beth Elohim's rabbi Poznanski had come to New York's Orthodox Shearith Israel with the first name Gedalia; in Charleston, he soon became Gustavus. A trooper of South Carolina's 5th Regiment of Cavalry, twice wounded in Civil War battles, was carried on the muster rolls as McDuff Cohen; Savannah's Joseph Davis had been born in Koenigsberg and given the name Joseph Hamburger.⁵⁶

JEWISH PHILANTHROPY TO GENTILES

Assuming an Anglo-Saxon name and giving children the names of American notables were, it is evident, common forms of integration. In relation to the community where he had sunk roots, the Jew frequently forgot that he was a Jew; he thought of himself only as a citizen, a good citizen. When help and charity were needed, Jews were among the first and the most generous of the givers; Jews, apparently without exception, wanted to become an intimate part of America and all that it stood for. A very substantial form of identification was philanthropy, the giving of one's

means to help the community. The Jew, said Dr. Peixotto in 1830, can never be deaf to the cry of the destitute. Jews, he emphasized, are taught to love their neighbor. In the course of two or three years—and this is typical of Jewry at that time—New Orleans Jews were happy to collect money for cholera relief, to dispatch funds to Charleston after a devastating fire, to contribute substantial sums to the poor of their own city, and to send help abroad to the widows and orphans of the men who had died in France's July Revolution. A very famous German writer of the late eighteenth century reported that a Portuguese Jew, who had died in Charleston, had left an enormous sum for the poor without regard to religion or sect. The man and the story are mythical, but the intent of this Enlightenment fabrication is clear: the emancipated Jew loves his fellowman and is ready to support every good cause. The Charleston Jews—indeed Jews in all the states—were determined to make this myth a reality. The acting minister in Richmond asked his parishioners to support a public school; let us manifest our gratitude, he pleaded; we live in a land of liberty. A friend left \$1,000 to endow a charity school in that same city. In Philadelphia, Simon Gratz gave money to a Quaker school; in Boston, Moses M. Hays contributed to Harvard. The Virginia pair, Cohen and Isaacs, rallied to establish a college which hoped to have branches in Richmond, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York.⁵⁷

In their willingness to help their neighbors, Jews reached out in all directions. In 1781, after the British banished Charlestonians who would not take the oath of allegiance, a subscription list was circulated in Philadelphia to relieve exiles seeking shelter there. Philadelphia Jews were among those who responded to this appeal. Distressed that Americans from the Wyoming Valley had been imprisoned by the Pennsylvanians in the 1780's and, so it is said, given only bread and water, Michael Hart, of Easton, sent them solid food every Friday afternoon. When February 2, 1814, was set aside as a day of fasting and prayer for the people of north-west New York state who had been burnt out of their homes by the invading British, collections on their behalf were taken up in the churches and synagogues. New York's Jews, 500 souls in a population of 90,000, raised one-ninth of all the money collected—a tribute to Jewish generosity and also an indication of the unconcern of the affluent and the unpopularity of the war. In Philadelphia, David Seixas gathered deaf-mute derelicts and taught them to communicate; in New York, the newly established Bnai Jeshurun Congregation used some of its limited funds to come to the aid of fellow citizens whose homes had gone up in flames.⁵⁸

Jews had their pet Gentile charity, the orphan asylum. Philadelphia Jewry supported the local home with money, supplies, food, linen, hay, and the like. This was the society which Rebecca Gratz had joined when it was first established in 1814. Her Christian colleagues respected and

admired her; they would have allowed her an apprentice Christian servant from the asylum, but they adamantly refused to accord the same privilege to a heretical Unitarian. Charleston Jews also loved their general orphan asylum; quite a number of them left it money in their wills. On August 21, 1791, Joseph M. Myers, a merchant and a Mason of high degree in the Scottish Rite branch of Masonry—he was a Deputy Inspector General of the order in South Carolina—was called upon to make an address in the synagogue on behalf of the asylum. The congregation's minister at that time, Abraham Azuby, was bypassed; apparently he was not an able English preacher. The service arranged was a most attractive one, enhanced by a volunteer choir of men and boys. "The tunes [were] delightful pretty." The congregants were almost ecstatic with the success of this philanthropic foray. Describing what went on, a local Jew said that it brought honor to the congregation and to Jewry at large. Obviously the city officials, the Gentiles who were present, were impressed, particularly because the Jews raised a large sum. The fact that the meeting was held on Sunday dismayed the New York Jewish traditionalists, but does not seem to have disturbed the Jewish Charlestonians. "Neivour was more decoram observed"; this pleased them.⁵⁹

RELIGIOUS RAPPROCHEMENT

When Jews could turn to Christians and ask them to support Jewish religious institutions, it was evident that gentle breezes were blowing in a world prepared to embrace both Jews and Christians. In the area of religion, both groups were learning to live together amicably. Hannah Adams taking note of the change in her *History*, reminded her readers that when Catholics were finally allowed to build a church at Paramaribo in Dutch Surinam, the Jews—and Protestants, too—made generous gifts. Decades earlier, here in this country, Jews were already helping Christian religionists. In 1711, the Jewish merchants of New York contributed to the building of Trinity Church. Among the donors was a businessman who also officiated as the "rabbi" of the community. Rivera, of Newport, in the 1770's, bought tickets in a lottery designed to erect a meetinghouse in Providence. Certainly, he had no objection to winning a few pounds, if he was lucky enough to pick a prize, but he seems to have been primarily interested in promoting "publick" buildings.⁶⁰

In 1778 at Mackinac, two of the first Jews in the Michigan country obligated themselves to help support a missionary priest. Why this gesture? A courtesy to Catholic friends? Were these Jews being good citizens, good neighbors, or did they want someone with moral authority to tame the turbulent French, Indians, and "breeds"? Loving Christians was for some Jews a counsel of perfection. Warned by Ezra Stiles, the Newport Jews hesitated to let Christians use their synagogue. During the war,

when the British occupied Newport, the churches were not always available to worshippers. The Jews, torn between the demands of neighborliness and Jewish Law, with which they were not familiar, did not know what to do. For the time being, they refused to let the Christians use their sanctuary. The nineteenth century brought more permissive Jews. In Galveston, Samuel Maas aided fellow Germans, Christians, to secure a free lot for a church; in Savannah, Dorothea Abrahams left money in her will to put up a Christian chapel. Was she a convert or a liberal-minded Jew? The Charlestonians, in 1850, permitted Christians to use the hall of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum for religious purposes; it was put at their disposal for a nominal rental. Long, long before this, in the late eighteenth century, in his neatly laid-out town of Aaronsburg, Aaron Levy granted lots to Christian churches and presented a communion set to the Lutherans. Providing ground at no cost to churches in a new town was considered good business; it was to become a standard practice since churches brought settlers.⁶¹

Hazzan Gershom Seixas was friendly with Christian clerics, as was emphasized in a eulogy after his death in 1816. In S. I. Cohen's *Elements of the Jewish Faith*, a London work reprinted here in 1817, the liberal author and his American Jewish publisher expressed the Enlightenment belief that all moral men are guaranteed a hereafter. Reviewing this book the following year, the Rev. Ezra S. Ely of Philadelphia chose to disagree; there could be no happiness, no heaven, except through Jesus Christ. When Noah dedicated the Mill Street Synagogue in 1818—aware that there were many Christians in the audience—he praised the Christian Bible societies because they emphasized the religious truths held by both religions. Rebecca Gratz's staunch traditionalism did not deter her from listening to William Ellery Channing, the Boston preacher, and from cultivating the friendship of Philadelphia's Unitarian minister, William Henry Furness. When Furness visited Rebecca and discussed Christianity with her, she did not hesitate to tell him that the nearer Christianity approached Judaism the more perfect it would become. In 1847 some Charleston Protestants asked Beth Elohim to take up a collection for them. The Jews did so, and the grateful church wrote a most urbane note of thanks to the people from whom all Christians had received "the oracles of God."

Though Jews in Europe under less happy circumstances had made gifts to Christian religious institutions, one suspects that relatively good relations between the two religions are uniquely American. Why? Jews felt it good citizenship to help churches; Christians, too, often aided the Jews to build houses of worship; the followers of Jesus cherished an image of themselves as an enlightened, tolerant people. Jews probably felt flattered to be asked; they gave willingly. America, the United States, was

going to be different. This was not Europe; this was a new world. As an integral part of the body politic, Jews could no longer live religiously in complete isolation from their fellow citizens. They had to emancipate themselves from a past of rejection; now they were accepted. They moderated their hostilities and abated their suspicions. In 1819, a Charleston Jew wrote: "The benevolent offices of humanity, not confined merely to this or that sect, enlarging its theatre of action, becomes at once sufficiently capacious to encompass the whole human race."⁶²

Because this was an entirely new world, where Jews were to be treated like other human beings, they were ready and eager to accept the culture, the mores, the dress, the mannerisms—even the prejudices—of their neighbors. America succeeded in integrating these immigrants. For the first generation of newcomers, pluralism was still important; the ties to Europe were still strong. By the following generation, at the latest, the moorings had been loosened; the native-born were very eager to become an indistinguishable part of America. Integration was now unconscious. It expressed itself in patriotism, in politics, in the desire for office. Yet even second and third-generation American Jews continued to make further efforts to complete, to intensify, the Americanization that meant so much to them. This assimilatory process, made inevitable by the millions of non-Jews surrounding them, was reinforced by the synagogue, the Jewish school, the social welfare organizations. All of them were, to a degree, Americanizing agencies helping Jews to survive in a challenging new world.⁶³

English was accepted as the prime medium of communication by the new immigrants. The use of language was associated with status. Some of Georgia's Christian Germans, even those born in the province and later the state, still retained German as their daily speech; some probably could not even speak English. This may have been true, too, of some of the Pennsylvania "Dutch." It was certainly not true of the Jews who switched to English as speedily as possible. The epitaphs in the Newport cemetery were almost all in English and in Hebrew; the Jews realized that, living or dead, they confronted an Anglo-Saxon world. Uncle Zalma Rehine, writing to Leeser, said that, if a young man was "accuquint in the English langush" he would do well in this country. Despite his phonetic spelling, Uncle Zalma was the complete patriot and a member of the Light Infantry Blues. Though his Richmond friends "Cohen & Isaacs" wrote Yinglish, Yiddish-English or English-Yiddish, they were Jeffersonian Virginians as their wills demonstrate. In their minutes, some congregations gradually shifted from the ancient Hebrew dating to the current Christian chronology. Anshe Chesed of New York employed the services of a competent and literate clerk and began keeping its records in English. Just about a decade after its establishment, this same congregation, originally

made up of Germans, Poles, and Dutch, began translating its English records into German for the sake of newcomers. When Jews began building synagogues, they adopted the architectural styles of their Christian neighbors; new synagogues were neo-classical and even neo-Egyptian.⁶⁴

American national culture was strongly tinged with Protestantism and civil religion. The Jews never realized the extent to which they had been Protestantized. Only rarely did they offer objections, as when Shearith Israel forbade the hazzan to use Christian melodies in his liturgical chants. With one notable exception, Jewry as a body never set out deliberately to harmonize Judaism and the national culture. A group of young Charlestonians did make this effort in the 1820's (their venture will be analyzed in a later chapter). In postbellum days, Isaac Mayer Wise would admit that American Judaism had been colored by Christian thought. Jews, he pointed out sarcastically and simplistically, had made a number of substitutions; instead of Jesus, they invoked God; instead of the Trinity, they emphasized unity, and instead of the Christian Messiah, who had already come, they offered a Jewish one, who had yet to make his appearance.⁶⁵

Christian influences were reflected in the rituals for synagogue dedications. The formal invitations were often printed; the discourse was in English, and a well-trained choir of men—and women, too—intoned Hebrew psalms and English hymns. An organ, an innovation for this very special occasion, accompanied the singers. Despite its cultural lag, its adherence to cherished customs, the American synagogue was consciously patterning itself on the church, certainly in some of the amenities. The constant emphasis and reemphasis on decorum was really more Protestant than American. There was to be no walking around during the services; infants and young children were to be left at home; parliamentary rules of order were to be observed in all meetings and, to make sure that the congregation understood them, were incorporated into constitutions and by-laws. Umbrellas and canes were to be left in the back or deposited in one's own pew; no one was ever to raise his voice and drown out the cantor. The number of "blessings"—actually financial offerings—during the service was to be reduced. In at least one congregation, the donors were permitted to make their offerings in English instead of the traditional foreign vernacular. Shearith Israel reminded its members in its 1805 constitution that it hoped to promote "solemnity and order . . . devotion and harmony."⁶⁶

The strongest bond tying the Jew to this his new country was a political one; the concept of democracy, in the sense of equal rights for all, was important. It was the privilege of the vote and the right to hold office that served to make the Jew one with his fellow citizens. Jews wanted to be in the mainstream of American life; this gave them a sense of security, of be-

longing. Jews, it is true, embraced America voluntarily and enthusiastically, but integration would have proceeded apace anyway; they were outnumbered a thousand to one; the human environment enveloped and overpowered them. It would not—could not—be denied. Most Jews believed that acculturation would bring a large or larger measure of acceptance. Entrenched in the “synagog” as institution and faith, the Jew had no hesitation in reaching out into the world of the arts and the sciences, in accommodating himself to the cultural patterns of the man next door, but he never desired or intended to surrender traditional religious values. Accommodation is frequently a technique for religioethnic survival. Of course, the ultimate question is this: could the acculturation process ever be complete for the Jew who would not foreswear his religion?⁶⁷

Acculturation, assimilation, in no sense necessarily implies religious or ethnic defection. Even the first generation of elite New Orleans Jews did not convert to Christianity, though they intermarried and rejected synagogal affiliation. Most Philadelphia Jewish lawyers, college graduates, identified themselves as Jews; some were active in the local congregation. Catherine Hays, of Richmond, owned hogs and may well have eaten swine’s flesh, but she was an accepted member of the Jewish community. Rebecca Gratz, of Philadelphia, Major M. M. Noah, of New York, Jacob Mordecai, of Warrenton, Jacob Cardozo, Penina Moïse, and Isaac Harby, all of Charleston, were cultured Americans; all were identified as Jewish religionists. Let us turn back to New York; Gershom Seixas, the rabbi, was a trustee of Columbia College; brother Ben was a founder of what came to be the New York Stock Exchange; brother Moses, the cashier of the first bank in Rhode Island, was Grand Master of the state’s Masonic Grand Lodge.⁶⁸

Wealthy Moses M. Hays was one of but a handful of Jews in Boston; there was no community there until the 1840’s. His friends and associates, it seems, were all Christians; he gave liberally to their charities and supported public enterprises, but made it abundantly clear that he was opposed to Christian missions. He once said that he had never met a Jewish convert to Christianity who was sincere. Moses Myers, of Norfolk, one of the South’s outstanding merchant-shippers, a board member of the Bank of Richmond, served also as an officer in the militia, as consular representative of France and Holland, as Collector of the Port of Norfolk, and as president of the town council. He was a loyal Jew. In remote Lexington, Kentucky, where there were few Jews, Benjamin Gratz felt that he had no choice but to intermarry and married out twice, into families of his own social class, families of repute. Before he settled in the West, while still in Pennsylvania, this graduate lawyer had served as a lieutenant in the War of 1812; in Lexington he was a hemp manufacturer, organizer of a turnpike company, president of a railroad, founder of a bank, sponsor of a

public library, and head of the Kentucky Agricultural and Mechanical Association. Despite his intermarriages he maintained Jewish religious interests.⁵⁹

A substantial number of Jews during this period were nonobservant and unaffiliated, yet content to remain within the religiosocial ambit of Jewry. To be sure, the degree of loyalty varied with the individual. Only a minority in every community went to services regularly; the typical Jew of that day was not a synagoguegoer. The number of confessing but un-synagogued Jews had been growing since the late 1700's; after the turn of the century, they certainly constituted a majority in the cities. Many of them turned to the mutual-aid confraternities. Because of their numbers, they were in not in limbo spiritually or socially; they built a Jewish world of their own as they nestled comfortably between the synagoguegoers and those nominal Jews whose ties to Jewry were very tenuous. Reading the letters of this Jewish generation, one is frequently not aware of their origins; one might even assume, wrongly, that they practiced the rites of the Christian masses who encompassed them. Few Jews of that day (or of any later generation) were so conscious of their religious and ethnic backgrounds that they sought to document these in their daily actions. This was particularly true if they lived in small towns and villages surrounded by the embracing kindness of intelligent Christian folk. The typical Jew did not carry his faith on his sleeve, not even on his face.

DECULTURATION

DECULTURATION IS NOT DEFECTION

Acculturation is but one side of the culture coin; the reverse side is deculturation. The price of cultural change is often cultural surrender. Jews who became Americans had to come to terms with the national way of life. Often this required divestiture, modification, even surrender of older mores and practices. Jacob I. Cohen ignored the protest of the Philadelphia congregation and flouted rabbinic law by marrying Elizabeth Whitlock Mordecai, a widow and proselyte. Mr. Cohen, a "priest" by descent, was religiously subject to certain limitations in choosing a spouse. Thus his action, his rebellion, amounted to deculturation; it was a flagrant disregard of hallowed traditions. Yet deculturation, like acculturation, is not necessarily defection. Jewish families moving toward defection usually survive three generations before they disappear into the common Gentile stream. Of course, there are always exceptions; the process may be completed in one generation. An Ezekiel Levy was once charged with shaving on the Sabbath. Ultimately, an Ezekiel Levy—it may be the same man—married out and joined a Christian church. A break with tradition may in-

itiate a course that will lead to apostasy, but this is not at all typical. Here in the United States, where Jewish communal and religious controls were weak, it was relatively easy to cease being an observant traditional Jew. Some immigrants, indeed, were so eager to become Americans that they did not hesitate to jettison age-old customs which they deemed a hindrance; other immigrants, still tied to their native Europe, rejected compromises which they saw as defection. Isaac Leeser was embittered by what he experienced as a widespread disregard for Jewish religious practices. He chastised his congregants for neglecting the synagog, for disregard of the Sabbath and Holy Days, for non-observance of the dietary laws, for intermarriage, for zeal in worshipping at the altar of Mammon. There were times, in the 1820's, when New York's prestigious Shearith Israel could not muster the necessary minyan, ten males, for a religious service.⁷⁰

Traveling on holidays was frowned upon by the observant, but an increasing number of Jews ignored this prohibition. Ever since the late 1790's, violators of the sanctity of the Sabbath might well be fined, but they were no longer excised from the community. Joseph Marx, Richmond's outstanding merchant, allowed his children to observe either Saturday or Sunday as a day of rest; one of them opted for Sunday. He himself would not have objected to a Sunday Sabbath for all Jews, inasmuch as the Jewish Sabbath was constantly being observed in the breach. Kashrut, the dietary laws, had been a problem ever since colonial days. Even in the early nineteenth century, there was no shoheit and no ritually proper food except in the major towns; Jews in the backcountry had to shift for themselves. This was certainly true of those young men who clerked for Gentiles and ate with the family. Many Jews concocted their own dietary laws. Religious radical Joseph Marx paid the shoheit a fee to provide kosher meat, but the same account book which lists this payment includes an entry for oysters, a forbidden delicacy. By the early nineteenth century, the paid synagog officiants had become the community's vicarious Jews; they had to observe the dietary laws. The rank and file then, as today, often neglected kashrut. Offending Jews were no longer excluded from membership in the congregation, nor were they denied honors.⁷¹

Flouting the dietary laws was bad enough; much worse was the refusal of some Jewish intellectuals to circumcise their children. This was bad, for, though Jews had no sacraments—that is no outward sign of inward grace—circumcision, in effect, functioned as one. A number of antebellum Jews condemned circumcision as a custom unfit for civilized people. Typical of this revolt was a case that occurred at Philadelphia in 1835. Benjamin Etting (d. 1875), the son-in-law of Joseph Marx, was uncircumcised. He was born in Baltimore at a time there seems to have been no circumciser in town. Two sons were born to uncircumcised Benjamin;

neither was circumcised. The older one, Frank Marx Etting (d. 1890), an army officer and historian, married the granddaughter of a Catholic Chief Justice of the United States, Roger B. Taney; the younger one, Frederick Henry, died when he was less than a year old. The question that now confronted Rabbi Leeser and his congregants was thorny: can an uncircumcised child be given a traditional Jewish burial? All the Jewish congregations and welfare confraternities of that day frowned upon Jews who had rejected the Abrahamitic covenant. Reuben Etting, the child's grandfather, was still alive. Since he was an important member of Leeser's Mikveh Israel, it would be very difficult to deny his grandson burial in hallowed ground. Hesitantly, then, Leeser and the officers of the congregation finally permitted the burial and went on to write rabbinic authorities in London asking for guidance in future cases. The replies, if made, are not extant. Major Alfred Mordecai, of the United States Army, apparently also refused to circumcise his sons. Years later, probably after the Major's death, one of his sons, already an adult, submitted to circumcision to please his mother, a traditional Jew, a member of the Gratz-Hays clan.⁷²

Though the rebels against circumcision had rejected an important Jewish practice, they were not defectors but respected members of the Jewish community. Given an open society where Jews were not mistreated, they tended to be less observant. Ever since the days of Ezra, if not earlier, separatist legislation had been a defense mechanism to ensure survival in a hostile environment, but Jewish sociocommunal controls slackened with the rise of the American republic. Equality was very probably interpreted by some Jews as the right to live like their fellow citizens. The French Revolution was another invitation to latitudinarianism. The Jewish desire for expression and fulfillment was satisfied by new civic and cultural opportunities; there was less inducement to cultivate the pre-Emancipation Jewish way of life. It was not that the apathetic and the lax were necessarily hostile to Judaism; for many, the synagogue was still a religiousocial center where they felt at home. Actually, synagogue membership was relatively high if compared to church affiliation; nevertheless, a substantial percentage of Jews in the large cities declined congregational membership. Judging from the estimates of population in the "Jewish" towns and the seating capacity of the synagogues, it is obvious that a very substantial number of Jews did not join.

Many Jews did, however, flock in ever-increasing numbers to the Jewish mutual-aid societies. Clearly they wanted insurance in this world rather than in the world to come. But these unsynagogued Jews were not invariably secularists. The source of loyalty seems to have shifted. With the growing sense of nationalism in the lands of the Atlantic basin came a stronger emphasis on ethnicity as the tie that binds. Jews were now less

dependent on the synagogue as an instrument for cohesion. There was no question but that traditional Judaism in the United States was confronted by serious challenges. In 1783 Haym Salomon had summed it up morosely: *venig yiddishkeit*, too little Jewishness. Fifty years later a friend of Leeser said that Jews here were not really committed to Judaism. If they were observant, if they went through the motions, it was only to impress the Gentiles who expected the Chosen People to be respectably loyal to their faith. There was an element of truth in this contention.⁷³

The forms of deculturation are many. Individuals in a family that had broken the bonds tying them to the Jewish way of life influenced siblings to follow in their footsteps: a path that could lead only to defection. Some members of Shearith Israel began coming to services without prayer shawls; Jews in Newport's Masonic lodge observed the feast of St. John; youngsters in private academies voluntarily attended Christian services and wanted to be looked upon as conformists. It took moral courage to persist in separatism. Many Jews sought to maintain a low profile. In his book *Richmond in By-Gone Days*, the author Samuel Mordecai did not identify the Jews whom he described. For him, these Central Europeans were Germans or Dutch, not Jews. Unlike some of his brothers and sisters, this Mordecai was loyal to his inherited religion, although there is little evidence that he was observant; after his death his relatives buried him in a non-Jewish cemetery.

Samson Levy, of the Philadelphia clan, married out, but circumcised his first-born son; one does not easily cease being a Jew. Apparently, however, the circumciser was not called in for his next son. Several of his younger children were baptized, though not at birth; no doubt the wishes of his Christian wife proved determinative. There is ample evidence of drift on the part of many under the impact of American culture. There was little desire to study Hebrew, to further Jewish schools, to observe the time-honored ceremonies. Jews forgot that they were in exile; the Restoration they prayed for daily meant little, if anything, to many. In the small towns, villages, and hamlets, Jews found it almost impossible to survive religiously, but this was often enough true even in the cities. Abby Bloch, Leeser's kinswoman who had gone to Cincinnati in the 1830's, felt lost Jewishly; this was no place to raise children, she wrote him. In Petersburg, Virginia, the lack of observance among the local Jews, all immigrants, shocked the impressionable Rebecca Samuel, who was determined to leave town. It seemed to her that these Jews were doing nothing to maintain the faith; their hallowing of the Sabbath was a mockery.⁷⁴

NON-AFFILIATION: AN ASPECT OF DECULTURATION

If the American-born Jewish community of the early nineteenth century was weak, so was the Christian religious community. Unitarianism was

growing; many Protestants were moving to the left; unaffiliation and apathy among Christians were common. Henry Clay was no religionist, and Governor James H. Hammond, the South Carolinian who had called on his fellow citizens in a Thanksgiving Day proclamation to worship Jesus, was not himself a believer. In the authoritarian European Jewish communities where dissent was not tolerated, it was easy to remain a Jew; little choice was given; in free America, it was much more difficult to maintain discipline. There were American Jews—not many, to be sure—who were rationalists, Deists, atheists, completely at odds with the traditional way of life and thought; there was no Jewish liberal movement to which they could turn. The fact that a Jew was not a member of a synagog is no proof that he rejected Judaism. He may not have been on the congregational roster because he was thrifty or parsimonious or because he bore a grudge against the hazzan or the president. He vented his fury by withdrawing, by punishing God; loyalty to the synagog was often governed by personal bias.

An intermarried Jew might well hesitate to affiliate; he feared a hostile reception; in some congregations, he was constitutionally ineligible for membership. Successful professionals and individuals who played a part in civic life were often wont to make their careers their prime goal. In Richmond, Charleston, New Orleans, and other towns, too, there were Jews who were only marginally members of the clan. A Jew might be a planter, a lawyer, a politician, a land speculator, a merchant for whom personal interests were always paramount. The following three men were marginal Jews: Colonel David Salisbury Franks lusted for advancement in government service; Raphael J. Moses, later a Confederate officer, had no interest in Judaism as a religion; Mordecai Myers, after his marriage to a Christian, ceased to play an important role in the Jewish community, though continuing to read the Jewish press and to contribute to Jewish causes and to hope that his fellow Jews in Schenectady would close their shops on the Sabbath. None of the three ever concealed their Jewish background; Moses in postbellum days became a passionate and eloquent defender of Jewry.⁷⁵

It is obvious that individuals varied in their degree of observance. Over here most men did what they wished. Most of them were probably in the process of shifting their loyalties, to a greater or lesser extent, to new cultural and humanistic values. Congregations were learning that they would have to take the times into account or lose out. Mid-eighteenth-century Shearith Israel could threaten non-conformists with expulsion; the synagogal authorities knew that the rebels had nowhere to turn; defection was unthinkable. By 1800, offenders were merely threatened with deprivation of synagogal honors; they were not to be driven out. In the early nineteenth century, communities began to wink at reli-

gious violations; a new spirit of freedom, individualism, and revolt made itself felt; congregations dared not bear down too hard. By 1823, Philadelphia's Mikveh Israel refused to exclude from membership a man who would not circumcise his son. More important: not only was there salutary neglect by the individual, but by the community, too! New Orleans and Savannah Jewry made provision for the burial of children born of a Jewish father and a Christian mother. In the conflicts between the seductive American culture and entrenched Jewish traditions, America generally won out. Compromises were made by the Jewish community. In a way, this form of accommodation became customary law and meant that there was no need for violators to secede.⁷⁶

INTERMARRIAGE

INTRODUCTION

At first glance, it would seem that marriage-out is a form of deculturation and secession from the community. Actually, not every intermarriage is a loss; Jews who marry Christians may remain loyal members of a congregation and even succeed in rearing Jewish families. The non-Jewish partner may become a Jew in practice or through formal conversion. On the whole, however, intermarriage in earlier generations was a threat to Jewish survival. No two intermarriages were alike, of course, since no two individuals were alike. In Baltimore, the dry goods storekeeper Levi Collmus, married to a non-Jew, was buried in a nonsectarian cemetery, though he had been active in the Jewish community. Fanny Etting, who married a Taylor, was buried in the family cemetery of her Jewish forbears; Jacob Hays, the New York police officer, married a Christian and reared a Christian family, but may never himself have accepted baptism. If he had, his pious Jewish father would hardly have made him one of his heirs. Dr. David Nassy reported that there were several intermarried families in Philadelphia. Husbands and wives, so he said, maintained their original religious loyalties and went to their respective churches or synagogues. What he failed to point out was that the children of these families were all reared as Christians and were lost to Jewry.⁷⁷

INTERMARRIAGE IN THE BACKCOUNTRY

Intermarriage was prevalent in the backcountry ever since the first Jews arrived in New Amsterdam. Jewish women were scarce on the frontier. When the twenty-three Jewish Founding Fathers, mothers, and children landed in this Dutch outpost in 1654, they found two known Jews; one of them, Solomon Pieters, had a Christian wife, and it is very likely that

Asser Levy, one of the newly arrived argonauts also found himself a non-Jewish mate. The Jewish village shopkeeper soon discovered that it was difficult to persuade a Jewish woman to go into "exile" with him. That may be why Jacob Lucena, a peddler, had been arrested in 1670 for "lascivious dalience . . . and profers to severall women." The typical Jewish settler had no desire to become involved in illicit love affairs; he found himself a Christian mate, with or without benefit of clergy, and reared a family. The Pintos, of eighteenth-century New Haven, were probably Deists; their children grew up as Gentiles. The first Jews in Pittsburgh, in Malta, Ohio, in Kentucky, in Frederick County, Maryland, in Missouri, took Gentile wives and disappeared as Jews. S. Meylert, in the Pennsylvania hinterland, never told his wife and young ones that he had been born a Jew.⁷⁸

In 1785, Philadelphia's Jews were confronted with a difficult religious decision. Was Benjamin Moses Clava entitled to a Jewish funeral? Clava, a born Jew, had been in the colonies no later than the 1750's when he appeared in the records as a partner of Bernard Gratz shortly after the latter arrived in Philadelphia. Now—a generation later—he was dead and was to be buried. What, then, was the problem? Like many other peddlers who lived in obscure villages, this Jew, who had settled in the Jerseys, had fallen in love with a Gentile and had been married by a Christian minister. Under the circumstances was he to be looked upon as a Jew and permitted interment in the Spruce Street Cemetery? The Philadelphians weighed the matter. When the Jews needed his help in building their synagog three years earlier, his name had not been found on the list of donors. The final decision was to bury him in consecrated ground—but without shroud and ritual cleansing. Even after the vote was taken, there was still uncertainty as to whether they had done the right thing—had they not been too lenient?—and they decided, no doubt for future guidance, to refer the matter to the rabbis of Amsterdam and The Hague. At the time, in all North America, there was not a single rabbi, a man qualified to lead them through the mazes of Jewish canon law. Yet, in this very Philadelphia, a generation later in 1823, Congregation Mikveh Israel refused to penalize Jews who had married out. Four years later, however, the town's United Hebrew Beneficent Society still would not tolerate intermarriage. Charleston Jewry also, in 1820 repulsed Jews who married out; they could not become or remain members.⁷⁹

INTERMARRIAGE REMAINS A PROBLEM

Jewish individuals and congregations may have made their peace with Jews who intermarried, but they were never fully reconciled to such departures from venerable Jewish laws. They were convinced that intermarriage threatened the very existence of the community; the children would

be lost. On occasion parents threatened to disinherit their progeny if they chose Gentiles as husbands or wives. Appealing for funds in 1825 to help build a house of God, Joseph Jonas, Cincinnati's founding father, argued that, if a congregation was established in town, intermarriages would diminish. Rebecca Gratz was opposed to marriage between Jews and Gentiles. She believed there could be no happiness in such a union; mixed marriages created problems for the children; there should be but one religion in the home. Rebecca was of the opinion that, even if a Jewess fell in love with a non-Jew, she must not marry him. In a letter to her brother Ben who had married a Christian, she encouraged him to persevere as a Jew. She was trying to make sure that he would never defect, though she had always preached that a house divided against itself religiously could not stand.⁸⁰

WHY JEWS MARRIED OUT

Cultured Jewish men and women sought to marry within their peer group. American-born Jews would not ordinarily marry one of the newcomers, for immigrants usually spoke with an accent and were often uncouth and without means. Occasionally, a Jewish woman would marry a Christian for romantic reasons; thus Phila Franks ran off with Oliver De Lancey—but that was deemed no *mésalliance*; Oliver, after all, belonged to one of the most powerful families in the North American colonies. David Franks, Phila's brother, married an Evans of Pennsylvania, and their children, reared as Christians, made excellent marriages. David, however, always identified himself as a Jew and occasionally made offerings in the synagogue, though he was not an enrolled member. One may venture the guess that the Cohens of Baltimore wrestled with this problem of intermarriage. They were one of America's most distinguished Jewish clans, nestling securely and comfortably—so it would seem—behind the ramparts of Jewish loyalty. This banking, insurance, and railroad family saw to it that Jews were not fined for absenting themselves on the Jewish Sabbath and Holy Days from the local stock exchange, which they had helped establish. One of the brothers, Dr. Joshua I. Cohen was the country's first collector of Jewish books. Among the Gentiles, the Cohens enjoyed a social station as high as anyone in the city. Seven Cohens survived; three married Jews; the others never married. It is patent that those who remained single would not marry outside of their own Jewish social set; they certainly would not look for wives among the incoming Jewish rustics from Central Europe. Had they been willing to compromise socially, they could have set up a Sephardic synagogue; the Ashkenazic newcomers would have been happy to join. The refusal of the Cohens and the Ettings to do so was motivated by class consciousness.⁸¹

During the early decades of the American republic, there were many Jewish women from native, affluent families who never found husbands. If they had married Christians, they would have had to accept their husbands' religion or conform to it. This they would not do. Since Jewish men of culture, status, and wealth had relatively little choice in marriages with other Jews because of the paucity of numbers, they tended to marry Christians who were their social peers. If they refused to intermarry, they took on Gentile mistresses or contracted common-law unions with women of humble origin. In a few instances the Christian-born wife and the children she bore him lived scrupulously Jewish lives, while the husband attempted to induce the congregation to accept the family as converts, but this was often most difficult. The knowledge that he would be rebuffed by the Jewish "authorities" must have deterred many a young man from bringing in his sweetheart for conversion. The alternatives were obvious: to forget the girl, to marry her under Christian auspices, or to live with her in a common-law marriage. All these alternatives are documented for this period.

PROSELYTES

Backcountry Jews who married Gentiles did not set out to desert their ancestral religion. There can be no doubt that, on occasion, the Jewish village shopkeeper held on to his ancestral faith to his dying day and would gladly have brought his Gentile wife into town for conversion, had he been given any encouragement by the Jewish community, but proselytization was frowned upon. This intransigent approach—rejection of converts—was not sanctioned by Jewish law, yet it was consistently followed, in New York at least, into the nineteenth century. It is not too difficult to understand what moved these early Jews. They could have maintained in defense of their attitudes that they did not have the proper religious organization to admit converts; they could have argued with some cogency that English Jewry had promised the civil rulers to abstain from proselytization and that they were merely adopting current English synagogal practices. These arguments—had they been employed—would have been nothing more than rationalizations. Once they let the bars down, so American Jews believed, they would be lost as a separate group. Underlying the taboos in the colonies and the later states was a desire on the part of the struggling young community to maintain itself in the face of powerful assimilatory influences. Back of it all was a grim, almost fanatical determination to survive as a distinct religious entity. It was unwilling to tolerate any compromise.

Jews shied away from would-be converts. In the first place, they believed—perhaps wrongly—that, if they induced Christians to accept Judaism, the Gentile community would protest vigorously. In turn, the

Jews were conscious of the fact that conversion to Judaism had long been a capital crime in much of Europe; though this was naturally not the case in the United States, Jews still lived under the shadow of this remembered threat. They could not divest themselves of their ancient fear. Even as late as 1783, the Jews of England excommunicated one of their followers for circumcising a Christian from Flanders. The Jews heard rumors—and they were not exaggerated—that men were still being dismembered in eighteenth-century Europe for violations of canon law. There was still another reason why Jews closed their ears and their hearts to those who pleaded for admission into the Jewish fold. They knew from their own experiences that, only too frequently, a Jewish apostate was a bad Jew who became a worse Christian. The terms apostate, traitor, and scoundrel were practically synonymous in Jewish lore; the worse excesses had been committed by Jews who had turned against their people. Accordingly, they made the sweeping generalization—a wrong one, to be sure—that, if all Jewish converts to Christianity were no good, converts to Judaism were equally suspect. These reservations—and a lack of comprehension for that type of religiosity which inspired pious Bible-believing Gentiles to turn to Judaism—induced Jews to look askance at prospective proselytes. Nevertheless, as the early nineteenth century advanced, some intermarried Jews did succeed in having their “Christian” families admitted. Moses Nathans had three children, two boys and a girl, by his marriage of sorts with a Gentile. His boys were circumcised; his wife was converted; the family was accepted.⁸²

SOME STATISTICAL DATA ON INTERMARRIAGE

The shortage of Jewish marriage partners for men and women of “good” families is eloquently reflected in the statistical data. Intermarriage usually began in the second generation; it became a problem in the third and fourth generations. The five sons of Michael Gratz, an immigrant, either did not marry or contracted intermarriages, or entered into liaisons with women of a lower social class. Not one married a Jew. As far as the Philadelphia Mikveh Israel community was concerned, none of the sons was married. The women in the Gratz family married Jews or remained spinsters. Benjamin and Rachel Levy, of Baltimore, scions of a very distinguished clan, had five children; two married out; three remained unmarried; by the fourth generation, this family was no longer Jewish. Most Jewish families of that day, whether humble or aristocratic, fought intermarriage. Of the seven surviving Etting children, two girls married; three of the women remained unmarried; the two sons married Jewish women. In Richmond, Joseph Marx and Jacob Mordecai attempted to stem the tide of mixed marriages in their families. Nine of Marx’s children grew up; one of the men and two of the women married Gentiles; four of the

girls married Jews; two of the men remained single. Adeline Marx married a Virginia Mayo and thus became a kinswoman of the New York Archibald Gracies and of General Winfield Scott, the Whig candidate for president in 1852. A contemporary report had it that the Marx family took pleasure in Adeline's intermarriage with a Mayo, but this was gossip.⁸³

Intermarriage was very painful to the educator Jacob Mordecai, a committed Jew. Five of his children married Christians during his lifetime; most of his sons and daughters drifted away from Jews and Judaism. For a decade, this family had lived in a North Carolina village, in an overpowering Christian religious milieu; there were no Jews with whom to associate. One wonders, too, if Mordecai took time out to indoctrinate his youngsters Jewishly. In later years, some of his grandchildren, Christians, would visit him at his farm near Richmond. At night they would recite their Christian prayers to their Orthodox grandparents. As Jacob Mordecai lay dying, his beloved daughter Rachel, the most brilliant of the girls, became a convert to Christianity. She, too, was very ill at the time and was obviously concerned about her future in the World to Come. Only a few years after her marriage to Aaron Lazarus, of Wilmington, North Carolina, she and her husband had to cope with the threatened defection of her stepson Gershom, who had become a Christian or was about to become one. The young man was shipped to Richmond where Jacob Mordecai induced him to remain Jewish. Rachel Mordecai's brother Alfred, the ordnance expert, married within the fold, but this may be looked upon as a purely fortuitous circumstance. He was a man of integrity, a dignified, self-respecting human being, too honorable to disdain his faith or disavow his Jewish background, even though Judaism was for him naught but a familial heritage. As the son of a learned father and as a Jew reared in an observant home, Alfred Mordecai was not unaware of the traditions of Judaism, but he was coldly unconcerned with the obligations and opportunities inherent in the faith to which his father was so passionately devoted.⁸⁴

The Richmond in which Jacob Mordecai finally settled had no Jew more respected than Solomon Jacobs. All of Jacobs's children chose Christians as mates. A German-Jewish newcomer with a bad accent made up to the aristocratic Miss Slowey Hays; the family thought it all a huge joke. Levy Andrew Levy, kinsman of Joseph Simon, the Lancaster fur entrepreneur, made his home in Baltimore. By that time, he had married out; when he was ninety-three—and probably senile—his Christian children made sure that papa was baptized. Simon Magruder Levy may well have been his son; Simon was a member of the first class at West Point. The Pettigrews, of Easton, may be unique. During the Revolution, Lieutenant James Pettigrew was married to a Hart girl by a chaplain. The

Jewish father drove her out of the house, but when she became pregnant, he was reconciled, particularly after a relative performed a Jewish marriage. The indignant Philadelphia Jewish community set out unsuccessfully to punish the Jew who had officiated at this intermarriage. It is not known whether a formal arrangement was made with Pettigrew, but, at all events, his sons became Christians, while the girls remained Jewish. Years later, one of the boys, Samuel, was elected mayor of Pittsburgh.

Out in the West, in Cincinnati, one of its first Jewish settlers was a man named Phineas D. Israel. The surname was later changed to Johnson, possibly because the family bought a tavern in Indiana once owned by a man named Johnson. Israel-Johnson married a niece of Abram Clark, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The Johnson daughter, though reared as a Christian, married a Jew and was converted to his faith. In New Orleans, the printer and publisher Benjamin Levy—not to be confused with the Baltimorean of the same name—married a Catholic. One of his daughters married a Protestant in a civil ceremony, which was reinforced when the couple was remarried by a Catholic priest. David Lopez, of Charleston, the gifted builder, had espoused a Christian, but when she died, she was not granted burial by Congregation Beth Elohim. Thereupon, the bereaved husband bought a lot abutting on the Jewish cemetery, a lot later incorporated into the synagogal burial ground. Lopez's second marriage was to a Jewish woman, who reared his children by the first wife as Jews. According to rabbinic statutes, Washington Bartlett was a Jew inasmuch as his mother was. Bartlett lived to become one of the most popular governors of California. As far as is known, he had no Jewish religious associations.

It is impossible to determine with any accuracy how many Jews intermarried in the years 1776-1840. Many married out and disappeared, leaving no trace of their Jewish origin. Scholars have estimated, however, that in the cities at least 10 percent intermarried; in a wide-open boom town like New Orleans, the rate of mixed marriages may have reached 50 percent. Malcolm Stern, the genealogist, is convinced that the rate of intermarriage at this time, in the United States, was at least 20 percent, probably higher. When Jews married Gentiles, very few lived as Jews; the overwhelming majority adopted the Christian way of life.⁸⁵

DEFECTION

In Zionist thinking, "assimilation" is defection, disappearance. The premise here is that, if a Jew is completely absorbed by the culture of a host land, he may no longer remain a Jew, and surely not a Jewish nationalist. Actually, all Jews everywhere are culturally eclectic, and in no land is this more evident than in the present State of Israel. Some Jews, however, do

defect totally, though there is apparently no method to determine with any degree of certainty how many consciously surrender their allegiance to Jewry and its religious or religioethnic values. Defection is usually a gradual process; few men or women moving out of Judaism ever make a precipitous jump; they edge away from their fellow Jews very slowly. They may marry Gentiles and live as Christians but only rarely do they become formal converts. After a few generations, the descendants are no longer Jews. Young Moses Franks, son of David and his Christian wife, did not dare at first to go to England and study law at the Inns of Court where, eventually, he would have had to take a Christian test oath. Moses was reared as a Christian by his mother and could have taken the oath in good conscience. The reason he hesitated was that the rich and powerful London head of the clan, still an observant Jew, would have disavowed him. Ultimately, he did study law and of course took the required oath. No doubt, it was through his family in London that he received an appointment as attorney general for the Bahamas.⁸⁶

James (*né* Joshua) Seixas became a convert. Was he eager to guarantee himself a career as a Hebrew teacher? Shinah Simon married Dr. Nicholas Schuyler and became a Christian. This seems to have been a love affair, but she remained utterly devoted to her Jewish family; when Michael Gratz, a kinsman, visited the Schuylers, they fed him kosher food. A Charleston Jewish woman, falling in love with a Gentile, adopted his faith and married him; years later, she repented rejoined Beth Elohim. Sarah Jane Picken, a Presbyterian, converted to Judaism in order to marry a rabbi. She, too, repented years later, rejoined her church, and wrote her memoirs, not only to validate her Christian faith, but to underscore the hazards of intermarriage. It is interesting to trace the course of complete assimilation in Jewish families. In the well-organized, disciplined European Jewish community, it was hard not to be a Jew; in the permissive American Jewish community, it was often hard to be a Jew. Defection in most cases began with intermarriage. This seems to have been true of Lieutenant Colonel Solomon Bush, Isaac Franks, and High Constable Jacob Hays. These three men are typical of those who lived as Christians and threw in their lot with the Gentile majority. Theirs was a conscious choice. They opted to be Protestant Americans, not Jewish Americans, even though they did not go through a formal conversion ceremony. After death their Christian children did not hesitate to give their Jewish-born parents Christian burial.

David Levy Yulee became a truly pious Christian. He had inherited his religious euphoria from his father, Moses E. Levy. The father remained a weird Jew; the son was utterly evangelical in his tenets; it is hard to believe that he was not baptized. David quoted with approval the following sentences from a Christian edificatory work: "Let us meditate

upon our Saviour's cross and our Saviour's crown; let prayer keep the Holy Ghost always near us." When David took the name Yulee, however, he was not trying to conceal his Jewish origins; invariably he used his middle name Levy as well. Asher Marx, brother of Joseph of Richmond, became an eminent New York merchant. In order to marry the woman of his choice, he accepted Christianity and reared his children as Protestants. One of them, Henry or Harry Carroll ("Dandy") Marx, was the city's best dressed man; he is said to have introduced the waxed mustache into America. Dandy Marx organized a company of elegant hussars, belonged to a hose company, and succeeded in running through the large estate left him by his father. His sisters adorned their King Charles spaniels and Italian greyhounds with silver collars and silk strings. In a way, the Monsantos, of Natchez, were unique, living as tolerated Marranos in a Spanish state where only Catholics were accepted. Everyone, including the Spanish rulers, knew that they were Jews and no one molested them, but as "Jews" they had no future.

Why did Jews live as Christians or become converts to Christianity? A host of reasons are given but one never really knows with certainty what motivates any individual to take this important step. Some Jews were convinced that Judaism was unenlightened; many wanted to become part of the larger American Protestant community. Few knew much about Judaism; it had little appeal for them. Many wanted to make a career by intermarriage and thus further themselves. A few, as Christians, were spiritually reborn. Ellen Mordecai in *The History of a Heart* declared that Jesus Christ was her savior and redeemer. Given an uncompromising Jewish Orthodoxy, acculturated Jews may have turned to Christianity with its possibility of a modernistic cultural appeal. There was little, if any, inspiring Jewish leadership during this period. Leaser was very knowledgeable, but hardly charismatic. His own congregational board ended up by letting him go. Intelligent men and women often drifted away; they stopped going to the synagogue; they observed no Sabbath, ate no kosher food, and made no Jewish friends. Judaism did not appeal to them; the sociocultural complex which they knew as Christianity did attract them; it was more "American." It is surprising that so few defected.⁸⁷

THE JEWISH SPECTRUM

There was no end to the assortment of Jews who were to appear on the scene between 1776 and 1840: one sometimes wonders if there was such a thing as a typical Jew. There was Isaac Leaser, the hazzan, utterly devoted; there was Nathaniel Levin, of Charleston, a well-educated layman, an earnest and sincere practicing Jew. Farther North, Richmond Jewry treasured Gustavus A. Myers. No Jew in the United States was more dis-

tinguished as a lawyer than this man; the only others comparable to him were Philip Phillips and Judah P. Benjamin. Myers, born at Richmond in 1801, was a grandson of Moses M. Hays, of Boston, and a kinsman of the Touros and the Mordecais. He became a very successful lawyer, representing clients in Virginia, in the neighboring state of Maryland, and even in New York. One of his biographers maintains that he had the largest legal practice ever enjoyed by any attorney in Richmond. Because of his activity in Virginia's capital and in the smaller Jewish community, Myers became the most distinguished Israelite in the Richmond of his generation. He was in a large measure a marginal Jew, for he married out and was buried in a Christian cemetery, yet he was acceptable to all groups. Jews admired him because he was ready to defend them; the Gentiles respected him because of his influence, his prestige, his distinction as a legal practitioner. The city co-opted him for many important communal tasks: the dinner in honor of the visiting Lafayette, the dedication of the Washington monument at Mt. Vernon, the meetings at the death of Thomas Jefferson, the administration of the Richmond Library.

All in all, Myers was a remarkable man. His cultural background was most impressive, for he was well versed in ancient and modern literature. The roster of his offices and achievements includes membership in the Virginia Historical Society and service on the city council as well as in the state legislature; he was a leader in the important local clubs, a Master in his Masonic lodge. In the larger world of business, Myers was the director of a railroad and of the Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia. After Richmond was abandoned early in April, 1865, he was one of the committee that waited on Lincoln to discuss the future of Virginia, and when Jefferson Davis was finally released on bail, Myers was a cosignatory who made it possible for the former Confederate president to return to the bosom of his family. Yet in more than one sense, he was not a marginal religionist; he was accounted the state's most notable Jew. He was interested in the conduct of the local synagogue, presided at the Richmond meeting to protest the torture of Jews in Damascus, and was outstanding among those who appealed to public opinion when the Italian Jewish child Edgar Mortara, of Bologna, was taken from his mother's arms to be reared as a Christian. He raised his voice in indignation when some of the country's largest insurance companies boycotted Jewish businessmen. Myers was charming, witty, cultured, an exceedingly attractive person. Sully, in his later years, painted his portrait at a time when the Richmond lawyer was already sixty-four years of age, and although this beautiful picture portrays the fatigue of a man who has lived through a hard civil war, it still reflects the sensitivity and the refinement that were indubitably his. His was a strikingly "Jewish" face. For Virginia Christendom, he was the voice of Jewry, and Old Dominion Jewry was proud to acclaim

him. As a distinguished man standing Janus-like between the Jews and the generality of the citizenry, he was the prototype of many nineteenth- and twentieth-century American Jewish leaders.⁸⁸

And then there was the complete defector, who was determined that no one should ever know of his Jewish origin. Such a man was Alexander Bryan Johnson (1787-1867). Born in Gasport, England, he was brought to this country as a child in 1801 and grew up in Utica. Determined to succeed with as few hurdles as possible, he told no one of his Jewish origins, though on both his paternal and maternal side he was of rabbinic stock. He became a wealthy banker, married the granddaughter of President John Adams, became a good churchman, wrote numerous books and articles, and was highly respected for his work on banking and the philosophy of language. He was a man of exceptional intellect. Finally, there is the born Christian child of a Jewish parent, and proud of his or her Jewish origin. Anna Gratz Clay, who had married the grandson of Henry Clay, once told a rabbi: "I am a Jewess by race, and an Episcopalian by religion."⁸⁹

ACCEPTANCE: A FINAL NOTE

The personal letters and papers of men like Jacob Mordecai, the Ettings, Mordecai Manuel Noah, Gustavus A. Myers, or a woman like Rachel Mordecai, pose a question for the Jewish historian: What was Jewish about them? In the preponderant majority of their daily activities these people were as American as any one else. Except in his patriotic ardor, when his political temperature usually rose to about 125 degrees, the typical Jew was nearly always 99 percent American. He was rarely conscious of his Jewishness. He reserved 1 percent for attendance at an occasional synagogal service for celebration of some specific Holy Day, or relish for some particular food, Spanish-Jewish meatballs or German-Jewish puddings. For a few, like Jacob Mordecai, the Carolina educator, Judaism was a passion; for others, like his kinsman Gustavus A. Myers, it was an old aunt to whom one was loyal, but hardly devoted. A further question must be put: Were the natives kept Jewishly loyal by the Orthodox German immigrants who were now beginning to arrive? It is hard to see how these low-status, often uncouth newcomers could have had any real influence on the proud acculturated natives.⁹⁰

The "typical" American-born Jew was a religionist *sui generis*; he visited the synagogue occasionally, associated primarily with Jews, kept the Sabbath after a fashion, and made a stab at maintaining a kosher home. Some, like Rebecca Gratz, were quite observant even when dining with Gentiles, refusing to eat swine's flesh and shellfish and blandly ignoring all invitations to apostasy. It is not easy to divide Jews into categories ac-

ording to the degree of adherence to Orthodoxy or lack of it. Actually there were almost as many Judaisms as there were individuals. Many were hardly observant at all and rarely attended religious service. The congregational boards realizing that the times were against them, tended to ignore the old bylaws which threatened or punished the lax. Yet many who were remiss often supported the synagogue in order to impress their Christian neighbors. Religion and respectability were closely associated, but even to the slack, Orthodoxy was important, at least in principle, and they expected the hazzan to be scrupulously observant. As a Jew, he was exhibit A.⁹¹



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

REFORM JUDAISM 1776-1840

THE PROBLEM

The Jews of the early nineteenth century were not stupid; they were fully conscious of the fact that there were defections and this fact disturbed them. They knew something had to be done. At first, it was not easy for them to understand that the fault, the cause, lay in the overwhelming impact of the environment. Many of them, particularly the native-born, were enlightened, cultured, thoroughly Americanized. Their minds had been set free by the American and the French Revolutions, by the Enlightenment. For not a few of them, it was a problem to find themselves emancipated politically and culturally, but not religiously. Now, in the nineteenth century, they had to adapt themselves religiously to tolerant, if not invariably, friendly neighbors. They were not sufficiently history-minded to understand their dilemma fully. Many were unhappy with the inherited traditions of a largely unintelligible Hebrew service and frequently objectionable rituals. They were ashamed of traditional Jewish practices in the presence of their cultured Christian friends. Because they believed that there was no nexus between life and religion, some urban—and urbane—Jews had no hesitation in jettisoning their traditions. But there were others who cared and were convinced that something drastic would have to be done, if Jews and Judaism were to be saved. Like the evangelical Protestants of the 1820's, loyal to the past, most European Jewish immigrants who had come to these shores had no desire to effect changes. They wanted more Orthodoxy, more devotion to their ancestral teachings. They seceded from Shearith Israel in 1825 to create Bnai Jeshurun, a new traditional congregation of their own. Others, however, were prepared to revolt. Reform Judaism was necessary for the Americanized Jew, if not for the recently arrived immigrants. For most Jews, religion remained important, the core of Jewish life and history, the only guarantee of continuity. Leiser, the traditionalist, and

Harby, the liberal, had this in common: Jews, they were convinced, could survive in the liberal American milieu. Leeser hoped to achieve a synthesis of Orthodoxy and Americanism; Harby, an amalgam of Reform and Americanism. The "progressives," as those on the left might be called, approached the problem of harmonization deliberately; theirs was the first group attempt at a conscious adjustment to American life. If changes were to be made, it was because many believed that they had no choice; the adaptation of Judaism was imperative, if assimilation was to be halted.¹

CAUSES OF REFORM: EUROPEAN INFLUENCES

What influenced the rise of Reform in this country? Above all, events in Europe! American Jewry in 1820 was a "frontier" community; all told, not even 1 percent of world Jewry lived here. It was inevitable that French and English influences would make their presence felt. Jewish Deists and freethinkers had been active in Europe ever since the eighteenth century; they had broken intellectually with their past. In the years 1807-1809, Napoleon attempted through implicit threat to catapult French and Italian Jews into the modern world culturally, politically, economically, and spiritually. In the early nineteenth century, individuals in London's Sephardic Bevis Marks talked of Reform in the service, of decorum and instrumental music. Some of the city's Ashkenazim also pushed for changes; they wanted to limit the number of financial offerings during the hours of worship and objected to exotic forms of chanting. Jewish Enlighteners (Maskilim) who had settled in the city encouraged the demand for change—with little success, to be sure. One of these scholars, Hyman Hurwitz (d. 1844), even questioned the authority of rabbinic law (halakah). The philanthropist and communal leader Isaac L. Goldsmid pleaded in vain for a Hamburg Temple reformist type of service in 1831. That same year, the Sephardim did introduce the English sermon though the innovation was of short duration. There was dissatisfaction in London with the traditional forms of worship and inherited beliefs, but no reforms of consequence were made before 1840, when the West London Synagogue of British Jews was established. The new congregants initiated some revisions in the worship service and insisted on decorum.

They were in no sense pioneers, since German Reform was by that time advanced and American Jewish religious radicals had made their appearance in Charleston as early as 1824. Leeser, the conservative, had been preaching regularly in Mikveh Israel ever since 1830. There is no evidence that the agitation for Reform in England had any influence or reverberations here in the United States; the contrary may be true. But the Germans were more influential. American Jews knew that some core-

ligionists on the Continent, patterning themselves on the Christians, had introduced sermons, art music, the organ, the mixed choir, and the ceremony of confirmation. European Jews were garbing their ministers like Christian clergymen; actually Dutch and English Sephardic rabbis had been wearing Christian clerical dress since the late 1600's. In 1810, the German Jewish religious reformer Israel Jacobson crowned his little synagogue with a steeple and a bell. Such reforms were especially evident in the Germany of the first two decades of the century. That some of the Dutch, Westphalian, Berlin, and Hamburg Jews were modernizing their services was well-known to the impatient intelligentsia here in the United States.²

CAUSES OF REFORM: AMERICAN INFLUENCES

The first quarter of the nineteenth century in the United States was a period of social concern, of intellectual and religious ferment. Social reformers now devoted themselves to temperance and to the abolition of slavery; there was concern for the insane and a consciousness of the need to advance women's rights. Utopian colonies began to dot the landscape. Masonry, which emphasized a common humanity, was widespread and commanded the devotion of thousands; for many, it was a new religion. Ever since the 1820's, Jacksonianism and its radical slogans had become a movement with all the fervor of a religious crusade, suggestive of the political agitation and the turn to the left in Europe and in South America. In the libertarian upheaval here in the United States—actually since the revolt of the 1770's against Great Britain—Jews began to come into their own. They were granted political equality; with the vote and office came a rise in social status and a larger degree of religious tolerance. Now it was necessary for the Jew who had moved well within the ambit of the Christian community to reevaluate his traditional religious beliefs. He would have to live with Christians; he was eager to command their respect.

This was incontestably a generation of religious ferment among the Christians. Christian orthodoxy was renascent—pietism, revivalism, a burst of an almost unrestrained evangelical fervor. There was movement over on the religious left, too: Deists, anti-orthodox Enlighteners, were still active; people still read Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*. Let it be remembered that Jefferson did not die until 1826. The Enlightenment was pervasive; idyllic humanitarianism was cherished. This period saw an emerging Unitarianism, important for Jews not because of its theology, which was still Christological, and not for its ethics, which had nothing to teach the Jews who stood foursquare on the Law and the Prophets, but because Unitarianism had a special message for the Chosen People; it was a Christian faith which had revolted successfully against America's formidable Protestantism. By 1825, there were more than 125 Unitarian

churches in this country. The Unitarians, liberals, were complemented theologically by the Universalists, who taught that all decent human beings would share in the joy of the hereafter—a divine democracy. Leftist religious thinking was strengthened in America by Transcendentalism, which emphasized spirituality and individualism.

By the 1820's, there was religious ferment among some Jews, too, although it was not as pronounced as among the Christians. Social pressure by Jews and the hostility of Gentiles prevented Jews from advocating violation of the traditional mores. Still, if Jews were to change, they would certainly not turn to the right. They found evangelicalism in all its varied forms repellant; it was for them irrational, incomprehensible. For many American Jews of that day, Judaism seems to have been a cerebral rather than an emotional, mystical experience. For those Jews who sought to change the nature of the service or the articles of faith, the road was open. Church and state were separate; all sectarians were tolerated by the government; dissent was the order of the day. Here, Jews were free religiously to organize as they saw fit, if they had the courage of their convictions. Unlike the case in Europe, there was no official Orthodox Jewish hierarchy; there was no government control of the Jewish community. Under the irresistible impact of American culture and civilization, new religio-acculturational goals could be envisaged by all Jews. Immigrants and the American-born were alike determined to shed their "foreign" characteristics. Occasional public celebrations, with Christians present in the synagog, would see Jews studiously embrace the vernacular despite the fact that the service itself was in Hebrew and Aramaic. At such times Jews were most insistent on decorum, on aesthetics. No Jew, no matter his religious meticulousity and his orthodoxy, could escape the relentless pressures, the coercions, of the cultural climate. Jews were eager to fit themselves into the prevailing pattern of Americanization as practiced by the Protestant majority.³

Jews here had to change—religiously, too—inasmuch as their traditional way of life was always threatened with undermining by the free society that was America. They wanted to be like their neighbors; they wanted their neighbors to like them. As far back as the early eighteenth century, perceptive Jews like Abigail Franks (d. 1756) understood that, sooner or later, Jews would have to respond to the challenge of the contemporary culture. She knew how necessary it was to conform to established colonial Gentile amenities. A truly pious and observant woman, she conceded nonetheless that Judaism was clogged with superstitions and voiced the hope that it was time for a Jewish Luther or Calvin. As early as the 1760's, two supplementary Jewish prayer books were published in English in New York City, a tacit admission that worshipers ought to understand their prayers, that it would not do to rattle off page after page

of unintelligible Hebrew and Aramaic. In 1783, Rabbi Gershom Seixas, living in exile at Philadelphia, hesitated to return to his charge in New York. He insisted on a restructuring of authority, on organized budgeting, on “decency and decorum in time of public service.” Even in metropolitan, observant Shearith Israel, Americanization went on apace. By the 1780’s, the hazzan had become a “Reverend” with the garb of a Christian pastor. Ashamed of the chaos in its service, Newport Jewry in 1790 was apparently ready to eliminate the auctioning of honors in the midst of devotions. If there is no one who can chaunt properly, the Newporters were also told by the erudite Manuel Josephson, then read the biblical portions without the lilt, the melody. If the shofar blower is a profligate, don’t blow the shofar; if it is cracked, worship without it. This was accommodation, salutary neglect with a vengeance. It is obvious, too, from Josephson’s correspondence that this congregation wanted to put its best foot forward when it had Gentile guests. The Newport Jews were always very eager for their services to reflect credit on them.⁴

As in Newport, there were worshippers in Shearith Israel who were not pleased with the customary selling of synagogal “blessings.” Decorous Jews were annoyed by this interruption in the service and objected to it in much the same way that Luther had resented the indulgence peddling of his generation. A protest against this procedure was voiced by Ephraim Hart, who had served the synagog as president in the early 1790’s. This man, a founder of the stock exchange and a large-scale land speculator, was patently offended by the crass disruption of what should have been a spiritual exercise. In 1818, a group of young worshippers in the congregation petitioned the governing board to establish a class in choral singing; it was their hope that the chaunting of prayers and psalms would be conducted with harmony and solemnity. All this is a reflection of the Protestant concept of religious propriety. Early in October, 1821, the handful of Jews in Wilmington, North Carolina, conducted services on the High Holy Days. Because of the lack of male readers during the long services on the Day of Atonement, a service that stretched almost from dawn to dusk, two women were co-opted. Were they fluent Hebrew readers or, as one suspects, did they read only the English translations found on the left paralleling the Hebrew text? One of the readers was Rachel Mordecai Lazarus, a daughter of Jacob Mordecai, that pillar of Orthodoxy. But even Mordecai, who carried on a polemic against Charleston’s religious Reformers, was ready to abolish the financial offerings, to modify the chaunting, and to read some prayers and the prophetic portion in the vernacular. The times were making their demands on this Jew, a native American and cultured Virginian.⁵

Seeking to conform to the cultural standards of the age, both Orthodox and liberal Jews sought and often enough received the approbation of

American notables. These Gentile luminaries responded by urging the Jews to educate themselves, hinting very delicately that they adapt their religion to the demands of the times. Many Jews were amenable to the suggestion that they improve themselves intellectually, for they were members of an urban middle-class which looked with respect on men of culture. In aligning themselves spiritually with this group, the Jews believed that they were following in the footsteps of the humanistic Founding Fathers. Commenting on an 1825 address by the Jewish reformer Isaac Harby, Jefferson wrote:

Nothing is wiser than that all our institutions should keep pace with the advance of time and be improved with the improvement of the human mind.

The comment of Charleston's Unitarian minister on this Harby oration was in the same vein:

the spirit of the age . . . will gently and irresistibly convert the present synagogue with its obsolete ceremonials, its unintelligent language . . . into a rational sanctuary.⁶

Some individuals nursed radical religious ideas and views which they expressed privately to confidants or tried to effectuate among their fellow Jews and even in the larger general community. One of Moses E. Levy's coworkers in the effort to effect a spiritual rebirth in American Jewry was Samuel Myers, of Norfolk. In a letter, dated March 2, 1819, this Virginian discussed Levy's colony project with his father-in-law, Joseph Marx. The latter, too, was quite ready to challenge traditional Jewish practices, institutions, and beliefs, and even to reject some in order to further a modern Judaism. Marx emphasized education. He wanted Jews to be accepted by their Gentile fellow citizens. Many immigrant Jews were not Americanized; these newcomers would have to be educated and integrated into the general community. Myers and Marx were convinced that the Jew had to come to terms with America; it was imperative that he be completely acculturated and accepted by his fellowmen. Unless the essential principles of Judaism are taught to this generation, Jews and Judaism will disappear: Marx had no doubt of it. Jewry, he said, needs a literature, an anthology of our classics that will teach us and thus keep us alive. He had other ideas. A Sunday Sabbath would not only save one day in every week by eliminating the neglected Saturday, but it would also enable us on Sunday to go to synagog and thereby emulate the Christians going to church. Too much time was wasted observing the numerous Jewish Holy Days. Moses E. Levy and Marx had this in common: they wanted to get at the essence of their faith. In effect, these two wanted radical changes, a "reformation," though they did not use this Protestant Christian term. In their desire, they were to be at one with the Jewish religious reformers

who in the decade of the 1820's would make their appearance in Charleston.⁷

Levy and Marx wanted to save the Jews; Moses Hart (1768-1852) wanted to save the world. Hart, a Canadian who had spent much time in the United States, offered the world a new substitute for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. His father, Aaron Hart, had been a wealthy merchant, of Three Rivers. Moses, Aaron's first-born son, inherited the major part of the family estates and a respectable share of the various Hart enterprises. This venturesome Canadian developed into a real seigneur, increasing by purchase the large holdings already bequeathed by his father. Literally hundreds of thousand of acres were owned and controlled by him; he paid taxes on property in a dozen different towns, and numerous habitants throughout Lower Canada bowed humbly before him. He lived like a seigneur in more ways than one. In his youth, while his father was still alive, he had sown a large crop of wild oats, and as he grew older, he continued with evident relish the habits of his youth. His brief, unhappy marriage to his cousin Sally Judah ended in a permanent separation. In addition to the family with which his wife presented him, he had at least eight other children whom he acknowledged. Some of them bore the Jewish names of his ancestors and were reared by their respective mothers to be good Christians.

In spite of his many eccentricities—if this is what they were—he was an excellent businessman, a banker, a merchant, and an exporter of wheat to Europe during the Napoleonic wars. Two years after Fulton's *Clermont* laboriously chugged up the Hudson, Hart had a steamboat of his own on the St. Lawrence. Money and love alone do not seem to have satisfied him, however. He was politically ambitious and was only dissuaded from running for office by the solemn warning of wise old Aaron Hart that his Gentile neighbors would never elect him, a Jew. He ran for office toward the end of his life only to be rejected by his fellow citizens. In between, in 1807, his brother Ezekiel was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada, but the assemblymen refused to seat him because of his religion; five years later, brother Ben was refused a commission in the militia because of personal enmities and because he, too, had been born on the wrong side of the religious fence. The rich Harts had made enemies as they clambered up the ladder of fortune.

Historic conditions conspired to make this a fighting family: the father fought to provide money for his four sons and four daughters; the children struggled for civil, political, and religious equality in Canada. Moses was unique among the brothers; he was a religious radical, bitterly opposed to all established churches and to all revealed religions; he was confident, like all Deists, that the world was ready for a change, for the creedless religion of a self-effacing God, a pale immortality, and a sound

system of social ethics. What Papa Aaron Hart never knew was that, whenever Moses went down to Philadelphia and to New York—and his visits were quite frequent—he consorted with the followers of Tom Paine, if not with the archheretic himself. Hart was very close to this theophilanthropist circle, and it may have been through it that he became familiar with the literature and ideals of the French Revolution. In 1794 the same year that Paine wrote *The Age of Reason*, Hart up in Canada was experimenting with a book of radical prayers. Finally, in 1815, he published what he considered his magnum opus, a pamphlet of fifty-eight pages which he offered to the world as a *General Universal Religion*. This was a rounded-out liturgical system for the entire year, suitable for all peoples and religions, and sent forth with the hope that it would ultimately be accepted by Jew, Moslem, and Christian, and thus replace these decrepit revealed systems based on ancient writings of dubious origin. It was patterned on radical French revolutionary thought, the Cult of Reason, Theophilanthropism, Tom Paineism, Deism, and a healthy dash of morality, nature-religion, and ceremonial fol-de-rol. It is an interesting religion—appealing in a sense, too—for it encouraged preaching, forbade slavery, limited the subservience of married women, deplored war, and glorified peace. All prayers, of course, were to be in the vernacular. Three years later, a new edition was put out under the title of *Modern Religion*. This revised work appeared with one notable omission: nothing was said in it of the institution—dear to him no doubt for quite personal reasons—of half-wives and half-marriages, but whole illegitimate children. The latter under this system, were to be legitimized.

During the decade after the appearance of *Modern Religion*, Hart made serious efforts to spread his gospel in Canada and in the United States, particularly in Vermont, the home of an old fellow radical, Ethan Allen. In 1820, the year in which the Mormon Joseph Smith was communing with angelic messengers, Hart was arranging to have his Montreal friend John Levi prepare some hymns for the new liturgy. Levi leaned somewhat in Hart's direction, certainly in his Voltairean attitude toward the church. "It would still be congenial to my feelings," said Levi, "to witness an overthrow of bigotry, to see the hands of moral feeling fire the unhallowed dome of upstart fanaticism and lay prostrate those whose crimes are shadowed by the cowl." But Levi had no intention of deserting Judaism. "To speak impartially and dispassionately," he wrote in a note to Hart, "I aver that of all religions, ours (the Jewish) is the true one, we are taught to believe in the unity of God, and to swerve from this point is violating the divine mandate." Strangely enough—or is it understandable?—while Hart was preaching the gospel of a universal modern religion, he was also on occasion contributing to rigidly Orthodox Shearith Israel of New York. This was apparently an act of filial piety. It is hard to break with

the traditions—the superstitions, he would have gravely interjected—of one's benighted youth.

Hart wrote, but never published, an anti-Catholic polemic and an anti-Christian essay defending the Jews against the New Testament charge that they had crucified Jesus. In 1821, he carried on an unsuccessful campaign to induce the New York constituent convention to decriminalize blasphemy. A decade earlier, Hart had been shocked by the arrest, fining, and imprisonment of a citizen of that state who had maligned Jesus. The New York Supreme Court, in affirming the judgment, had declared that to scandalize the son of God was an attack on Christianity, that is, the established social order. Chancellor James Kent, who wrote the decision, maintained that any defamation of the general religion of the community was an abuse of the state's constitutional guarantee of religious freedom. Hart was something of a Don Quixote, but there is no question that he was a sincere, bold, and resolute fighter for civil, political, and religious liberty.⁸

WHY CHARLESTON GAVE BIRTH TO REFORM JUDAISM

Why did the Reform movement first appear in Charleston? Was it because a generation was rising here in the city that knew not God or His people? In their desire to save the youth, did the Reformers who now appeared on the scene follow the midrashic injunction of the Psalmist: Now is the time to work for the Lord. Break the Law! Break with tradition! (Ps. 119:126). The answer to this conjecture is that at that time indifference and apathy were characteristic of both Gentiles and Jews in every city; Charleston was not unique. Did Jewish revolutionaries make their appearance in South Carolina because the state numbered many religious liberals? That is not farfetched. Deism was strong among the cultured; South Carolina served as the setting for the anti-clerical propaganda of a Dr. Thomas Cooper, who dared to lecture on "The Authenticity of the Pentateuch." Charleston was unquestionably one of the most cultured Jewish communities in the United States, possibly the outstanding one. The city already sheltered a group of highly educated young Israelites who were to make names for themselves in the antebellum period: Jacob Newton Cardozo, the economist and editor; Philip Phillips, the lawyer and member of Congress; Henry M. Hyams, who was later to become one of Louisiana's outstanding politicians and who, when only twenty-one, served as secretary of Charleston's Reformed Society of Israelites. In 1828, Hyams moved on to New Orleans, the Mecca of ambitious Charlestonians, to engage in banking and to practice law. His activities as a Whig and Democrat brought him recognition, for he served in the state senate for four years before he became lieutenant governor. Laura Smith, his wife, was a Gentile.⁹

The Charlestonians of this generation had read and studied. They were influenced by the French Enlightenment; they were at home in the writings of the English Deists and Tom Paine; they had a righteous contempt for "bigotry and priestcraft." The economic, educational, and social advances made by Jewry in South Carolina brought them well within the ambit of cultured Gentiles. This Jewish elite wanted to make sure that the image of the Jew as a polished Carolinian, a man of intellect and learning, would never be tarnished. Judaism must conform to the finest, the best in Protestant Christendom. These Jews wanted a type of service which would not bring the blush of shame when a Gentile was present. The Jewish *illuminati* may have been influenced by rationally-oriented Protestant clergymen. They were in touch with Samuel Gilman, the Unitarian and litterateur who served the Second Independent Church. Cultured Charleston was a challenge for the bold among the Jews. It was almost inevitable that it would be the scene of a confrontation between radical Jews and those seeking to maintain the status quo. Charleston in the 1820's sheltered the second largest Jewish community in the country. If the spirit moved them, there were enough educated Jews to lead a revolt and to attract a sizable following. Thus, the rebellion against the Orthodox that was to explode in 1824 was possible because a substantial number of radical intellectuals called Charleston home and among them were several willing to assume leadership. The last is important. The conditions that made Reform possible in Charleston were true as well of Philadelphia and New York, but the leadership was lacking.¹⁰

THE REFORMED SOCIETY OF ISRAELITES IN CHARLESTON

A group of religious rebels made its appearance in Charleston in 1824. Less than a year earlier the Prussian king had at the request of the Orthodox Jews closed the liberal Berlin conventicle. Now the Charlestonians were ready to carry the liberal torch. Though there is evidence that the emerging Carolina reformers had heard of the Prussian edict, there can be little question that the roots, the inciting causes of their movement, were American. Reform Judaism in its origin was indigenous to Charleston. Coincidentally, 1824 was the very year that the youthful Isaac Leeser landed in the United States. When he became the hazzan at Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia, he set out to save and rehabilitate American Judaism by furthering an enlightened Orthodoxy. He would devote his life to a Jewish Counter-Reformation directed against the encroachments of secularism and Reform Judaism.¹¹

Like their counterparts in Germany, these Charleston liberals were laymen. Most of them were probably native-born; all were completely acculturated and not very strongly rooted in tradition. Many were not even members of the synagogue; apparently, some were synagogal "dropouts,"

Isaac Harby among them. Religious officiants, hirelings literally, were subject to the synagogal authorities for their livelihood; they could not serve as leaders; they were not free agents. These South Carolinian insurgents resented noisy prayers in a foreign tongue; they found repugnant the swaying body-language, the raucous hawking of synagogal honors in a Spanish gibberish—they were ashamed of all this, particularly if there were Gentiles in the audience. They did not understand it; they had outgrown it.¹²

Jews in the North, though aware of the revolt against Calvinism and the rise of secessionist Universalists and Unitarians, were not moved to protest what they knew of conventional Jewish practice. Some of them lived in a world of a double truth. They remained members of the synagogue, gave lip service to a theology which often meant little to them, conformed to tradition when and only when it pleased them to do so, and lived happily as political and intellectual—though not as religious—radicals. A Deistically inclined Solomon Simson could even become president of New York's Shearith Israel. The rebels in the South, in Charleston, faced up to this antimony; they came out in the open. Was theirs a youth movement? There is not much evidence to support this suggestion though Philip Phillips was only seventeen when he joined the group, and Henry M. Hyams was probably only fourteen. Most of the members, it would seem, were adults, young men for the most part. What these Jews sought was a religious service that conformed to acceptable standards established by Christians in their churches. Jews were very eager to modify the traditional worship so as to make it attractive enough to appeal to coreligionists in a secular world that was drawing them away from the synagogue. Something had to be done, they felt, to counter the widespread apathy and indifference. Tradition and modernism must mesh together harmoniously; an intelligible service would inspire respect and would further devotion.¹³

Forty-seven individuals and householders, representing a body of at least 150 to 200 souls, addressed the vestry of Beth Elohim on November 21, 1824, asking for changes, reforms. The Charleston petitioners said they wanted to perpetuate a pure Judaism and enlighten the rising generation. This was a very definite turning away from the right, from tradition. The protest was put in religious terms, but equal, if not greater, importance was the desire of this new group to further sociocultural adaptation. One wonders whether the Reformed Society of Israelites was a truly religious movement. Originally, only twelve rebelled, but forty-seven signed the memorial. The Society prospered from the start; by 1826, it numbered fifty members, which left only seventy householders in Congregation Beth Elohim. It was said at the time that there were many more who were sympathetic to the rebels, but did not join for familial reasons. The

petition or memorial was rejected by the Board in December, 1824. The authorities of Beth Elohim were convinced that any major change in the service would only result in a complete break with the past and open the way for new and more radical demands. The leaders of the congregation, conservatives all, were determined—unwittingly, to be sure—to maintain their aristocratic stance in an age of nascent Jacksonian liberalism. All infractions of the constitution of 1820 were severely punished by heavy fines. Sabbath violations were discountenanced, intermarriages were frowned upon, and efforts were made to force every Jew to join the monolithic synagog-community. Beth Elohim's leaders were intelligent, devoted Jews, but they feared change: "Touch not a cobweb in St. Pauls, lest you shake the dome."¹⁴

When their petition for change was rejected by the board, the rebels moved to organize the Reformed Society of Israelites for Promoting True Principles of Judaism According to its Purity; thus the charter. This was secession. The association itself came into being on January 16, 1825; a constitution was adopted on the 15th of February; on September 21, 1826, the group appealed to the world at large, Jews and Gentiles, for funds to erect a new temple "to the service of the Almighty." It is surprising, in a way, how slow the Jews were to turn to the left. Why had these Charlestonians waited two generations, since 1776, before attempting to bridge the gap between political emancipation and religious liberalism? Protestant dissidents had made their move at the turn of the century, a generation earlier. The wave of Christian liberalism now moved southward from New England. By 1819, Jared Sparks had been installed in a Baltimore church by the Unitarian Channing. Was Beth Elohim aware of the Protestant moves to the left, but undisturbed by them? When the congregation adopted a new constitution in 1820, the preamble emphasized that the members wanted to uphold religion and promote "harmony and social love." Were there already liberal murmurings in the Jewish community?¹⁵

The sources tell us nothing. Maybe the reference to "harmony" should not be overstressed, for it had also occurred in the preamble to Shearith Israel's 1805 organic statute. Discord was the lot of all congregations at all times! Nor should Charleston's 1820 constitution forbidding the establishment of any new congregation within a five-mile limit be construed as an attack on putative rebels. Restrictions of this type were traditional and go back in England to the seventeenth century. They were motivated by a desire for central authoritarian control and a passion for anonymity. To repeat the question posed above: why were the Jews so slow to turn to the left? The Jews moved slowly because of timidity, because of the restraints of the many tradition-minded Jewish natives and immigrants. By the 1820's, however, there was a new generation of edu-

cated Jews; they sensed that the survival of Judaism was at stake and were sufficiently interested to attempt a rehabilitation, to insist on radical changes. It is by no means improbable, too, that the reports of persecution in reactionary post-Napoleonic Europe may have evoked their latent Jewish sympathies and loyalties.¹⁶

The 1824 revolt against the traditionalists was American Jewry's first organized attempt to cope with the challenge of a New World culture. It established the first liberal Jewish religious organization in the United States and was a deliberate attempt at a synthesis of Americanism and Judaism. J. C. Moïse, Harby's biographer, was of the opinion that he was the "father of the movement." Actually, the first elected heads of the Reformed Society were businessmen of established repute. Harby, however, was certainly one of the leaders; he served as the first chairman of the committee of correspondence. The Reformed Society of Israelites looked to American Jews for help and recognition; the Reformers hoped even to have an impact on European Jewry. To achieve its purpose, the Society set up a propagandistic committee of correspondence to put itself in touch with others and to preach the gospel of religious liberalism. This special body was patterned on the Committees of Correspondence of the 1770's, the associations that had done so much to further the American Revolution. The chairman of this important group was the brilliant Harby, editor, litterateur, devotee of the classics, dramatist, and educator. Penina Moïse paid a postmortem tribute to Harby, who had once been her teacher:

The vivid scintillations of a mind
By nature gifted and by lore refined.¹⁷

Harby was an ardent patriot whose love of country may have been intensified because he was the son of an immigrant. He could not have been unmindful of the fact that, when he was born in 1788, South Carolina had not yet emancipated its Jews; he was glowingly grateful for the freedom that was his. His fervent Americanism threatened to swamp his Judaism, which was not deeply rooted in Jewish learning. One is almost tempted to say that Harby was first an American, then a Jew. Like many of his Jewish compatriots, he leaned to the left intellectually and theologically, but adhered tenaciously to the right in conforming to the behavior standards of his middle-class Christian friends. In an address made in 1825, Harby invoked the shades of Luther. The implication here is that this revolt against Charleston's Beth Elohim was being compared to the Protestant Reformation. Harby may well have looked upon himself as a Jewish Luther. The rise of the Reformed Society, he felt, marked a new era in the history of Judaism; like the sixteenth-century German Protestant innovators, these Charleston liberals were shaking off the bigotry of the ages.¹⁸

The leadership of the Society during the first two or three years was fluid. Others who stood out in the organization were Isaac N. Cardozo, David N. Carvalho, and Abraham Moïse. Cardozo, a man of some learning was a customs officer; Carvalho, who served as the reader or officiant, was the Hebraist of the Society. Tradition has it that it was Carvalho, Harby, and Abraham Moïse who busied themselves collecting the material for the new Reform liturgy. In many respects, Abraham Moïse was the leader of this somewhat inchoate group, certainly its wheelhorse. He was a superior person, well educated, a student of literature, a member of the Philomathean Debating Society, a lawyer, politician, and magistrate. He wrote the 1824 memorial and later would draft the constitution, deliver an oration (1827), help edit the selected writings of Harby (1829), and issue the Society's published prayer book (1830). From 1828 on, he served as the president of what seemed to be a group in decline. Certainly, he was the man who held the organization together in the late 1820's and throughout the 1830's after Harby and Carvalho had left town.¹⁹

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SOCIETY

The Reformed Society of Israelites developed structurally into a unique institution. It had several of the characteristics of a *hevrah kaddisha*, a burial and sick-care confraternity. The group held religious services and hoped ultimately to become a congregation with a hazzan, prayer book, and building of its own. Some of its members had seceded from the local congregation; others were previously unaffiliated; a few may have had double membership, remaining in the mother synagog in order to be sure of burial privileges, since the Society never purchased a cemetery for its followers. Originally the Reformers met in a rental hall once a month, later quarterly. Whether religious services were held only then or more frequently, on the Sabbath, is not known. Men, and women too, could join at the age of seventeen. The members referred to themselves as Jews, Israelites, and Hebrews, all three names occur. A number of these Reformed Israelites had come from the hinterland. Services were in English for the most part; some Hebrew was retained. According to Maurice Mayer, who wrote at a time when members of the Reformed Society were still living (1856), the services included a sermon and hymns with organ accompaniment. The worshippers prayed with uncovered heads. In 1830, the Reformers published a tentative, incomplete liturgical work of some sixty pages. It was used, probably to supplement the standard Hebrew prayer book. It was an eclectic work and included materials supplied by Harby, Carvalho, and Moïse. There is ample evidence that a number of different manuscript prayer books had been circulating during the 1820's before the final publication of the *Sabbath Service*. Actually the Reformed Society of Israelites was a *Kultusverein*, a religious confraternity

with a variety of goals and activities. Temple Emanu-El of New York City grew out of a verein of this type in 1845.²⁰

CEREMONIALS, RITUALS, BELIEFS

What was the nature of the Society's ceremonies? What were its beliefs? The rituals and fixed prayers were all important, for they mirrored the thinking and practices of the Society. Their form of worship was reflected in the *Sabbath Service* and probably in the manuscripts, since their Reform prayer book was not printed until five years after the association was established. If the published Reform liturgy was only supplementary, and if a standard Hebrew prayer book was also used, then the *Sabbath Service* does not tell the whole theological story. There was no daily service, though private prayers for individuals and special occasions abound. There were rituals for the High Holy Days, for Pentecost, and, of course, for the Sabbath. The Sabbath, the worshippers were reminded, was created for "rational creatures." The fact that there was no liturgy for Passover and Sukkot would indicate that, on those Holy Days, the Society turned to the Sephardic Orthodox prayer book. Were these people interested in a Sunday service? Though the contemporary press spoke of Jews in Europe transferring the Jewish Sabbath to Sunday (1824-1825) and though there were rumors in Charleston that Jews were thinking of making this change, there is no evidence whatsoever that the Society even considered moving the Sabbath to the first day of the week.²¹

Provision was made in the Society's prayer book for grace before and after meals; a marriage service was written, which by implication denied the spiritual authority of postbiblical worthies. There were prayers for circumcision, for naming a daughter, for the sick and dying, for burials and mourning, for voyages, storms at sea, and deliverance from danger. The confirmation service, the first among Jews in this country, was nothing more than an Americanized bar mitzvah in English for an individual male. Unlike today, no arrangements were made for a collective confirmation service at the Pentecost Holy Day for both boys and girls. More important is the rejection by these Reformers of the concept of a personal Messiah. They did not urge the Return of Jewry to Palestine, the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, or the restoration of the sacrificial service. They had no desire to encourage the rebirth of an aristocratic priestly class. Despite these expressed convictions, theological inconsistencies persisted in their writings. Not Palestine but America—"these happy United States"—was the land promised in Sacred Scriptures. Whatever Jews observed and practiced had to comport with the American way of life, a member of the Society wrote. For these Reformers, Americanism, patriotism, was fast becoming a Jewish dogma. A few years earlier, in 1820, when Dr. De La Motta spoke at the dedication of the

Savannah synagogue, he had referred to this country as the land of milk and honey. Five years later, Harby gloried in his love for America and his insistence that Jews look upon their neighbors as members of "the same happy family worshipping the same God of the universe."²²

The Reformed Society of Israelites wanted more than decorum. Its effort was a revolution; it wanted a complete break with the rabbinic Judaism of the preceding 1,800 years. The appearance of this organization does not mark the culmination of a slow evolutionary development; it sprang up almost overnight. Its appearance is more abrupt than the emergence of the Unitarians out of Calvinism. The anti-Calvinist rebels were clergymen; the Charleston Reformers were laymen, who moved rapidly because they were laymen unmindful of past traditions, ungrounded in history, unfettered by Jewish knowledge. They were determined to do what they deemed right and timely. Theirs was an ideological revolution with a vengeance. Their appearance really marked the rise of a new sect, although they would have denied this. They insisted they wanted no break, but the crisis of coping with emancipation and living with Christian neighbors made it necessary for them to take radical steps, so they believed. They were determined to leave their spiritual ghettos; the medieval Jew had to face the modern world. There was no question in their mind that the traditional service was outmoded and would have to be revised to conform to the "enlightened" state of society. They were willing, however, to retain ceremonies deemed fit for the nineteenth century.

The Charlestonians were influenced by the Protestants and Catholics about them; they were eager to have a service of awe and reverence, not one of religiosocial character. They objected strongly to the Orthodox atmosphere of congeniality and emotional relaxation in the synagogue. These Carolina liberals were far more radical than Europe's German Jews who were engaged in Reform activities for the period 1802-1823. The reforms in contemporary Germany were cosmetic, superficial; the American reforms were radical. Judaism, the rebels contended, was to be presented in its "purity." The sceptre of rabbinical power had to be broken. There was no need to recognize the authority of the Talmud and its latter-day commentators. Rabbinism and the Oral Law had to be summarily rejected; the rabbis of old were obscurantists. Freedom of thought, science, modern culture—these deserved priority.

In his 1825 oration, Isaac Harby lauded Spinoza and the elder Disraeli. That Spinoza had broken with Judaism and that Isaac Disraeli had already baptized his children—this does not seem to have disturbed him. Spinoza and Disraeli were enlightened men—that impressed him. These rebels rejected the authority of all law after the Bible. This is the Deistic slant. Their attack on blind observance shows strong Christian influence, for these Jews often drew their knowledge of Judaism from printed

Christian sources, all of them critical of Jewish ceremonials. No wonder the views of the Reformers were strabismic. More than once they emphasized that the sources of Judaism were found in the moral teachings of the Mosaic Code and the Prophets. They even used the phrase, the Law and the Prophets, which comes from the New Testament. The Charleston Jewish rebels laid emphasis on the Mosaic Code, on the Bible. As with earlier Protestant sects in Europe and in the United States, Christian sectarians here demanded a return to the Bible, the source of religion. For Christianity, the Bible was the basic book. This was doctrine which the Charleston Reformers were ready to accept. The Society believed that the Ten Commandments had been given by God to Moses; they were the foundation of morality. However, the decalogue was not included as part of the prayer service by the Society; in this, Reform was at one with the Orthodox; the decalogue is reprinted in the traditional liturgy, but is never recited. In their prayers, the Reformers stressed love for all mankind. All vengeful denunciations for past massacres were to be removed from the ritual. The United States was not Russia or the Barbary Coast of North Africa. The approach of these Reformers was not Jewishly particularist; it was always universalist. Unlike Moses E. Levy and Noah, both of whom went through a "colony" phase, Harby and his cohorts had no desire to lock Jews up in a cultural enclave.²³

The Reformers introduced basic changes into the services which they held in a Masonic Hall. They employed art music, and a choir; they sang the psalms together with both Jewish and Christian hymns. Some thirty hymns, borrowed from the Protestants, were appended to the *Sabbath Service* though none of them was Christological in content. Worshippers were abjured to chaunt in harmony with the reader. In all probability there was no separation of the sexes; families sat together. The sale of honors in the service was abolished. The amount of Hebrew read was curtailed, but there is no indication that there was any opposition to Hebrew as such. All told, the service was shorter than the traditional one in which only Hebrew was employed. Because it was imperative that worship be intelligible, weight was laid on the use of English. Rachel Mordecai Lazarus was unhappy with the translation of the traditional liturgy for the High Holy Days; the English was not good; some of the prayers were irrelevant. Rachel's unhappiness with the Orthodox prayer book, even in its English guise, explains why the Society dwelt on the need to edify the adult and work with youth to keep them all in the fold; hence the growing emphasis on the English sermon, which was borrowed in this country from the Christians. Nothing was said by the Charlestonians about the dietary laws. For these innovators, ethics, love, and an informal piety were more important than ritual. But piety, too, had to be rational. There were no intimations of pietistic learnings; that would have been deemed Christian.²⁴

The Society was essentially a movement of young adults. They were eager to fashion a service of which they might be proud, one to which they could bring their Gentile friends, one devoid of rabbinical excrescences and fully adapted to the needs of American society. One wonders if, in their Americanism, in their rejection of ancient rituals, the members were altogether free of nativism. It is by no means improbable that they looked askance at immigrants. They did believe that observant newcomers were still under the sway of bigotry. Hostility to new arrivals can be documented as early as the 1720's; it is probably much older. Yet, despite their separatist tendencies, the members of the Society were not assimilationists or would-be defectors. They had no desire to merge into Christianity; they were universalists. In their liturgy and in their sermonic orations, the members never failed to stress morality, universalism, love of God. However, they always maintained stoutly that they were good Jews. They had no desire to break with the Jewish people. Although they infuriated traditionalists in Charleston and shocked many in the North, there is no record that anyone ever attempted to read them out of the faith. Theologically, they did subscribe to most of the articles of faith accepted by all Jews: the thirteen principles advocated by the medieval Jewish philosopher Maimonides. They affirmed the existence of God and acknowledged his attributes. They believed in immortality, not resurrection. Revelation was an authoritative tenet, for God himself had given Moses the decalogue on Mount Sinai. God is man's only redeemer! This of course was a polemical jab at Christianity. God will yet be worshipped by all the people of the world. Here we have an intimation—faint, to be sure—of the "Mission" concept: the Jew is called upon to teach the Oneness of God and his ethical demands. That is his role in history.²⁵

FAILURE

The Society started out with such high hopes. Yet, in 1833 it returned with interest the money it had collected from Jews and Christians for the erection of a house of worship. Though the Reformers continued to hold services, it is obvious the rebellion had failed. Why? Were they held back by recent immigrants who adhered to their ancient traditions? The "German" immigration was not to begin in force till the sun of the Charleston Reformers had already set. Did the new movement die because of the oppressive atmosphere of evangelicalism, political reaction, and proslavery agitation? No. Reform was to break through again soon in Charleston at a time when the South had moved still farther to the right. Indeed, one might argue that Southern conservatives would look with favor on the Reformed Society, for its acculturation thrust brought it that much closer to Protestantism, superficially at least. Were the brilliant young men in this new Jewish movement too engrossed with politics and

the Nullification controversy after 1829 to find time for religion? This is possible. Did the hostility of the traditionalists overwhelm the radicals? No, for Reform was to emerge triumphant in less than a decade when hostilities were even more bitter. Was the break with the past too shocking? This, too, is possible. The new faith was perhaps excessively cold and rational, hence lifeless. Traditional Orthodoxy was warm, vibrant, soul-satisfying. Intuitively, the Orthodox clung to the rock whence they were hewn; they believed that customs, traditions, rituals would keep them Jewish. For them, Harby and his friends had moved too fast.²⁶

The Reformers stressed ideology, but theology was not important for the average Jew; the old-fashioned way of life was very appealing. It is much more probable that the Society faded because its members had no tolerance for tradition, no romanticism, no historicism, no profound knowledge of Judaism, no anchor to the past. In the final analysis, the historian may venture to suggest also that the Society suffered because it had no full-time leadership. Two of the four “leaders” were gone by 1828. Harby had charisma and ebullience, but more was needed. Supporting his wife and nine children was in itself a full-time job for him. He was never truly successful at anything he undertook and died in poverty. The Reform Movement of the 1840’s had Poznanski, Merzbacher, Isaac Mayer Wise; they had Jewish learning; they worked at their jobs full time; their liberalized synagogues flourished. When a minister arrived in Charleston in the late 1830’s and turned toward the left, Reform was reborn in that community, but in Beth Elohim, not in the Society.²⁷

The Reformed Society of Israelites was not entirely a failure. In 1827, Isaac N. Cardozo, one of the leaders of the Society, bragged that it was making an impact on German and English Jewry. It was reported that Samuel Gilman’s review of Harby’s 1825 oration had been translated and published in Germany, where the Jews were talking about this American society. Sabbath moral lectures were introduced into Liverpool, England, a city with which the Charlestonians had commercial and familial relations; Jews of the Charleston elite had married into one of the best families of that English metropolis. Certainly, Reformers looked upon their innovations as an article for export. In the American North, so Cardozo said, English readings were introduced into one of the synagogues because of the precedent established by the Southern liberals. Harby wrote Jefferson that he was trying to influence his “co-religionaires.” The Society prepared not one but two Hebrew translations of its Articles of Faith. This was probably motivated by the desire to influence other Jews. It may or may not be significant that in 1826, less than two years after the Carolinians revolted, two members of New York’s Shearith Israel prepared and published an English translation of the Sephardic daily liturgy.²⁸

The Society made its presence felt. Within a year after its birth, Noah, New York's most articulate Jewish layman, was calling for English sermons and reforms in the traditional service. The talks, he insisted, should deal with the principles of faith; morality had to be emphasized, but there could be no departures from the basic religious traditions. The ritual, the prayers, had to be in Hebrew. There were to be no innovations; there was no end to the pruning knife. Let us make sacrifices cheerfully, but no changes! These warnings were unquestionably directed against his Charleston friends. But Noah was not blind to the needs of American Jewry. Like Harby, Moïse, Cardozo, and Carvalho, he, too, believed that changes must be made if the Jew was to be completely Americanized. In 1818, six years before the Reformed Society made its first protest, Noah had already come to grips with the problem of adapting Judaism to the American scene. For him, surgery, cutting the cord that tied the Jew to 2,000 years of history, was not the answer. Noah doubtless knew of the changes introduced by the Berlin Reformers in 1815. He, too, wanted adjustments here; they were necessary, but he feared the consequence of a break with the past.²⁹

The next decade, the 1830's, was something of a watershed. Emerson began to attack Christian orthodoxy; Rebecca Gratz, an admirer of Philadelphia's Unitarian minister, had opened the first American Jewish Sunday School before the decade closed. Leeser began to preach in English, never failing to emphasize morality as well as the established ceremonies and rituals. In dedicating Shearith Israel's new building, the Crosby Street Synagogue, in 1834, Noah touched upon the need for sermons and prayers in the vernacular, on modern music, on improvements in the worship service, on education for youth, on the importance of women in the synagogue. He acknowledged the problem of burdensome ceremonies, though he hastened to add that no changes were to be made without rabbinical sanction. In October, 1844, Noah addressed a large Christian audience in a New York church, appealing to it to help restore the Jews to their ancient homeland. Four months earlier, twenty-four German rabbis had met in Brunswick to discuss the future of Judaism; they saw the need for reforms. With this conference in mind, Noah told his Christian auditors that the Jews were aware of the need to prune away talmudic additions. Jews had to return to the Bible, their safe guide. Four years later, in 1848, in an address at Shearith Israel, he hailed the building of a new synagogue in Jerusalem. Once more, he addressed himself to the subject of reforms in Judaism. He knew that the 1848 revolution in Germany had moved people to think in terms of change: Jewish religious rebels in that country had moved far to the left. Noah was fully aware that, here in the United States, three Reform synagogues had been opened in the early 1840's, two of them radical in their approach. But, reiterated the cautious Noah, the

necessary reforms could be made only with the concurrence of the rabbis. Without doubt, leftist Temple Emanu-El in 1845 frightened him: Reformers created schisms and Noah was never a Reform Jew!³⁰

The Reformed Society of Israelites did have an impact on American Jewry. Despite the fact that the Reformers had given up the hope of building a sanctuary in 1833, there is evidence that they limped along until about 1840, when Congregation Beth Elohim itself had begun to steer a liberal course. In 1837, even before Beth Elohim had begun to turn to the left, it had already declared that offerings could no longer be made in Spanish and, more significantly, that no minister was to be employed who was not at home in English and could not preach in that language. Very likely, this push to Reform in the South Carolina city was not due primarily to the returning rebels, not even to the new liberal rabbi, but to the times. American Jews were aware of what was going on in Europe: surface reforms—decorum, the vernacular, the sermon, modern music—were beginning to be accepted in the religious heartland of world Judaism. Jewish secular liberalism and Reform were soon to blossom here in the United States in the 1840's. The 1830's was a decade when the Jacksonians—if they did nothing else—talked of change, of rebellion against authority.³¹

In 1838, Congregation Beth Elohim, still ruled by uncompromising traditionalists, lost its beautiful sanctuary in a fire. Before the foundations of the successor building were even laid, the congregation turned to its new minister and asked him to use some English in the service and to preach in the vernacular every Saturday. Patently, it was the threat of the Reformed Society which compelled the board to take this action. In July, 1840, as the sanctuary began to rise, almost forty members, citing European precedents, asked that an organ be installed. Music, said the petitioners, would influence the rising generation and intensify its loyalty. In one of their communications on this subject, they waxed rhapsodic as they recounted the powers of music, this “universal language of the soul,” to control “the fierce passions” and to elicit “the finest qualities of our nature.” This time, the liberals moved more circumspectly, eschewing the revolutionary tactics of 1824. The approach now was gradual; the organ, a simple attractive musical instrument, was the Trojan horse that breached the Orthodox walls.

The new rebels, a younger generation, finally succeeded in winning a bare majority for their cause by their gradualistic tactics. There was nothing new or radical in the employment of the organ, said the would-be Reformers. This instrument is mentioned in the Bible, it was used in the temple at Jerusalem and employed even in the ritual of a Prague synagogue in the eighteenth century. It has been introduced—and this was true—in German Reform Jewish synagogues ever since the second decade of the

nineteenth century. Both in Europe and in the United States, the organ has always been the classical symbol of change and innovation, a change that was altogether out of proportion to its actual significance as a violation of tradition. The organ was the shibboleth, the test of orthodoxy, the break with the past. The first sonorous tones of that new instrument, pealing out the response to the inspiring "Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord," meant the first shot in a new war for religious independence. One of the leaders of this radical move was Abraham Moïse, now in 1840 once more a member of Beth Elohim. When the conservative board was overruled and it was decided to use an organ, about forty members seceded and established a congregation of their own. They called it Shearith Israel, since they intended to pattern themselves on the traditional synagog of the same name in New York. This year, 1840, a reform service of sorts was introduced in Beth Elohim. In this sense, it was America's "cradle of Reform Judaism."³²

The new sanctuary was finally dedicated on March 19, 1841: the important address was made by Hazzan Poznanski. Coming to New York as a young man in his twenties, this Prussian Polish Jew had secured a position as shohet and occasional reader in Orthodox Shearith Israel, the Spanish-Portuguese synagog. Several years later, in 1836, Gedaliah Poznanski, recommended by the staunchly conservative Leeser, of Philadelphia, blossomed forth in Charleston as the Reverend Gustavus Poznanski, an able, affable, socially presentable gentleman. The congregation gave him life tenure; he married wealth and soon became an influence in the Jewish community, veering away from orthodoxy in the direction of liberalism. When his reformist sympathies became apparent, protagonists of time-honored observances spread the false rumor that he was a bastard by birth, if not by deed. Before Poznanski's arrival in the United States in the 1830's, he had officiated as a shohet in Hamburg, where he was surely well aware of the liberal tendencies that characterized the famous Hamburg Temple. By 1838, he himself had turned to the left. Thus, when in 1840 he was asked whether he approved of employing an organ in the services—and of course on the Sabbath—he answered in the affirmative.

In his dedication talk, he made it clear that he wanted to bring instrumental music into the new synagog building and favored increasing the use of the English vernacular in the service. These suggested innovations did not startle American Orthodoxy as much as his high-flown oratorical flourish: "this synagogue is our *temple*, this city our *Jerusalem*, this happy land our *Palestine*." Yet, his was no new doctrine. It had been implicit in Noah's 1818 *Discourse* and in Harby's 1825 Reformed Society oration. Harby had enthusiastically maintained that America was truly the land of promise spoken of in Holy Writ. Christian Americans, he had said, are our brethren; we all worship the same God. Here, then, are some of the

roots of American classical Reform Judaism. Implied here, too, in the Poznanski address was the renunciation of a personal Messiah who would lead the Jews back to the Promised Land. Furthermore, if there was to be no Messiah, there would be no Resurrection. Poznanski's blatant break with the concept of Restoration infuriated Rebecca Gratz, who saw it as nothing less than a denial that the Jews were to return to the Holy Land where a glorious future awaited them. Yet, a year earlier she had written that reform was in the air; such enquiries and talks on the subject were healthy, she had said.

Whether Poznanski, this quondam devotee of Orthodoxy, was by nature a liberal and a leader of the intramural revolt is difficult to determine. He was at all times careful to maintain a relatively low profile. It is true that, in 1843, he was to recommend, unsuccessfully, the abolition of the second-day Holy Days. Poznanski was no fighter; one may even question his commitment to Reform. Before the decade had come to an end he resigned his post, voluntarily. When he finally left town and settled in New York, he rejoined Shearith Israel, America's bastion of Orthodoxy, but on his death he was eulogized by Temple Emanu-El's Reform rabbis. What an interesting odyssey, Poznanski's life.³³

In 1843 the Reformers in Beth Elohim and the Orthodox in Charleston's new secessionist congregation began to sue one another. The traditionalists, insisting that they were still members, wanted to capture the beautiful new sanctuary; the Reformers feared that they would be taken over by the Orthodox who were numerically powerful. After the liberals won out in 1845, their opponents, aggressive and determined, appealed the case, but lost again in 1846. In delivering his opinion, the judge, who favored the Reformers, declared that a granite promontory does not change; human institutions do.³⁴

SUMMARY

The Reformed Society of Israelites in South Carolina began as a radical lay movement that broke with the past. Stimulating protests and comments in the North, it encouraged dissidents who were to make their views felt no later than the 1840's, when Reform began to blossom in this country. It infuriated the Orthodox. As early as 1835 Leeser was dismayed at the lack of interest in the Hebrew language and at the push for changes. This, he said, was not reform but deformity. The Philadelphia minister attempted to cope with liberal inroads by furthering a modernist Orthodoxy that would understand its literature, its doctrines, its roots. Rebecca Gratz supplemented his efforts and responded to the threat to tradition by establishing a Sunday School movement that emphasized the English vernacular, but adhered firmly to Orthodox principles. By the

late 1830's, Beth Elohim had moved somewhat to the left. The new minister, Poznanski, encouraged new approaches, but as a rabbi he linked them to the past; the nexus was not broken. In modern Jewish religious history, the laymen and the clergy have always had different roles. The laymen innovate, the clergymen conciliate. In Germany, England, and Charleston, Reform had begun as a lay movement; then came the clergy—who supported the insurgents, but made sure that they did not repudiate the past. In Charleston, for the first time in the United States, a clergyman played a leadership role, modest though it was; this was the first time that a “Reform rabbi” appeared on the scene.³⁵

Charleston in 1841 was taking on a Reform look; that year it witnessed the reprinting of a translation of Gotthold's German Reform sermons. The congregation looked upon itself as a reformist institution. Abraham Moïse bragged to Leeser that Charleston sheltered the only liberal synagogue in the United States. His boast was supported by the fact that the congregation had refused to adopt a resolution that it adhere to Mosaic and rabbinical legislation. Yet, in actuality, the final reforms in the 1840's were minimal. Despite the fact that the leftist stance of Beth Elohim induced two Orthodox secessions in this decade, the mother congregation made no radical moves at first. After all, the South was conservative, culturally, politically, and religiously; it was to become increasingly so as the decades passed. The changes made were cosmetic. There was decorum, an organ, a mixed choir, an occasional English hymn. There was some English in the service, probably a translation of a Hebrew portion of the ancient liturgy. Not a single paragraph of the traditional prayer book was omitted or modified, with one minor exception: the excision of a chapter of the Mishnah which described in some detail the regulations dealing with the Sabbath lights; it was not a prayer. Hats were not doffed in the service; women were confined to a special seating section; there were still no family pews. Officially the congregation still adhered to the dietary laws and it hired a shohet. The few changes listed above document the determination of this southern synagogue to conform to a degree to some Protestant worship amenities. It is probable that the members rationalized these few departures as a return to pure Judaism. In the 1850's, however, radical innovations were introduced into the service.³⁶

Did Charleston “Reform” solve the problem of loyalties? Harby held the “rabbis”—that is talmudic law—responsible for the drifting and defections of the day. Actually neither the modern Orthodoxy of a Leeser nor the radical measures of the Reformed Society of Israelites would or could solve the problem of indifference to Judaism, the religion. That problem bespoke the times, the attractive pull of the secular American culture, and the possibility of surviving as a Jew outside the parameters of Orthodoxy and outside the perimeter of any synagogue.



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

AMERICAN JEWRY 1776-1840:

A SUMMARY AND SOME COMMENTS

POLITICAL GAINS

Prior to 1775 and the violent break with Great Britain, no Jew in the British colonies could hold an honorific office unless he was willing to take a Christian test oath. By 1840, most Jews in the United States enjoyed full political rights. Several states denied them full equality, but, with exceptions, there were few Jews living in those commonwealths. Ultimately, even those laggard states would have to emancipate them; Gentiles were the prisoners of their own grandiloquent Rights of Man; it was becoming increasingly difficult to deny free men full civil and political immunities. The Jews speedily recognized that there was a future for them here in this new republic. As early as 1784, even before a federal Constitution existed or before Pennsylvania emancipated its Israelites, a Philadelphian, Manuel Josephson, made it quite clear that for the Jew America was the best of all countries. That was true. It was the first land to endow Jews with all immunities, at least on a federal level. For the Children of Abraham, the Revolution was truly important. Jewish veterans of the war were proud that they had helped effect this sociopolitical change. Noah once hoped to write a book or an essay on this subject. It was not long, however, before American Jewry became aware that it would always have to struggle to retain the privileges it had won. Encroachments of Christian religionists frequently threatened political parity. As of 1840, no Jew had as yet been elected to an important state or national office; individuals, however, were reaching out for recognition and for power; this decade would see a Jew in Congress.¹

ECONOMIC CHANGES

With political rights came commercial privileges; if nothing else, equality before the law conferred status. Merchant-shippers—not many, to be sure

—lived in the coastal towns that curved southward and westward from Boston to New Orleans. Commerce, however, was moving from the Atlantic Ocean westward to the mountains and beyond. This was the age of continental expansion. The merchant-shippers traded with Europe, the Far East, and the West Indies as well as with South and Central America; the shopkeepers looked to the West, a West which began with Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and extended even then to the Pacific Coast. Before 1840, there was a Philadelphia Jew selling pantaloons in a village on the shores of San Francisco Bay. As businessmen, the Jews of the early republic tended to continue the economic traditions of colonial days. Most were petty shopkeepers, a few were craftsmen; still fewer were merchant-shippers; others were large-scale dry goods merchants, building emporia that would yet emerge as embryonic department stores. Jews, always literate, were relatively numerous in the civil service, employed both by towns and the federal government. In a day when most Americans were farmers or village folk, not many Jews tilled the soil; there were no mill hands. By 1840, however, important economic changes were taking place, all of which were to affect Jewish entrepreneurs. The older agrarian economy was radically modified by the beginnings of industry and banking and by turnpikes, canals, and railroads. Lawyers, the accoucheurs of big business, were already indispensable. In all of these areas, with the exception of textile manufacturing, Jews made their presence felt. In a way, one Jew embodied in his career some of the changes so characteristic of those early decades: John Jacob Hays (d. 1836), a native of New York, trekked north to Canada and then moved on to the Illinois Country, where he engaged in the fur trade. In the new transmontane West he served as postmaster, sheriff, collector of internal revenue, Indian agent; unlike most of his fellow Jews, he also ran a farm. Despite the prejudices that were never absent, Jews did move upward; most of them were in the middle-middle class; only a few became wealthy. The road to prosperity was a rocky one; there were eight depressions during the years 1776-1840.

GAINS IN THE ARTS AND SCIENCES

Political liberalism and broadened economic opportunity brought cultural emancipation. Before 1776, hardly a single Jew stood out as an exponent of western culture, though individuals, men and women, read widely and owned good libraries. After the Revolution, with its promises and its fulfillment, many Jews, men and women, became people of culture. They embraced the common American culture wholeheartedly; they were not cultural pluralists. Later, much later, in the second half of the twentieth century, the traumatic experience of Russian and Polish persecutions, American anti-Semitism, and German mass murders would make socio-

cultural pluralism an acceptable, even a desirable option. In the years between 1775 and 1840, Jews in the United States emerged as poets, writers, journalists, portrait painters, dramatists, physicians, lawyers, economists, and sponsors of libraries and art academies. Jacob C. Levy, a Charleston entrepreneur, preferred his study to his countinghouse; Jacob Mordecai, of Warrenton, North Carolina, was engrossed in biblical research; Rebecca Gratz, the Philadelphia spinster, read everything and moved freely and confidently in the salons of the literati. The attractions of an open society led frequently to assimilation and defection, but the defection of some families was a multigenerational process that offered no threat to the survival of American Jewry. A constant influx of Central European newcomers replenished the American Jewish reservoirs.

RELIGIOUS CHANGES

The many prerevolutionary Jews surviving to 1840 could testify to the changes in their lives, politically, economically, and culturally. Religiously, these men and women were less affected. The 2,000-year-old tradition maintained its hold despite the fact that apathy and indifference were rife. There was relatively little interest in traditional Hebrew texts; knowledge of the rabbinical classics was not deemed imperative. Hence there was to be no rabbi, no expounder of the Law, here in the United States till 1840, almost 200 years after the coming of the first Jew to the British colonies. Isaac Leiser made a desperate effort to link his generation to the past and its literature so that the chain of tradition would not be broken. To effect his purpose, he prepared text books, liturgies, and translations. His authority as a “rabbi” was never recognized. “Learning,” Talmud, rabbis—these were to play very little part in American Judaism in the six or more decades after the Revolution. Unlike the more autocratic European states, the government here would not buoy up the authority of Jewish religious leaders. American concepts of democracy influenced the synagogue; democracy made the vote all powerful. Learned and unlearned lay leaders, backed by the ballot, ruled the congregations. Thus it was that the Orthodox elite of Charleston, victorious in 1824, went down to defeat in the 1840’s. Rugged individualism was to prevail over years of sacrosanct religious traditions.

In some towns, only a minority was affiliated with the congregation. It was the threat of defection that provoked some in cultured Charleston to attempt a synthesis of Americanism and Judaism. It was the hope of these Charleston Reformers that an Americanized Jewish religion would guarantee survival; this motivation explains the rise of the Reformed Society of Israelites. But even for the typical American Jew, for those men and women who tended to neglect the Sabbath, to ignore the dietary

laws, and to absent themselves from the synagogue, there was no thought of disloyalty. For those tempted to break completely with the past, the knowledge that there was a world outside ready to reject them deterred many from taking the final step. Judaism and its institutions were a tie to the past, a source of strength emotionally, a refuge when calamity struck. Most Jews were at least nominal religionists. It was not difficult to be a Jew as they defined that term. They accepted tradition in its entirety, but willfully—and, it would appear guiltlessly—ignored any law or ordinance which failed to interest them. They believed in the Jewish people, the need to help one another. They never doubted even for a second that the ties that bound Jews together were unbreakable. They insisted that their children learn to read Hebrew; it was imperative that the service be in the same holy language; they loved the liturgy and the Holy Days. Without matzos there was no Judaism; they created and supported mutual-aid societies, burial associations, charity organizations. In all these areas, religion and philanthropy, they were one with their predecessors who had landed at New Amsterdam in 1654. The incontrovertible proof that they were determined to remain Jewish is the steady increase in the number of new synagogues, all of them traditionally oriented.

PROTESTANT INFLUENCES

The dominant Protestantism was not without an impact on Jewish traditionalists. There was an incessant drive for a Christian-like decorum in the service; the English sermon made its way forward; New Testament phrases rolled off the lips of the most orthodox; Sunday Schools were established in the major Jewish communities. Catechisms were published, and recondite theological dialogues were conned and repeated by bright Jewish youngsters. Yet, these Jewish religionists with their ethically motivated monotheism and their plethora of ceremonies and rituals had little interest in essential Christian dogmas. Jews summarily rejected the concept of a mediating divine savior. Revivalism was viewed as a religious aberration. Devotion to social reforms, to abolition, to temperance, evoked no enthusiasm on their part; the overriding concern of the synagogue was to survive institutionally. The individual religionist was eager to maintain a low profile in the general community. Is there a typical religious layman? Many. Philip Hart, of Charleston (1727-1796), may well be a good example for the Revolutionary generation. This native of Hamburg was in America by 1750. He served in the Revolutionary army and made his way as a businessman and merchant-shipper. His generosity in 1794 helped build the beautiful Charleston synagogue in which he was active, and when his will was probated, it was found that he had manumitted a slave, given liberally to the Charleston general charities, and left substantial legacies to the local congregation and to the Jews of his native Hamburg.²

THE AMERICAN JEW AND THE WORLD JEWISH COMMUNITY

THE PERVADING SENSE OF KINSHIP

Jews have always nursed a pervading sense of kinship with every other Jew in the world. This is the concept of *Kelal Yisrael*, the Totality, the Oneness of Israel, of World Jewry. Leiser called it “a tie holier than a fatherland.” What were the roots of this concept? Common suffering, indoctrination, cherished rituals, and customary law. The Charleston Jew of German provenance left money to a German rabbinical conventicle. That was important for him; he believed that talmudic studies were vital if Jewry was to survive. A New Orleans Jew who evinced little interest in the local Jewish congregation—the members were not his social peers—gave a large sum to his native German community. The New Orleans synagogue honored the memory of Abbé Gregoire, the French Revolutionary cleric, because he had fought for Jewish emancipation. Jews everywhere never forgot that they were part of a very intimate world fellowship. The approach of the typical Jew was simple: since we are all kin, we have a right to ask for help from all Jews wherever they are; it is their bounden duty to respond, are we not responsible one for the other? In their loyalties, Jews are always “ultramontane.” Their basic fidelities are not to the local or the national Jewish community, but to any Jews in the world who need help. They come first.

The concept of the Totality of Israel admits of no exception. Thus, New Orleans Jewry in 1853 established the Hebrew Foreign Mission Society to help Chinese Jews in dire need. But long before that, American Jewry had reached out to its coreligionists in the Far East. Their language of communication was Hebrew. By 1787, as the postwar depression was slowly coming to an end, Solomon Simson, of New York, reached out to India; he began corresponding with the Jewish community in Cochin on the Malabar Coast. Why? Curiosity was certainly a factor that stirred him. Jews are always thrilled to hear of distant fellow Jews whose existence was heretofore almost unknown. There is of course a very special religious reason. The Bible made it clear that after the Dispersion would come the Ingathering followed by the Messiah, the Restoration, and everlasting peace and glory for the House of Israel. And finally Simson looked forward to establishing a lucrative business relationship with the Jews of India. It was these motivations that prompted him later, in 1795, to attempt to correspond with the Jews of China who had a settlement at Kai-fung-foo. The ship captain entrusted with the letter to the Chinese Jews was not able to locate the settlement.³

THE LINK TO PALESTINE

Like all other Jews, American Jewry also had a link to Palestine and prayed daily for the Return. True, this was but a mechanical ritual that meant very little to most who rushed through their prayers. Yet, let there be no question, Palestine itself was sacred to Jewry; Jewry was determined to do all in its power to maintain its communities—a tradition that went back for over 2,000 years. Jews here and in all lands looked upon the Palestinians as “real” Jews. They were World Jewry’s vicarious students, laboring as they did day and night over the tomes of the Law. They were the mediators who interceded at the graves of the patriarchs for Diaspora Jewry. It was a mitzvah to support these men, and one needed good deeds to enter the World to Come. These Palestinians are holding the fort till the dawn of the Restoration; they are God’s beloved pioneers. They depend upon us to support them and it is our sacred obligation, our privilege, to do so. The monies sent them were collected here at funerals, in charity boxes, and through offerings and personal gifts. The Palestinians, always impoverished, always oppressed, always importunate, were in constant touch with prosperous Diaspora communities. Printed circulars were dispatched from the Turkish-ruled Holy Land describing in heartrending phrases their injuries and their sufferings and their anguish. Amsterdam, London, and Constantinople Jewries wrote to the American communities soliciting gifts for the stalwarts of the four sacred Holy Land cities, Jerusalem, Hebron, Tiberias, and Safed. A more direct connection was established by those Palestinians who had been coming to the British North American colonies since the middle of the eighteenth century.

The first, Moses Malki, of Safed, arrived in 1759, lived for months in New York and Newport at the expense of those communities and then moved on. There is no evidence that he was seeking aid for his fellow townsmen. Beginning with the 1760’s, requests for help were continuous. The American Jews responded; there was a Palestine relief committee in New York in 1761; Daniel Gomez, of New York, apparently the American treasurer in 1770, was assigned the task of collecting funds from Newport, Philadelphia, and New York. Thus, we have here the intimation of a national Jewish effort to aid a foreign Jewry. Like Malki, Haim Isaac Carigal, of Hebron, was another itinerant. He was a man of quality, learned, dignified, charming, competent. Even though there is every reason to believe that he was collecting money for his own needs, he was respected and admired; he tied American Jewry to Palestine and he was a worthy representative, respected by both Jews and Christians. Samuel Cohen, who landed in Newport in 1775, was the first authentic apostle or messenger to land on these shores. He sought aid for the oppressed Jews of Hebron. While in Newport, he preached a fast day sermon, as the Continental Congress had suggested, praying for peace; the Americans

were then besieging Boston. Because of the war, the Newporters and New Yorkers hastily shipped him back to Europe. During the Revolution, the crossing was hazardous and no Palestinian itinerant or “rabbinical messengers” (*shaddarim*) attempted it, but beginning with the late 1780’s, they again made their appearance with outstretched palm. *The Pennsylvania Packet*, in its edition of August 16, 1788, asked all good citizens to help redeem Hebron’s Jews from enslavement at the hands of the Turkish pashas. From the 1790’s on and well into the 1820’s, God’s messengers found it once more difficult to make the Atlantic crossing and to unite the two Jewries through the bond of charity; the Napoleonic wars and the War of 1812 made travel dangerous. Knowing of the distress under which the Palestinians labored, the Massachusetts philanthropist Abraham Touro set up a modest endowment fund at Shearith Israel to educate impoverished Jewish children in the Holy Land.

Beginning in the 1820’s, the persistent *shaddarim* again made their appearance. Since that time, they have never ceased to come or to petition for aid. Rabbi Samuel Isaacki appeared in 1825, collected a substantial sum and insisted that it be given to him; the New Yorkers had hoped to send their gifts directly to the needy. By this time, the American Jewish leaders were convinced that the messenger system, by which they documented their attachment to Palestine was inefficient. Providing for these visitors was a huge expense; some of them were probably imposters. The Jewish elite of Amsterdam and the Londoners—both Sephardic and Ashkenazic—suggested that all funds collected be sent for transmission to responsible men and agencies in Europe. Though the Americans turned against the messengers, the latter continued to come and not infrequently were showered with gifts. It was difficult to refuse them; these exotics were enveloped in an odor of sanctity.

To cope with the problem of safeguarding the monies destined for the Four Sacred Cities of their ancestors, the Europeans in the 1820’s had finally organized an international Society for the Offerings for the Sanctuary (Hevrah Terumat Ha-Kodesh). By 1832, a similar organization with the same name was established in New York. Local congregations were co-opted; branches in other cities here were established or contemplated. In founding this society, it was pointed out that oppression in Eastern Europe, revolution in the Balkans, and war in the Levant had disrupted the flow of funds to Palestine. America’s gifts were, therefore, of vital importance, and in order to keep in touch with the changing political scene, it was suggested that a committee of correspondence be appointed to study the situation abroad. This *hevrah* is historically significant, though it was to disappear after two decades; it marks a stage in the organic development of the local New York community. Equally important, it documents a drive toward nationwide Jewish consolidation

and a strengthening of the link to Europe and Palestine. All told, it intensified the sense of kinship that was always present. New York's Jews, the men who usually bore the brunt of providing for the "messengers," wrote to their confreres in London, Paris, Amsterdam and Bordeaux, warning them not to encourage these solicitors to come here. The increasing immigration of Central Europeans to New York made it imperative to provide first for these newcomers. Charity begins at home. This protest of the Shearith Israel trustees points up a problem that has continued to confront American Jewry to the present day. What takes precedence: the needs of local Jewry or the demands of foreign communities (Palestine-Israel)? Jews of the Holy Land were always faced with a crisis.⁴

UNITED STATES JEWRY: A EUROPEAN RELIGIOUS SATELLITE

American Jews deemed themselves an indissoluble part of World Jewry; in addition, they looked upon themselves as satellites of the Jewish community in England. They had no rabbis of their own, men qualified to make authoritative decisions in the area of rabbinic law. They accepted willingly spiritual guidance from Amsterdam Jewry because that city was probably the largest Jewish community in Europe; they deferred to London, not because of its size, but because of its scholars and the common tie of Anglo-Saxon culture. Many of New York's Jews were natives of England or were Central Europeans who had been anglicized in London before embarking for the United States. The Sephardim here listened to the mandates of Europe's Sephardim; the Ashkenazim gave a respectful hearing to London and to Amsterdam's Ashkenazic leaders. The Jews here turned to their respective doyens abroad in matters of marriage, divorce, burial, and conversion. They solicited their aid in the recruitment of officiants. American Jews were dependent on Europe not only for religious advice but also for material aid. As part of the Body of Israel, every Jew, in every land, was expected to help his fellow Jews, particularly when religious institutions were in need. Individual communities were not constrained by political boundaries; kinship surmounted them all. Despite the war with Great Britain, Jews in this country nursed no animus against English Jewry. After the treaty of peace was signed in 1783, the Sephardim here continued to maintain close relations with London's Bevis Marks; Shearith Israel was always close to the English congregations in London, Barbados, and Jamaica.

If all America's documents describing the building of Jewish sanctuaries during the years 1729 to 1839 were lost, the historian would probably be able to reconstruct some of their history by consulting foreign archives. Many early American synagogues wrote abroad seeking financial help. These petitions were dispatched as early as 1729, when the first

sanctuary was being constructed; the New Yorkers then addressed requests to London and to the English and Dutch colonies in the West Indies. It must not be forgotten that Surinam and the Caribbean Jewish congregations were more prosperous, more numerous, more important than the North American mainland ones until the 1820's. The Jewish colonists who settled en bloc at Savannah in 1733 were outfitted and financed by London Jewry; two years earlier, a London Jewish philanthropist had built the first Jewish school in this country. The English Sephardim were glad to see incoming refugees from Spain and Portugal emigrate to North America; dispatching them to the New World was motivated by more than ethnic and religious fellowship. European communities dumped their social-welfare problems on the colonies.

Newport's congregation received a Scroll of the Law from London in 1759, and when Philadelphia's Jews and the assembled exiles erected the city's first Jewish sanctuary in 1782, they, too, turned to London, Surinam, and the West Indies. As late as 1818, New York's Shearith Israel appealed to the Dutch in Curaçao for a building grant. This New York congregation always maintained good relations, not only with the Dutch in Curaçao, but also with the Dutch colonies of Surinam and St. Eustatius. When Sephardic Philadelphia set out in the early 1820's to erect a new sanctuary, it appealed to, among others, a London Rothschild, a Montefiore, and a Goldsmid. These famous bankers were given an opportunity to perform a meritorious deed; it would stand them in good stead! It is strange, but there is no record, prior to 1840, of any Jewish group in this country appealing to the Germans in Berlin or Hamburg. Why were they beyond the pale of kinship? No good answer suggests itself. The Cincinnatians in 1825 turned to the English; B'nai Israel in that Ohio city was founded primarily by emigrants from the English hinterland; and when Charleston's beautiful building was razed by fire in 1838, a printed circular soliciting contributions was sent to the chief congregations in Amsterdam, London, and Barbados. Long before this, when a majestic, impressive Sephardic sanctuary was built in 1792, the Charlestonians had secured a substantial grant from prosperous Barbados. Foreign communities besieged for help frequently said no for reasons of their own, but they never questioned the right of another Jewry to ask for such assistance and to expect it. In a way, the congregations seeking succor were not petitioners but fellow Jews asserting their claims. "Who can we apply to for aid unless it be our brethren of the House of Israel," wrote the Baltimoreans in 1837.⁵

HELPING JEWS ABROAD

The prerogatives of fellowship induced merchants in the Islands to seek courtesies of fellow Jews on the North American mainland. Reflected

here is a curious—but not unusual—admixture of business and friendship. West Indians sent their children north to be educated in Norfolk and New York and asked their suppliers to supervise their studies. Although the small American Jewries lived in the shadow of the more affluent Islands and the European communities, they did make an effort, a very modest one, to be sure, to help Jews in other lands. Common concern was deemed a two-way street; Jews here were expected to give as well as to receive. Indeed the contemporary historian of World Jewry, Isaac Marcus Jost, wrote that American Jews had more sympathy for oppressed brethren abroad than for suffering fellow Jews at home. In 1755 and 1775, London's Spanish and Portuguese Bevis Marks wrote to New York Jews and asked them to help Smyrna Jews suffering from fires and poverty. The Philadelphians in the 1780's responded to pleas from the Barbadians; Shearith Israel's burial society aided the starving Jews of Persia in 1815. The Americans gave little; congregations could barely balance their own budgets; the members were poor and thrifty to a fault. Foreign supplicants on these shores did better as they peddled their tales of woe. An emissary from Tunis pleading his personal misfortune was treated generously as he traveled all the way from New York to Savannah—in 1815, in the midst of the war with Great Britain. Eight years later, the scholarly Aaron Judah Corcos appeared in New York pleading for funds to help ransom his family. All told, the funds dispatched to Palestine, the Islands, or possibly to Europe and Asia, between the years 1775 and 1840, were at the most a few thousand dollars. By the last decades of the twentieth century, the five million or more Jews in the United States were annually sending over \$500,000,000 abroad to aid Jews in need.⁶

AMERICAN JEWRY AND THE CHALLENGE TO EUROPE

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, Europe influenced America. If the Jews of the United States played any part in world Jewish history, it was not because of intrinsic accomplishments, but because of the accident of history that set them up as exemplars to all the nations of Europe. American Jewry was the Diaspora's first emancipated Jewish community. American liberals were redressing the European balance; they were speeding the emancipation of all Europe's disabled people, including the Jews. A new dimension was now influencing World Jewry; the international Jewish community, always based on kinship, was strengthened by American egalitarian teachings, which then began to make their way in Europe. Europeans read the Declaration of Independence; Jefferson's 1786 Act for Establishing Religious Freedom, too, was translated and read by many. Messiah-like, America deliberately set out to bring liberty to the whole world—whether it wanted it or not. Citizens here gloried in their liberal

Constitution and its amendments. Enlightenment had made its impress on France even before the American Revolution, and there was talk then of emancipating the Israelites. Such a desire on the part of a few was reinforced in that century by the American egalitarianism of the 1770's and the 1780's.

Returning French Jews who had lived in the United States or had fought in the American Revolution brought back American concepts of liberty. French liberals and leaders like Mirabeau and the Abbé Gregoire knew what the new America had done for its Jews; the Abbé was ready to accord full rights to French Jewry. On January 29, 1790, when French Jews petitioned the National Assembly for political and religious liberty, they referred specifically to the new North American republic which had rejected toleration in favor of justice and liberty. Writing to the Jews of Savannah in 1790, Washington expressed his conviction that the enlightened nations of the earth would accept the political principles espoused by the new republic on this side of the Atlantic. The President's hopes were prophetic. Finally in 1791, France, influenced in part by the United States, emancipated all its Jews. During the 1790's, America offered asylum to refugees fleeing from Revolutionary France and from the black revolutionaries in the French West Indies who had successfully turned on their white oppressors. In 1818, Noah expressed his conviction that the rights accorded here would profoundly affect the European states, that the emancipation of Jewry in the Old World was inevitable. When Paris rose in revolt in 1830, an American Jewish orator in New York implied that it was this country that had helped the French to strike out for larger freedoms.⁷

HOLLAND, GERMANY, ENGLAND, AND AMERICAN JEWRY

When, under the influence of the French, emancipation of the Dutch Jews was debated in the Dutch National Assembly in 1796, the libertarians pointed out that emancipating the Jews in the United States and France had contributed to the prosperity of those countries. A political exemplar, tiny American Jewry reached out across the ocean ultimately to exert a perceptible influence on the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe. This was important, since these two regions were to become reservoirs out of which would pour a torrent of men and women to make twentieth-century United States the largest Jewry in the world. In 1840, there were at most 15,000 Jews in this republic; in the 1980's, it was estimated, there were well over 5,000,000. Passive American Jewry, merely by virtue of being "free," was reaching out and tying world Jewry to the new western republic. The rights granted American Jewry were finally to influence Western and Central Europe to emancipate their Jews; more significantly, the privileges and immunities enjoyed by this country's

Jews were to buoy up millions until time and circumstance made it possible for them to emigrate. The cumulative evidence is interesting. In 1783, German Jews, oppressed, were appealing to the Continental Congress to make a home for them in the United States. It was immaterial that this letter may have been only a propagandistic device; German Jews were hoping eventually to become part of an emancipated, not a disabled, World Jewry. In 1797, a Moravian Jew published a Hebrew work informing his readers that Charleston's Jews enjoyed political rights, and in 1808 a Prussian Minister of State lauded the bravery of American Jewish soldiers. That same year a German Gentile writer, seeking to further Jews politically, printed a list of Jews holding office in the United States—probably the first of the “lists” which were later compiled to prove that, if Jews were emancipated, they could become exemplary citizens.

In 1809, a Galician Jew published a Hebrew ethical work, based in part on the writings of Benjamin Franklin. America was indeed beginning to make its influence felt in Europe. Franklin, this author said, was “a Gentile who kindled a light which has made brighter the light of Israel.” Hannah Adams's *History of the Jews* was translated into German in 1819. Her good tidings about America found their way almost immediately into current Judeo-German literature. Brackenridge's 1819 appeal to give all rights to Maryland Jewry was published in Berlin, the Prussian capital, a year later. Circumstances conspired to make these publications about the United States very acceptable, for in 1819 German mobs had risen in several cities to club and plunder the Jews. An English review of Isaac Harby's provocative address on Reform Jewry appeared also in German. Finally, in 1840, a pseudepigraphical work appeared in Rothenberg, Germany: a book, *There is But One God*, which pretended to be a German translation of an American religious polemic. Jesus was depicted as a human being, an Essene; there was no Virgin Birth. The purpose of this pseudepigraph was to point out that Jews were permitted to polemicize in the United States, but not in Germany. The implication is clear; the Jews in this country were free in every sense of the word.⁸

ENGLAND AND AMERICAN JEWRY

It is not easy to determine whether the many German states were indeed influenced by conditions in the United States when confronted with the problem of fully emancipating their Jewish citizens. It was not until 1871 that all German Jews were finally accorded parity with their Gentile fellow citizens, on paper at least. Long before this, however, thousands of German Jews had emigrated to the West, to the United States, seeking political equality and a larger economic opportunity. English Jews, however, did not leave for America in substantial numbers. They remained at home and initiated a vigorous campaign for more rights after the enfran-

chisement of Protestant dissenters and Catholics in 1829. When, in the late 1820's, Jews, too, began to push for more privileges in England, they had the whole-hearted support of American Jewry—and Christians, too. In 1821, a New York Gentile liberationist wrote to a friend in England informing him that Jews in this country were not excluded from any political rights. The mayor of New York, he said, was a Jew. (This was wrong; Noah, however, was then sheriff.) The conversion-minded Christian Philo-Judeans in London began to work for the emancipation of English Jewry even before the Jews themselves turned to this task. Christian love was in the ascendency. In 1829, an Anglo-Jewish pamphleteer, encouraged and aided by Gentiles, began a campaign to secure more political, economic, and cultural privileges for his people. Thomas Babington Macaulay wrote on their behalf in 1831 in the *Edinburgh Review* and two years later addressed himself to the same subject in Parliament. In both instances, he cited the example of the American Jews. Joseph Hume, another member of Parliament, quoted John Quincy Adams, who had written a letter recommending the grant of rights to all European Jews: "No set of men can be better subjects," said the ex-President; Harriet Martineau also joined in the battle for political equality; she had visited America and was impressed by the Jews she met there in 1834.

English Jewry now turned to the Americans for the evidence that Jews living in an enlightened state as full citizens had carved out notable careers. The Americans were only too happy to respond to the call of fellow Jews whom they admired and respected. Mendes Cohen, of Baltimore, then in London, sent for copies of the pro-Jewish addresses on the Maryland Jew Bill. A New York Israelite compiled a list of American Jewish officeholders and sent it off to the Board of Deputies of British Jews. Anglo-Jewish leaders encouraged the publication of similar lists which were widely circulated. These pleas for privileges and immunities, made by London Gentiles and Jews, were probably effective; the emancipation process, however, was a slow one. Offices were open to the Jews in the 1830's; a Rothschild was admitted to Parliament in 1858, and in 1871 Cambridge and Oxford were finally ready to grant degrees to Jews. This was the very year that the Germans also emancipated their Jewish subjects. American Jews watched the developments in England with keen interest. They admired and respected the Rothschilds and loved Sir Moses Montefiore, English Jewry's grand old man. The Jews in the British Isles were fellow Jews fighting to survive with dignity.⁹

AMERICA'S NATIONAL JEWISH COMMUNITY

Obviously, Jews in the United States were part of an international Jewish community. No one international organization linked them closely to-

gether, but there was really no need for this; the sense of belonging, of fellowship, was intense. Was there an American national Jewish community? Here, too, no formal organization existed. Jews were few in number, about 6,000 souls in 1829; yet there was a national Jewish "community," one by consensus. What was its nature, its quality? Individuals, confraternities, and synagogues reached out to one another. In most instances they were seeking aid or giving aid. Not infrequently, they ignored requests from other towns, but this was not due to indifference. Most congregations were poor. Memberships were small; the dues and fees paid were inadequate. Yet, individual Jews asked to provide help were often generous; even men living in towns where there was no organized congregation were solicited and responded. In some respects, Jacob S. Solis, of Westchester County, New York, was exceptional; he established the New Orleans congregation and helped other communities, too. He was, indeed, a committed, dedicated Jew. The Sephardim felt close to congregations adhering to their Spanish-Portuguese liturgy; but they were not always parochial in their interests; they rendered assistance to Ashkenazim also. The classical example of a far-visioned Sephardic merchant and industrialist was Harmon Hendricks; he was most generous in helping New York's Bnai Jeshurun, the town's first Ashkenazic congregation, a break away from Hendricks's Shearith Israel. His largess was not denied other synagogues which turned to him. When the founders of Bnai Jeshurun decided to go out on their own, they did not hesitate to turn to Shearith Israel; we newcomers are European émigrés, help us!¹⁰

Congregations were never slow in turning to one another; often the response was favorable, but not always, for most synagogues barely managed to balance their budgets. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Shearith Israel was exceptional in having means. The country's mother synagogue in a metropolitan community, it was able to help others, but on rare occasions it, too, solicited help for itself when it was faced by heavy outlays, as in shoring up its Chatham Square Cemetery. Fortunately, the Gentiles in the city responded generously in this instance. The services to fellow Jewish communities rendered by Shearith Israel were at times true also of other American congregations in relation to one another: money was contributed to help others build; Charleston's Beth Elohim was aided when razed by fire in 1838; Palestine messengers and itinerants (schnorrers!) were received and dispatched. Shearith Israel was in touch with other American Jewish communities. This New York congregation was represented in cornerstone layings and dedications in other cities; it scouted around for hazzanim, shohatim, and teachers for others and for itself; it served as trustee for a Charleston cemetery, and when New Orleans's newly organized synagogue wrote to them, the New Yorkers sent the special Ashkenazic prayer books needed in the Louisiana port. Shear-

ith Israel stored Scrolls for defunct communities and lent them out when new conventicles arose. Thus, when the pioneer Savannah community folded, for the time being, its Sefer Torah was sent to New York, and when the Newport community was temporarily reconstituted in 1860, the Savannah Scroll was lent to it. In 1818, all the Scrolls had been taken out of the Newport ark and shipped to New York for safekeeping; the local community had faded away. In 1835, after selling their Mill Street building, the New Yorkers sent Cincinnati five chandeliers for its new sanctuary, the first synagogue to be erected in the transallegheeny country. The chandeliers, some of which had been used as early as 1764, were shipped by sea to New Orleans and then up the Mississippi and the Ohio to the Queen City of the West.¹¹

American Jewry knew affectively that it was one community, though it never rushed to give the conviction permanent expression. Shearith Israel was the mother synagogue by virtue of age, wealth, and the willingness, at times, to assume responsibility, to work with others. This fact, that all Jews in the United States were one community, was certainly strengthened in 1782, when the Jews, exiled from their homes by the War, gathered together in Philadelphia and established The Hope of Israel, Mikveh Israel, a congregation that included members from almost every major town in the country. Seven years after American Jewry built this Philadelphia synagogue, George Washington was inaugurated in New York City. The different American religious denominations, now in the process of organizing themselves nationally, hastened to congratulate him, each as a united body. One letter from a nationally organized church was welcomed, for it was bruited about that the president's secretariat would rather deal with large organized groups than with individual churches or congregations. The Jews, too, were expected to take note of the accession to power of the country's first President. However, there was a problem; the Jews had no national organization. Diaspora Jewry had no hierarchial tradition; every Jewish institution was fiercely jealous of its autonomy. Yet it was necessary that the Jews get together, somehow or other, for a conjoint effort and send a letter. After all, they as much as any other religious group in the country had become political beneficiaries of the newly adopted Constitution.

It was not easily accomplished. Shearith Israel was expected to take the initiative; New York was the capital; George Washington was resident there. For reasons that are by no means clear, the New Yorkers dragged their feet, although they were pushed by other Jewish communities. It was more than a year after the inauguration before Shearith Israel began to bestir itself. In the meantime, Savannah, impatient, had written to the president; the head of the Georgia congregation was certainly eager to put his best foot forward, since he had once been damned as a Tory,

although his Whig credentials were impeccable. When Newport was first asked to join with the other communities in a letter to Washington, it demurred because the state, Rhode Island, which had just joined the Union, had not yet written to the president. Moses Seixas, the head of the tiny congregation, believed that his first loyalty was to the secular state, but when Washington visited the city, Seixas and the congregants reversed their stand. They waited on Washington on August 17, 1790, and presented a letter felicitating him. During the War, Seixas and a few of his Jewish friends had secretly protested their loyalties to the king. Obviously, at the time, these men had tried to salvage what they could of their holdings during the British occupation. By the fall of 1790, after the capital had shifted to Philadelphia, the New Yorkers offered no objection when Manuel Josephson, the head of Mikveh Israel, took over. Relatively hurriedly he secured permission from New York, Philadelphia, Richmond, and Charleston to represent them, and on December 13, 1790, called on Washington and read to him a conjoint message from those four communities. The President answered in a courteous letter addressed to all four. It is by no means improbable, however, that individual copies were dispatched to the four participating synagogues. To a degree, at least, the Jews in their various addresses to the President represented themselves as part of a national Jewish community. American Jewry, they said, had been raised from a state of political degradation and had been enfranchised by the federal Constitution. There is no question that Washington thought of American Jews as a national body, even though there was no formal organization embracing all of them.¹²

THE DAMASCUS AFFAIR AND THE BEGINNINGS
OF A NATIONAL AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY

Some thirty years later, the visionary Moses E. Levy and his handful of associates set out to influence and unite American Jewry. Theirs was a Grand Design. Nothing, apparently, of lasting value emerged from this incident, yet their proposal is notable in American history as the first attempt to organize American Jewry as a whole behind an institution designed to relieve disenfranchised European Jewry and to create a cultural and spiritual center for American Jews. With many modifications, Levy's 1821 plan reappeared twenty years later in Isaac Leeser's proposal for "establishing a religious union among the Israelites of America." The attempt was made again in 1849 and in the 1850's by Isaac Mayer Wise, but it was not finally successful till 1873, when the Union of American Hebrew Congregations was created with the primary purpose of supporting a national college: the Hebrew Union College, which opened its doors in 1875 and is today the oldest surviving Jewish theological school

in the western hemisphere. In 1832, the need to remedy the abuses in the offerings for Palestine brought the Hevrah Terumat Ha-Kodesh into existence. From the aspect of national organization, the Hevrah is the first hesitant step toward a formal unification of the American Jewish communities. There were people who were convinced that an intercity union was necessary at times to reach a philanthropic goal.¹³

THE DAMASCUS AFFAIR

It was not until 1840, fifty years after Manuel Josephson's representation on behalf of four of the country's six communities, that the national consciousness of the Jews in this country was again aroused. Their feeling of oneness, their sense of kinship, was fired by the accusations, both in Damascus and on the isle of Rhodes, that Jews were murdering Christians and using their blood to make unleavened bread for Passover. This libel had already cost the lives of many Jews in previous centuries. Jews here and in most countries of Europe and Asia were particularly shocked by the charge that their coreligionists in Damascus had murdered Father Tomaso, a Franciscan monk, and his companion. Ritual murder allegations under various guises had been made against Jews in pre-Christian times and later against the early Christians by their enemies. Such anti-Jewish libels were common in the Middle Ages and have continued in Europe and even here in the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. James Gordon Bennett, editor of the *Herald*, rehashed these charges in 1850, though, on a previous occasion he had rejected them summarily. His one goal was to sell newspapers; nothing else mattered. The monks who, it seemed, spread the rumor of ritual murder after the disappearance of Father Tomaso were probably hoping to establish a shrine in his memory and thus attract pious pilgrims. Denunciation of the Jews was also supported by the French consul in the city, a man of influence. Dozens of Jews—even children—were arrested, and the tortures inflicted on the men were almost unbelievable; at least one of them died from the torments to which he was subjected.

Rest martyr, rest! neath the Syrian sod
Whose spirit ne'er bow'd but to truth and thy God.¹⁴

Fortunately, the surviving prisoners were saved through fortuitous circumstances. Though European Jewries had made vigorous protests, led by Moses Montefiore and the Rothschilds in England and by Adolphe Crémieux in France, it was politics, not Jewish cries of outrage, that saved the accused in Damascus and Rhodes. In this instance, liberal France was not on the side of the angels. The French had labored for centuries to increase their influence in the Levant. In more recent days, this effort was

part of an ongoing struggle to hinder the rise of the English. The two empires had been rivals ever since the late seventeenth century; Waterloo marked a precipitous decline, but the hostility continued. England, moving to control the road to India via Suez, supported the Turkish state, the nominal overlord of Egypt; the French supported Mehemet Ali, the actual ruler of Egypt and Syria. The authorities in Paris tolerated, if they did not encourage, the ritual murder charge, hoping thereby to strengthen their political influence in the Eastern Mediterranean. When England and most European states raised their voices in defense of the Jews, denouncing torture and medieval superstitions, they were motivated by more than humanitarian impulses; they were wary of French aggrandizement; Napoleon was a spectre that continued to haunt them.

The English took the lead in working to secure the release of the Jews in Damascus. In part they were impelled by their traditional Protestant Restorationism. The Jews, God's people, were yet to return to Palestine (then under control of the Egyptian-Syrian ruler). This was something that God had promised! Indeed, in 1841, the British representative in Damascus, Charles Henry Churchill, worked actively for the reestablishment of a Jewish state in the ancient homeland. A year earlier, a writer in Cincinnati's *Western Messenger* had described in detail the tortures inflicted on the Damascus Jews and then suggested that England expel the Egyptians from Palestine and reestablish an independent Jewish state. England's lifeline to India would thus be secure; the southward drive of the Russians would be halted; Jews, numerically strong, would find no difficulty in defending their ancient homeland. Palestine belonged to them; they were resolved to rebuild it. With the Jews in power, the New East would blossom and bloom again. Noah was not the only American who dreamed of the reconquest and the rebirth of the Land of Israel. In March, within weeks after the arrest of the Damascus accused, Constantinople's Jews appealed to the Rothschilds to do something. It took some time for the English Foreign Office to get into gear, but by June, it was intervening in Constantinople and Alexandria. In April, English Jewry began to push vigorously; in July, there was a public protest meeting in London at Mansion House, and by August, Montefiore and Crémieux (without the blessing of the French) had arrived in Alexandria to meet with Mehemet Ali. Behind Montefiore stood the English government and a number of European countries. The Egyptian ruler had little choice but to order his deputy in Damascus to release the prisoners. This was in late August; in September, they were freed. The following month Syria was restored to Turkey, and in November the sultan issued a decree exculpating the Jews of Damascus and Rhodes.¹⁵

AMERICAN INTERVENTION

As early as July, at the time of the London outcry against the Damascus and Rhodes outrages, the American minister to the Court of St. James, Alexander Stevenson, had forwarded documents in the Damascus affair to John Forsyth, Van Buren's Secretary of State. Washington had been alerted to the arrest and torture of the Jews as early as March by the American consul, a Judeophobe of Macedonian origin, who was convinced that the Jews really did practice ritual murder. The State Department ignored his charges, but was ready to take action in defense of the Jews when it heard from Stevenson. Forsyth moved in August. He knew of the rivalry between England and France and, with Stevenson, opted to side with the British. The Americans were still embroiled in spoliation claims against the French, who had seized their ships in the 1790's. On August 14th, Forsyth wrote to John Glidden, the consul at Alexandria, informing him that President Van Buren and American citizens were horrified at the unfounded accusations against the hapless Jews: Employ your good offices on behalf of a persecuted people; justice requires it; work with the governments of Europe; do what you can. Indeed Glidden had already joined European consuls in a protest even before the arrival of Forsyth's strong note. A similar letter was dispatched to David Porter, the minister to the Sublime Porte (Rhodes was Turkish, not Egyptian): Tell the Sultan that the United States is a land which acknowledges no distinctions between Moslems, Jews, and Christians; do something; humanity demands it. Forsyth's letters, it happens, arrived too late in Alexandria and in Constantinople to be of any use; the prisoners were already being released.

The Secretary of State had been moved to take action by the American newspapers which, with few exceptions, rose to the defense of the Jews. The United States government was not prompted by American Jewry to intervene in this affair. When Forsyth wrote to Glidden and Porter, he was undoubtedly influenced strongly by Stevenson in London. Both men were Jacksonians, Democrats. Humanitarianism, too, impelled them. Beyond this, however, intervention was a wise political move; the Americans and their clergy were anti-Moslem; Van Buren and his followers were on the eve of a national election which was to determine whether the Democrats would remain in power or have to make way for the Whigs. Harrison, the rival candidate, was popular. Every ballot counted; the few thousand Jewish votes could not be ignored. Forsyth's instructions to Glidden and Porter mark the first time that the United States government intervened on behalf of Jews, non-citizens, in a foreign land, in an issue where human rights were at stake. Whatever the diverse motivations, sympathy for Jews was certainly reflected in the efforts of Van Buren and Forsyth to aid the wretched prisoners at Damascus and Rhodes.¹⁶

THE REACTION OF AMERICAN JEWRY TO THE DAMASCUS AFFAIR

It was not until August that American Jews as a body organized themselves locally to protest the Damascus persecution. It was then rather late (though they did not realize that) to influence the course of events in the Near East. The prisoners were about to go free but the American mass meetings on behalf of the Damascene Jews did have a perceptible impact on American Jewry. Therein lies the cisatlantic significance of this tragedy. Between August 17 and September 21, 1840, protest meetings were held in Richmond, New York, Philadelphia, Charleston, Savannah, Cincinnati, and Boston. Not all of these were sponsored by Jews. There were two meetings in Charleston; one for the Jews and one for the general public. Like the latter, the Savannah assembly chaired by the mayor, was a general, not a Jewish demonstration. The Boston meeting was solely for Christians; Boston as yet had no organized Jewish community. It is strange that Baltimore Jews did not meet to raise their voices. The obvious reason here is that the elite families, the Cohens and the Ettings, would not join together with the more recent German immigrants. It may well be, too, that these two clans of notables looked upon themselves as exurban Philadelphians.

The first group to meet were the Virginians, at Richmond in mid-August. Why did they, why did *all* American Jews wait so long? In late July, a New York Jew had published a letter in a local newspaper expressing his surprise that his coreligionists had as yet taken no action to help the Damascus captives; Jews and enlightened Christians, he wrote, were hoping that something would be done here: Jews had known for weeks, if not for months, of the arrest and torture of fellow Jews in Syria. The British Board of Deputies had written to the Americans soliciting their aid and cooperation. Apparently, the so-called leaders in each American town hesitated to move. Jews then, as today, shrank from high visibility; they were apprehensive. Leeser preached on this cause célèbre, on July 24, more than a month before the Philadelphians met in protest. A remarkable talk! He discussed the tragedy in depth, but did not mention the word "Damascus." His interpretation of the event was simple and unequivocal: Jews were being punished for the sins of their fathers and their own transgressions—neglect of the Sabbath, rejection of circumcision and the dietary laws, marriages to Gentiles. Jews were reforming, tampering with, their worship service! If we want God to protect us, we have to observe his Law. Assimilation is a "festering cancer." Not once did Leeser ask the Jews to rise in protest. This man was emphatically no coward, but apparently the service was no place to make such a proposal; his board would have resented it; the synagogue was concerned with "religion."¹⁷

It was not until the middle of August that Shearith Israel's trustees began to think of a public meeting. Richmond, however, took the initia-

tive. Its congregational leaders may have known that President Van Buren and his Secretary of State, Forsyth, had already taken action. After having organized a committee of correspondence, the Jewish Virginians wrote to other congregations, apparently asking for or suggesting concerted action. Other Jewish communities established similar committees, exchanged copies of their proceedings, and urged the newspapers to take note. The Boston meeting was unique. It was called by Christian Jews, conversionists, Jews for Jesus. The meeting was a proselytizing tactic oriented particularly toward the Central European immigrants who were now coming to this country in increasing numbers. Resolutions were passed in defense of the persecuted; immigrants were urged to seek the safety of America's shores. Let them turn to Jesus lest they be eternally damned! This was the magic year 1840. Christ's return was imminent. William Miller, a founder of the new Adventist movement, had assured the Christian world that it was only a few years before the Son of God would reappear in all his glory.¹⁸

When Jews and Christians assembled in protest, they passed resolutions which were dispatched to Washington, to the President and the Department of State. What did they want and what did they say? They denied that Jews ever practiced ritual murder; they asked for a fair trial for the prisoners; they expressed their sympathy for the sufferers, resolved to aid them, and deplored all persecutions for the sake of conscience. They thanked the American authorities, American representatives abroad, and European liberals, and urged them to work with the diplomatic corps of enlightened states to bring freedom to the imprisoned. Let the Jews of Damascus come to America, this free and happy land, said the Philadelphians and the Charlestonians. It was patent in the proceedings of these assemblies that all present, Jews and Protestants and Catholics, were vigorously opposed to all manifestations of bigotry. Protestant and Catholic clergymen were one in denouncing intolerance. Jacob C. Levy, of Charleston, warned his audience that what affected Hebrews in Moslem lands could be equally fatal to Christians in a later decade. How true this was: the Moslems in Damascus ultimately destroyed the church of the very Christians who had originally raised the cry of ritual murder. The resolutions passed made it manifest that American rights and privileges were this country's most precious export. The Damascene Jews and all human beings were entitled to the civil and religious privileges guaranteed by our constitution. We were the "vindicators of the principles of universal toleration." Greece, Poland, Ireland, and Texas had a right to be free! So had the Jews! In 1789, after the ratification of the federal Constitution, the Richmond Jews met and proposed this toast: "May the Israelites throughout the world enjoy the same religious rights and political advantages as their American brethren."¹⁹

THE ULTIMATE MOTIVATIONS FOR PROTEST

Christians and Jews made common cause as they reached out to one another from the Hudson to the Ohio. Christian liberals were willing to help Jews, fellow human beings in distress. When the protest meeting was held in Philadelphia, one of the speakers, the Rev. Mr. Ducachet, exulted that for the "first time for centuries a Christian minister was addressing a religious assembly in a Jewish synagog, a spectacle at once sublime and pleasing to humanity." Men like Ducachet were opposed to bigotry. With Jews, they believed in American political ideals; freedom was the natural right of every man and woman. When Leeser spoke at Mikveh Israel on July 24, he was cautious in expressing himself; he dared not violate the unwritten congregational prohibition against preaching on a mundane topic. A month later, on August 27, when he made the main address at the Philadelphia protest assembly, he spoke with more authority. He asked the Jews and Christians, too, of his city and other American towns to help the oppressed abroad secure complete and full political equality: the Greeks are free, they who have given us art and the tragic poets; we Jews have given the world the Ten Commandments and the Sacred Scriptures. We Jews here must unite with all Jews, wherever they are; we are all kin. Like Leeser, the rank and file of Jewry identified with the Jews of Damascus, with Jews in all lands; this was the ultimate motivation that spurred them to action. Initially, they had been pushed to do something by England's representative body, the Board of Deputies of British Jews. American Jews still looked to their English coreligionists for guidance. The charge of ritual murder frightened the Jews in this country; they feared similar accusations might be made against them here and impair the status in which they gloried.

In the fall, when it was evident that the Damascus Jews were free and exculpated, Jews here were jubilant. They realized that throughout this ordeal, which had been prolonged for three months, the American people, its churches and press, had been most sympathetic. All this gave Jews a sense of well-being; their feeling of self-respect was heightened; they believed that they had made their presence felt. Because of the concern of the United States government and its citizens for the prisoners abroad and their coreligionists here, Jews were convinced that their status in America had been enhanced. What was equally gratifying, World Jewry—and American Jewry with it—had been accorded recognition by the World Powers, which had intervened to rectify a grave injustice. Many, if not most, Jews probably—and mistakenly—believed that the mass meetings staged by Jews and their Gentile allies had been effective.

This, however, was certain: Jews here were developing a feeling of political power, and in writing to Van Buren in this crucial election year, one of the Jewish communities did not hesitate to tell him that it was

working “in conjunction with our brethren of other cities.” That was the kind of subtle message that Van Buren would understand. It was immaterial that American Jews had made little, if any, contribution to the resolution of the Damascus affair; what was sufficient was their belief that they had rallied successfully to the defense of fellow Jews. This conviction furthered their self-esteem and their identification with World Jewry. The belief tended to strengthen the sense of community of all American Jews. Important, too, is the fact that American Jewry now set out to be the subjects, not the objects, of history. Now, in 1840, for the first time in American Jewish life, the Jews here organized themselves politically to help a Diaspora Jewry in distress. One of the by-products of this endeavor was the strengthening of the already existent affective national Jewish community. Their efforts are laudable when one bears in mind, that in number, American Jews did not then exceed 15,000.²⁰

WHAT THE DAMASCUS AFFAIR DID FOR JEWRY IN THE UNITED STATES

Jews react to crises. The “Hep Hep” German mob attacks in 1819 encouraged Noah to think of the United States as an asylum for the Jews of Europe. The Damascus accusations aroused American Jewry in 1840. Through committees of correspondence, close relations were established among the synagog-communities of the country. Jews in the United States now began to think of themselves in nationwide terms, as a national American Jewish body. They began to conceive of themselves as a specific Jewish group within the geographic limits of the United States. Normally, the religious loyalties of Jews are to a universal body, World Jewry, *Kelal Yisrael*. This universal loyalty has never diminished; recognition and awareness of Jewry in the United States as a distinct body was a concomitant of the Damascus protests. Obviously in union there was strength; the Jews had only to look at the Protestant and Catholic hierarchies to realize how true this was. But this incipient development must not be overemphasized. The basic corporate unit in Jewish life was the synagogue; it commanded devotion, though the Jew’s prime loyalty was to the Body of Israel, Universal Jewry. Traditionally, Diaspora Jews have not been interested in a formal structured Jewish organization established within the confines of a limited geographical area. When such were created, the motivation was usually one of administrative convenience; frequently, they have been imposed on Jewry by autocratic governmental authorities.

In the past, the individual Jew has most often thought of himself as an integral part of World Israel. *Kelal Yisrael* is a consensus; Jews share common beliefs, traditions, hopes. They are bound together for mutual help in the struggle for survival; they belong to one another. Thus, during the days of the Damascus disaster, Noah emphasized world Jewish

unity, not American Jewish unity, which of course was absorbed and included in the concept that all Jews are one. When American Jews approached their government and asked it to intervene, they constituted only a series of separate synagogues, each of which deemed itself a distinct community. Congregationalism is the hallmark of Judaism. Each synagogue is autonomous. At the time of the Damascus affair, Rebecca Gratz mentioned—but did not deplore!—the fact that Jewry had no “representative power.” Jews are citizens of the country in which they live and can act only through the constituted governmental authorities. The final solution of all problems is trust in God: thus, Rebecca Gratz. Her pious rabbi, Isaac Leiser, also trusted in God, but he believed that God helped those who helped themselves. That is why he attempted to create a formal national organization for all American Jews exactly ten months after Philadelphia’s Jewry had met in solemn protest. The attempt was premature and it failed. But the Damascus crisis did intensify Jewish loyalty. In Philadelphia, it put down all petty strife, wrote Rebecca. The *Western Messenger*, a non-Jewish Cincinnati periodical, wrote that the sufferings of the Syrian Jews “would bind together as one man the scattered tribes of Israel.” That was true.

In 1840, because they were learning to work together, some Jews were conscious that they were part, not only of a local and a World Jewry, but of an American Jewry, one that had been reinforced and strengthened by its sympathy for the Jews of Damascus. Addressing the congregations of the country, Jewish Virginians expressed their willingness to unite in a common union and to dispatch delegates, if there was to be a national congregational convention. Writing to President Van Buren, the New Yorkers told him that they were expressing unanimous opinions shared by all Israelites in this country. By working together in a crisis, the Damascus brutalities had taught Jewry here to think of itself as an American national unit, though a generation would pass before some congregations came together in a formal national organization in 1859. United States Jewry has to date never created a structured instrument that would embrace all.²¹

THE LOCAL JEWISH COMMUNITY, 1775-1840

Who is a Jew? What is a local community? It is worth repeating: an international Jewish community existed by consensus; there were only intimations of a national American Jewish community because of the accident of geography and the reality of a common United States government. Was there a local American Jewish community? How define it? Since it was peopled by Jews, it would not be amiss to ask: who was an American Jew? A non-canonical definition is that a Jew was any man or

woman who identified himself or herself as a Jew—but felt free to ignore any, if not most, traditional Jewish practices. There was no compulsion to remain Jewish in this country, yet most Jews did not defect; they enjoyed being Jewish; they could not conceive of being anything else. A Jew was a member of a folk and a religion, for Judaism and Jewry were, and are, one.

The degree of religious observance, or nonobservance, varied with individuals. Behaviorally, Jews tended to be more American than Jewish. Since there were anywhere from 10,000 to 15,000 Jews in the United States in 1840, our definition of a Jew would imply that there were as many Judaisms as there were cognitive and affective individuals. That is true. In this early American generation, Jewry ran the gamut from a Samuel Hermann to a Rebecca Samuel. The wealthy Hermann, of New Orleans, gave 1,000 gulden to his German hometown community of Roedelheim; he gave nothing to the struggling Jewish community on the Mississippi delta. The meticulously Orthodox Rebecca Samuel, of Petersburg, Virginia, observed every jot and tittle of the Law. Yet, despite the almost infinite number of variations, there were but two basic types of Jews in the American community: the newly arrived immigrant and the acculturated citizen. The newcomers, with one foot in Europe, still looked eastward. They held onto their cultural baggage; it promised them security. They were encouraged to maintain their way of life, for many, if not most, of America's Jews had been born abroad. As late as 1840, some 40 percent of Shearith Israel's presidents were not native Americans; the percentage of foreign-born presidents was probably higher in Mikveh Israel. Rodeph Shalom, the Ashkenazic congregation in Philadelphia, was an immigrant bastion. The majority of the newcomers strove desperately to transplant their European culture; their Old World roots were strong despite the fact that they were Americans in a state of becoming.²²

The acculturated Jews were themselves an amalgam of two groups, the natives and the old-time immigrants. They were middle-class businessmen; some were affluent; practically all were literate. A few Jews—these were the professionals—were well educated; some were classicists and nursed literary ambitions. Most, if not all, of the old-timers had Christian friends and slavishly adhered to the American cultural pattern; they joined the socially-oriented militia and ran with their fire company. Politically, they were all committed to the republican style of government, but when they went to the polls, they were not necessarily Jeffersonians or Jacksonians. A substantial number were always on the right. Very few seem to have been interested in the humanitarian reforms of the day; these smacked too much of Protestantism. Judaism? Practically all respected the faith of their ancestors. Observant? That was something different.

What did all American Jews, the old settlers and the newcomers, have in common? What consensus, what sentiment, what beliefs held them together, foreigner and native, the Jew with his face toward Europe and the Jew with his back to the Old World? Negatively, Jews rejected Christianity straightway. Many, coming from lands of oppression, were wary of Christians, too. The Jewish sense of kinship was very strong. The intimate, gregarious emotion that possessed them was enheartening. If the cement that bonded them was Jewish ethnicity, the locus where they played their role as Jews was the synagog. The building, its worship services, its constitution and bylaws were all part of a core around which they agglomerated. It was an association that was cherished because, on the whole, it was democratic, voluntary, influenced by an atmosphere of freedom. Here, in the United States, there was no compulsion from the government, the secular authorities. Theirs was thus a pervasive community. In principle at least, they recognized the right of every Jew to make demands on a fellow Jew. There was strong mutual concern. In a formal sense, nearly all were traditional in their religious loyalties; only a handful were truly observant, but the nostalgia for religious practices was never absent. Need for Jewish education was a basic principle which all were eager to accept. They surrendered to the mystique of Hebrew; it was held imperative that every Jew be taught to read the Sacred Tongue. They knew that they belonged to a fellowship which would nourish and protect them; this was always a comforting thought. Within this group, every man, woman, and child had a Jewish niche; to be sure, not all occupied the same one.

American Jews of the postrevolutionary and early republican period hailed from over a dozen different lands. In 1782, several Philadelphia Jews, squabbling, hurled charges at one another. Involved were a Lithuanian, a Pole, a German, and a Frenchman. The Frenchman was indignant that the Pole spoke two languages, Yiddish and Polish, which were foreign to him; by the same token, the Pole would never have understood the French and the Spanish-Portuguese so familiar to the native of Bordeaux. Despite their diverse backgrounds, they were learning to live together. Iberian, German, Hebrew, and Yiddish phrases were becoming part of a common American Jewish vocabulary. No matter how all-encompassing their embrace of Americanism, Jews, even marginal ones, never forgot that they belonged to one another. In itself, the consensus that prevailed among Jews eventuated in a sentimental, if not a physical, community. The community was unity; it was a concept and a reality; it was the sum of all agencies and activities, folkways and practices, beliefs and worship services, all religiously motivated. It included all who identified with the Jewish group, willingly or reluctantly. Jews did not join the fellowship; they were born into it; they identified completely one

with another. They quarreled and clawed one another, but never failed to succor one another. They presented a common front, because they were afraid to be “alone.” The community integrated the newcomers, giving both natives and immigrants a cohesion that made for stubborn loyalties. When second generation “aristocrats” refused to integrate themselves—and they sometimes did—they were automatically excised by the weight of numbers. They joined their peers in another town or they defected.²³

The Jews knew they were a “community” at all times; certainly the Gentiles among whom they lived never doubted this. Thus, wherever there were Jews, there was a preexistent community. It took on flesh as soon as there were ten adult males for a religious quorum. What kind of community did American Jews inherit in 1775? The Jews had lived quite comfortably without formal recognition under the British in colonial America. Indeed, their synagog was not exempt from taxation. It is not without irony that Jews were compelled to serve as constables in eighteenth-century New York and as such collected taxes from Jews, too, for the support of Trinity Church and its ministry. From the time of the British conquest in 1664 to the signing of the final treaty of peace in 1783, the formal American Jewish community was completely embraced in one institution, the synagog, which provided all necessary services: worship, charity, and when necessary, Jewish education. Authority was resident in the president (*parnas*) and the junta or board. The salaried staff included a reader (*hazzan*), the *shohet* (ritual slaughterer), and the beadle (*sham-mash*). No officiating rabbi was elected in any town until well into the nineteenth century. On the whole, the synagog was accepted benignly and tolerantly by the British authorities.

Up into the second half of the nineteenth century the synagog continued to remain the community’s prime institution. American Jewry was to grow from the bottom up. Indeed there was to be no national federation of local societies until the 1840’s. Shearith Israel, a generation before the rise of a rival congregation, attempted to force all Jews in town to affiliate. The effort failed; non-affiliated Jews became increasingly numerous, but they were still part of the community. No Jew was denied the right to attend a synagog and participate in the service. Jewry in post-1775 days was essentially the same as its colonial predecessor. Congregations, now chartered, began to dot the country; constitutions and bylaws were adopted; governing boards were uniform in that they all included a president, a secretary, and a treasurer; committees began to proliferate, each with a specific jurisdiction.

New and important in the early national period was the appearance of social-welfare confraternities. Though there may have been a burial society in New York in the mid-eighteenth century, its existence has not yet been definitively documented. These *hevrot* began to rise in large

numbers as they set out to provide education for children and care for the sick, the dead, and the orphan. Even the women established an association to make provision for respectable families in reduced circumstances. The synagogue remained the umbrella institution, sheltering all others, but its authority was diminished, if only slightly at first, by the appearance of the welfare associations. Some of these new societies were semi-autonomous; others, independent, raised their sights, reaching out for all Jews in town.

Because the voluntary independent church was common, if not typical, in this country, the unitary-synagog community vanished the minute a second congregation was founded. Multiple Jewish communities now appeared in the larger towns; no city-wide congregational federation was established during this period, though there was a faint beginning in the shortlived pro-Palestine Society for the Offerings of the Sanctuary. At first glance, the local Jewish welfare societies that now appeared contributed to the atomization of the Jewish community, to centrifugality. They were, one might think, rivals of the synagogue. Actually they helped build communities and furthered Jewish loyalties. They took up the slack, for they often enlisted unaffiliated Jews. They appealed to the communality; they were not proponents of what could be a divisive religious philosophy; *hevrot* unified by uniting members on the basis of prospective benefits. It is very significant that the 1822 welfare association established by Philadelphians called itself the United Hebrew Beneficent Society; it united, for it set out to embrace all. Autonomy, disparateness, was to characterize the American Jewish community. Even then, no local Jewish community was as well organized as the secular city administration.²⁴

INTRA-JEWISH HOSTILITIES

Problems Confronting the Developing Local Community

The developing local Jewish community was wracked by intramural problems. A solid front was usually presented when Jews in a distant land were threatened. At home, the Children of Israel allowed themselves the luxury of discord and contention. One is almost tempted to say with the prophet (Micah 7:7): "A man's enemies are the men of his own house." Some ethnic Spanish and Portuguese Jews tried in marriage and in burial to exclude non-Iberians. For at least two generations, the Gomez clan managed to escape intramarriage with other Jews. Shearith Israel made a determined and successful effort to remain a traditional Sephardic synagogue. The 1682 Chatham Square Cemetery in New York may have been intended originally as a resting place for Spanish-Portuguese Jews only. In the early 1780's, the Charleston Da Costas set aside a burial plot for Iberians alone. They looked upon themselves as aristocrats. In a later generation, the cemetery was used as a potter's field for impoverished Polish

and Russian Jews. Some of the beautiful tombstones were carried off, probably to be used as hearthstones in neighboring cabins. In the early nineteenth century, the Touro brothers provided an ample endowment for the Newport synagog and cemetery, though there were at that time no Jews left in the town. They looked forward to the rebirth of the community and in this hope were not disappointed. The proud Cohens and Ettings, of Baltimore, members of Philadelphia's Sephardic Mikveh Israel, had their own cemeteries in their Maryland hometown. Even in death, they would not breach the wall between themselves and the newcomers, despite the fact that in actual ethnic provenance these Baltimore "Sephardim" and the immigrants were all Germans.²⁵

It was traditional in American Jewry for immigrants of one decade to look with disdain upon those of the next decade. A Virginia spinster, an aristocrat, laughed at the advances of a German newcomer; Seixas was amused by the accent of the Germans in his synagog and was mildly contemptuous of these recent arrivals from Central Europe. Because American amenities were foreign to some of these immigrants, Seixas was wont to think of them as a motley crew, a gang. Jewish newcomers brought with them ethnic characteristics as well as religious customs and traditions which they were loath to surrender. These differences made for divisiveness and hostility. The Iberians, the Central Europeans, and the East Europeans each brought their own Jewish and secular cultures with them; these dissonances were not easily harmonized. Ultimately, when the newcomers were reinforced by countrymen from the old homeland or their native province, they succeeded in establishing conventicles where they could revel in their own conventions and practices. In so doing, the Jews were tacitly encouraged by American governmental permissiveness and the prevalent Protestant sectarianism. There were at least six national Baptist denominations among the whites and three among the blacks. Jews were slow to establish separate, independent congregations. The newer immigrants first attempted to induce the congregations with which they had affiliated to tolerate them as a separate confraternity within the parent organization; only when that request was rejected did they secede.²⁶

Secession was the last resort; establishing a new congregation was an expense not easily borne by immigrants struggling to gain an economic foothold. When immigrants began to arrive in large numbers, congregations began to proliferate, albeit slowly. Centrifugality was the order of the day. There were breakaways in Charleston and in Philadelphia in the late eighteenth century, but they were not to be permanent. By 1802, however, with the creation of Philadelphia's Hebrew German Society, Rodeph Shalom, the urban multi-community system was inaugurated in this country. By the 1820's, the Ashkenazic (non-Sephardic) newcomers

began to establish small congregations in the major cities, from New York westward to St. Louis. In towns where there was an established Sephardic synagog, various pretexts were offered for secession; the ultimate reasons were social, ethnic, and liturgical; the newly arrived immigrants wanted to be by themselves. Seventy-five years later, the fully acculturated grandchildren of these selfsame German newcomers were shocked and apprehensive when the East European Orthodox émigrés, flocking to this land of liberty, insisted on their right to the kind of services to which they were accustomed. In the early period, local congregations kept their distance, one from the other; in a way, they were rivals. In 1837, Sephardic Shearith Israel politely but firmly refused to allow Ashkenazic Anshe Chesed to use its rooms for services, but even in the confines of a synagog, liturgical variations and congregational elections provided ample opportunities for intramural quarrels and recriminations. That was a generation when Christian religionists, too, were at each others' throats; Catholics were burnt out; Mormons were lynched.²⁷

The gingerliness, if not suspicion, with which Jews of the same community often viewed one another merits further study. What really separated Jews and hindered the development of a single overall local community? Ritual and ethnic differences certainly played their part. Yet one wonders how definitive they were in separating Jews. By 1840, American Jews were divided into two groups; those affiliated with Sephardic congregations or sympathetic to the Sephardic religiocultural approach and the Ashkenazim, the English, Dutch, and Central Europeans, recently arrived for the most part. The original core of most Sephardic congregations was of course Iberian; as late as 1820, some of these "Portuguese," as they called themselves, made determined efforts to preserve their ethnic integrity. A century earlier, in the 1720's, the non-Iberians were already in the numerical ascendancy in New York's Shearith Israel. In their synagog, which stretched from New York to Savannah, these devotees of the Spanish-Portuguese ritual maintained that they were a superior group. They received replenishments constantly from non-Iberian immigrants who had come up in the world and were eager to be associated with Jews of status. Uriah Hendricks, a Yiddish-writing Dutch merchant, even married into the Gomez clan; he was the first *Tedesco* to breach those aristocratic walls. Jacob I. Cohen, a Bavarian who had begun life here as a trader with Indians and as a peddler, was the head of the Richmond-Baltimore Cohen clan. His nephew was a cultured magnate who entertained the Gentile elite of Baltimore and dressed his servants in livery. Hendricks and Jacob I. Cohen were to serve as presidents of a Spanish-Portuguese synagog. Even the cultured elite who seceded to form the Reformed Society of Israelites could boast of very few Iberian blue bloods; only six of the forty-four protestants were of Iberian descent.²⁸

Thus, it is quite clear that, by 1840, there were two distinctly separate Jewish groups in the five major American Jewish towns: one comprised natives and old-time acculturated Europeans, "Sephardim," and the other comprised newcomers who were establishing congregations of their own. They were separated, barely tangential, not because of ritual or even assumed Iberian provenance, but because of sociocultural differences. This bias went to extremes with the Mordecai children, who taught in their father's school. It would seem that they were not happy with any Jewish youngsters in the school, which was patronized almost exclusively by Gentiles. This was (anti-Jewish?) snobbishness with a vengeance. The wealthy, established New Orleans Jews were an interesting lot. They identified with the Sephardic elite in the congregations of the North; for the most part, they avoided the New Orleans newcomers who established a congregation in 1828; they refused to affiliate with them. The Etting and Cohen congeries had very little to do with the European immigrants who began to settle in Baltimore in relatively large numbers. These affluent native Americans were members of Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia, though it is by no means improbable that, on occasion, they conducted Sephardic services in the privacy of their homes. They were "good" Jews, certainly not escapists, but, like their New Orleans contemporaries, they refused to join with the newcomers to establish a synagogue and thus create a united community. Indeed, the elite seemed to ignore the very existence of the new arrivals as if they were non-persons.²⁹

Why did the established Baltimore Jewish families of wealth and position give the incoming émigrés a wide berth? They ignored them for the same reason they would have ignored an untutored Gentile and for no other reason. Who can question that a Solomon Etting, president of the First Branch of the City Council, had more in common culturally and socially with the Catholic Charles Carroll of Carrollton than with Immanuel Gershom Feist or Jonas Friedenwald? It was their cultural, their "American" background that moved the Ettings and Cohens to treat with restrained courtesy even the older Germans, who had arrived around the year 1800. Their prejudice was not ethnic—they were all Germans themselves, only one generation removed—it was cultural and social snobbery. It was hard for the Cohens and the Ettings to recall that their own parents had once been poor immigrants from Bavaria and Frankfort on the Main. Had they been willing to work in concert with these incoming rustics, they could easily have established a Sephardic congregation in Baltimore, even as such houses of worship were established in all the other large coastal towns from New York to Savannah.³⁰

Despite the fact that the Americanized settlers kept the less acculturated at arm's length, there are indicia that Jews in the same towns were beginning to surmount their differences. On occasion, congregations col-

laborated. This is all important if one is interested in the history of the development of the local community. When the Jewish Whig patriots, exiles, reorganized New York's congregation after the British evacuation, the local Tories, Jewish Loyalists, were incorporated into the new Shearith Israel, apparently without question. When a new congregation was founded in a town, it often borrowed Torah Scrolls and other ritual appurtenances from a sister congregation; a shohet might work for more than one synagog; the congregations joined together to bake matzos; generous gifts of money were made to help newcomers build a sanctuary of their own. When Jewish paupers died in the almshouse or in a public hospital, some congregations in New York did make the effort to share the expense of burial, and during the 1837 depression, there was talk at least among New York's congregations of jointly establishing a colony to help impoverished immigrants. At the time that the beloved Sephardic Hazzan Peixotto died, prayers for him were recited in Ashkenazic Bnai Jeshurun and its members joined the funeral cortege.

The need to support Palestine's Jews, perpetual suppliants, brought about the founding of a truly city-wide organization to raise funds for them. Mutual benefits impelled Jewish institutions to cooperate. Jews worked together in the multi-congregational communities, because Judaism demanded that they help one another; aiding other Jews or Jewish institutions was a mitzvah. In crises, as in the Damascus affair, the community acted as a unit. Even though Shearith Israel's board refused to join the Damascus protesters, several of its most prominent members unhesitatingly assumed leadership in this cause célèbre. This congregation had a number of far-visioned prominent laymen who were interested in furthering the Jewish community as a whole. But, let there be no doubt, cooperation was not integration, structurally or socially. American Jewry in 1840 was still a hodgepodge of at least a dozen foreign elements; it would be another century before an American Jewish ethnos would be forged. That would come only when the portals to America were closed to Jewish immigrants. Then and only then could a local community begin to take on form and substance.³¹

LEADERSHIP

Though there was no formal overall local community structure, there was always a concern for the Jewish faith, its people, and such institutions as the synagog, the school, the cemeteries, and the confraternities. These organizations, in turn, were dependent on leadership, whatever its quality and whatever its definition. It is difficult to determine whether any of the hazzanim, the ministers, were to be considered leaders. As hired hands, they enjoyed no high status. Yet they all had friends, admirers, and followers. As the keepers of the traditions and as interpreters of the Law—

God's Law—they enjoyed a degree of authority, even if they were not sacramental personalities. Seixas was loved and respected by many; Carvalho in Charleston had his followers among the *hoi polloi*; even young Leeser was widely admired for his knowledge, his piety, his moral courage. No lay leader dominated the scene during this period; none moved the people to collective action. To be sure, authority was built into the office of president of a congregation or of a confraternity. Men of wealth and generosity like Harmon Hendricks were powerful, but whether they led or dominated is moot. Noah was influential, because he was the editor of a general newspaper, frequently held public office, and was the country's favored Jewish speaker whether he was consecrating a synagogue or haranguing Gentiles. What leadership there was in New York City or elsewhere was lay. No one here could claim the prestige of a Moses Montefiore in England; he was the cherished, if uncrowned, King of the Jews. Ultimate control of institutions and of the community was resident in an oligarchy of affluent men. The goals of these men were the goals of all American Jews—the preservation of Judaism. In this effort, they were successful despite the gloomy predictions of an ever-despairing Leeser.

SOCIAL LIFE

Congregations and confraternities were guided by their elected heads; their work and influence were reinforced by the home, the family, wives and mothers. Our knowledge is limited largely to the homes and diverse domestic activities of the more affluent members of the middle class. The poor made no wills and had nothing to leave; they wrote few letters, for postage was expensive. Shopkeepers, even in the hinterland, made every effort to see that their children were well educated; girls were taught to sing and play the piano. Manners and morals were important; there was a constant effort toward upward cultural mobility. Individual Jews obtained social acceptance in Gentile circles. It was not uncommon for Jews who visited the new capital, Washington, to attend a levee at the White House and shake the hand of the President; on occasion, Jews were asked to dine there. Business relations and professional activities brought Jews and Christians together socially. Some of Rebecca Gratz's most intimate friends were Christian women; she wrote them constantly. Jews dressed in the latest fashion and meticulously observed the amenities. Young Raphael Moses, something of a dandy, wore gloves and swung a rattan cane. When his employer asked him to carry a turkey down fashionable Chestnut Street, Moses resigned rather than suffer the humiliation. Intra-Jewish social mobility, always a problem, was eased for second-generation acculturated Jews. The chasm that separated parents was bridged by their children. Intramarriages were, therefore, common if both parties belonged to the Sephardic synagogue, but Jews who remained in the Ashkena-

zic congregations were not so quickly accepted in fashionable social circles.³²

DIVERTISSEMENTS

One need not pity early nineteenth-century Jews because they were denied the privilege of the telephone, the radio, and television. Men and women of that early generation somehow managed to entertain themselves and to escape boredom. A visit to another town or city was an important occasion. In 1793, Mrs. Benjamin Nones returned from New York, glowing in her possession of an elegant gold watch and chain. In Philadelphia, "we only breathe . . . New York is the place to live." That trip to New York was both a vacation and an escape from Philadelphia's yellow fever. For the Jewish businessman and his wife, vacations were important. Going to the various hot and medicinal springs in Virginia served to make recuperation a pleasure. Zalma Rehine had no difficulty at one of the spas in maintaining a kosher diet; he lived on eggs, herring, potatoes, and milk; the cost was \$9 a week, a lot of money in those days. Friendships were cultivated through the written word. Letter writing was the usual method of communication between friends and relatives. In the first two decades of the 1800's, Rebecca Gratz would use her Sunday mornings for keeping in touch with close friends. The hours she sat down to write to Maria Fenno Hoffman were, she said, her happiest.

It was not easy for Joyce Myers, of New York, to cope with widowhood when her husband, the silversmith Myer Myers, died. She read a good book when she was able to borrow one; visited friends for tea, and was delighted when she was invited to weddings. Like Rebecca Gratz and Gershom Seixas, she, too, enjoyed writing to the family. Her daughter Becky, Mrs. Jacob Mordecai, lived in Richmond. In one of her gossip notes Joyce described in detail how a bride had been adorned: she had worn a satin dress, white kid shoes, and silk gloves, and around her neck a string of pearls. This was a generation that enjoyed the theatre. Certainly it turned out when Mordecai M. Noah's plays were performed at the Park and the New-York theatres. The synagogue was an associational, if not a social, center. Jews did attend services on the Pilgrimage Festivals and on the High Holy Days; many came in from the countryside. In New York's Anshe Chesed, in an improvised booth, the seventh day of the Sukkot festival was celebrated in a long night of study of Deuteronomy, Psalms, and some cabalistic passages. The liquor bill, paid by the synagogue, was substantial. In those days, Purim was one of the most favored holidays; parties were held in many homes. Judging from a description of a gathering in 1789 at Jacob I. Cohen's home, the injunction to make Purim "a day of feasting and gladness" (Esther, 9:17) was not disregarded. There was an ample supply of porter, ale, gin, and brandy to help celebrate the escape of

the Jews from Persia's wicked Haman. The most colorful celebrations were those held for cornerstone-layings and synagog dedications. A public parade marked the transfer of the Scrolls of the Law to the new sanctuary; a band, singing, Masonic ceremonies, and magniloquent speeches were also featured. What a great day it was for New York's Jewish community when the Crosby Street Synagogue was consecrated in 1834 and the House of God was illuminated for the first time by gas.³³

HOME AND FAMILY

Jews enjoyed their beautiful synagogues and delighted in their homes. Solomon Jacobs, of Richmond, in a letter to his wife who was visiting her parents in Philadelphia, kept her abreast of the news: the house is being papered; the lawn is beautiful; "I miss you more than I expected." He is not sure he will be willing to let her leave him again; he is lonely, but with the yellow fever in town, the "sickness," he hesitates to urge her to return. The "servants"—the slaves—miss her. But not all marriages were happy. In his will, David Nathans made provision for his wife, though she had not lived with him for some years and had not treated him like a husband. Manuel Noah, Mordecai's father, deserted his wife. There were men who failed to support their parents and grandparents in their hour of need. Jews of this type, blind to their responsibilities, seem to have been few. Far more typical, every effort was made to hold the family together. The marriage of Shinah Simon, of Lancaster, to a Christian, Dr. Nicholas Schuyler, was certainly a shock to the Simon-Gratz clan, but it learned to embrace the doctor and, in turn, became part of his family. The early republican period was an age when children respected their parents or at least expressed themselves dutifully in their letters. The patriarchal mode prevailed; children were expected to obey; brothers dominated sisters. There are many indicia that the Jewish home, at its best, was still a live tradition. This was certainly true of Gershom Seixas, his wife, and his fourteen surviving boys and girls. Dignified in his relations with uncouth congregants, he was jolly and charming in the bosom of his family. When he wrote to his beloved daughter Sally Kursheedt in Richmond, he took his letter, descended into the kitchen basement, and read it to his daughters and to "the primary leader of the pots and pans," his wife. At times he even read his letter to the servants in the house. Purim was an important holiday to the Seixas family members. They received gifts from members of the congregation, and all of them sat down around a large table in the parlor to enjoy tea and all sorts of sweets. Not one but two candles were lit for that happy day. The children were allowed to stay up until 8:30, and Seixas entertained them with a romantic story of his life.³⁴

WOMEN

Women played an important part in the life of Gershom Seixas; with his wife and eight daughters there were nine all told. Though Ma (Hannah Manuel) spent much of her life in the kitchen, she was no drudge. The position of a Jewish woman in early America—as in later America, too!—depended on her personality. Abigail Franks (d. 1756), like Abigail Adams, was a highly intelligent woman who could stand on her own two feet; her husband, one of North America's most influential army purveyors, could not—and did not—dwarf her. Her children respected her. Jewish women in her day and well up to the threshold of the twentieth century were exposed to many restraints, built-in problems, because they were females. In the traditional synagogue, though relegated to the galleries, they managed in a modest fashion to make their presence felt. They contributed money to help build North America's first sanctuary, and in every generation theirs was the task and the privilege of preparing the vestments, curtains, and cloths for the sacred Scrolls, holy ark, and reading desk. Most girls were taught to sew. When Mordecai Sheftall was imprisoned by the British during the Revolutionary War, Fanny, his wife, supported the children as a seamstress. Young girls, with time on their hands, kept themselves busy making samplers. The versified Ten Commandments were a challenge to their skills:

Take not the name of God in vain,
Nor dare the Sabbath day profane.³⁵

In colonial days, the wives, sisters, mothers, and children were often distraught when the fathers, the providers, were away on long sea voyages or had crossed the mountains to the forks of the Ohio. There is every reason to believe that most grown-up girls were eager to marry. No evidence indicates that spinsters remained unmarried by choice, but suitable males were scarce; women would not marry outside their class. For most of them, intermarriage with Gentiles was summarily rejected. There were always unmarried women who were compelled to remain dependent on their parents or siblings. A paragraph in Charleston's 1820 constitution is ominous; it implied rather clearly that there were Jewish prostitutes—but, and this is significant—the woman and her husband could become fully accredited members if the woman had lived a “moral and decent life” after marriage.³⁶

By 1819, at the latest, Jewish women were aware of themselves, self-consciously as a group, for in that year distaff Philadelphians established the first Female Hebrew Benevolent Society. They were undoubtedly impelled by the example of their Gentile sisters, who had already established a women's organization of their own; Jewish girls and wives were invited

to participate and did. The Jewish society flourished; its constitution was reprinted and modified three times in less than twenty years. Thus, by the beginning of the third decade of the nineteenth century, Jewish women in the community began to make charity their specific task outside the home. This was to be their *métier* for just about a century. Like the Gentile women about them, these Jewish women began reaching out in different directions and also wrote and published poetry and religious textbooks. It was women who created the Jewish Sunday School, the most successful children's educational instrument in the history of American Jewry—this no later than 1840. One of the problems they faced was that they were expected to conform to a male standardized mental picture. They did conform; they had no choice. There is very little, if any, evidence that individuals were prepared to kick over the traces. The acrostic Hebrew prose poem which begins with Proverbs 31:10 had for millennia determined the role in life of the Woman of Valor:

The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her,
And he hath no lack of gain.

It is all so simple; she works, he prospers, but he must not fail to praise her on the public square; her children must rise up and call her blessed. The cult of true womanhood was thus outlined by a Jewish gnomic writer centuries before the rise of Christianity. In eighteenth and early nineteenth-century America, she helped her husband in the business, reared their children, taught them to be pious, virtuous, genteel, and modest, and to become part of an extended family. Let there be no doubt about it, however: in the final analysis, she was expected to be submissive to her husband. As a contemporary Jewish orator said—sarcastically, to be sure—he was the Lord of Creation.

Isaac Leeser had very definite, fixed ideas about women. His views are important, for through his *Occident*, which began appearing in 1843, he influenced many: a woman must be educated because the fate of the young lies in her hands. Let her not read romantic novels; there are no great truths in them. There is no need for her to enter a profession; to do so would unsex her. Only men are to pursue more advanced studies. Speakers in those days were often carried away by their own euphoria when they praised women. Did they believe what they said? Did the women believe what they heard?

'Tis woman who holds the balance of power and controls the destinies of nations!
She it is who stamps upon the infant mind the signet of greatness and sends forth
into the world the author, the orator, the hero, and the statesman!¹⁷

WHAT DID THE LOCAL COMMUNITY ACCOMPLISH?

By 1840, the so-called communities were usually made up of a number of synagogues and confraternities. Each synagogue and society had its function, its job to do, its loyal members. The sum of all loyalties added up to an emotion-based community. This was "real." In a larger sense the total Jewish community was trying to take shape—which meant a struggle. It was difficult to keep some of the towns alive. Newport was dead; Savannah for generations was barely viable; Philadelphia for decades was financially desperate; Richmond, Charleston, and New York were alive and well. Judaism was alive; synagogues were open; new ones were being established. The charities had loyal followings; schools of various types rose and disappeared; Jewish education, even if it was shallow, was always available. Folkways persisted; Jews huddled together for comfort, if only because they sensed a lack of cordiality on the part of their Christian neighbors. Assimilation and defection constituted no real danger, but there was no real leadership anywhere. Old-timers who had immigrated in colonial days hewed to the line Jewishly; the Jews of the new native-born generation, educated, more sophisticated, less ardent in observance, were in their own way loyal, determined to be faithful to the religion of their fathers. In the postrevolutionary decades, established Jewries assimilated the new European migrants and gave them a Sephardic veneer; they found their niche in the synagogue and in the *hevrot*. Later arrivals, in the 1820's and 1830's, more Orthodox than their hosts, endured the natives until they were numerous enough to go off on their own. The Damascus affair not only made them aware of themselves nationally, but locally, too. They learned to work together, if only temporarily, as a community. It was a precedent that would bear fruit, albeit slowly, in the next two decades.³⁸

SIGNIFICANCE OF AMERICAN JEWRY IN THE LIGHT OF JEWISH HISTORY

The American experience from 1654 to 1840 is significant in documenting the transfer of Jewish institutions and the establishment of settlements in a new corner of the Diaspora. More important is the fact that this new Jewry, living in an open society, survived as Jews and as citizens; it set up a pattern of integration that was accepted by the Gentiles among whom these Jews lived. Theirs was a Judaism of salutary neglect. In order to effectuate an acceptable integration, they found it necessary to make constant religious adjustments. This they did, yet in their minds their Judaism was still traditional. As Jews, they could boast of no rabbis, no seminaries, no scholars who devoted their lives to the study of the Talmud; they were a "frontier" community and would remain such until the early twentieth century. As Americans, they developed a vocational, economic

pattern which was typically Jewish; that is to say, they were an urban extended middle-class body of businessmen. There were among them almost no dirt farmers and very few plantation owners and industrialists. They were as yet too few in number to make any lasting contributions to American literature. There was no Jew in Congress. No Jew was a social reformer; as a conspicuous minority, they were assiduous in avoiding controversy.

America had done a great deal for the Jew since 1776. Privileges of wealth, heredity, and aristocracy were strongly curtailed; more precisely privileges were made available to all, including Jews. No area of economic life was closed to them; infinite vistas of business and commerce beckoned. In a modest fashion, individual Jews began to appear as litterateurs, poets, dramatists, portrait painters, musicians, artists, physicians, attorneys, judges, politicians, economists, army officers, and naval commanders. They were learning to live with Gentile neighbors; this was something new. As in ancient Alexandria and medieval Moslem Spain, they were absorbing a new culture. They were fully aware that a new era was opening and they took advantage of the new opportunities. No longer tolerated second-class citizens as in the colonial period, they were now invested with all rights and immunities. They began to enter the professions, to run for office, to go to college, to write and to teach. Individuals developed a sense of pride that they were culturally the equal of all others. Wealth brought dignity. Conscious of the import of their citizenship, they resented any diminution of their rights. The larger United States as a national polity commanded their devotion: the Constitution was their patron and protector, not the individual states that were reluctant to emancipate them. As men engaged in interstate commerce, they were concerned with the welfare of the country as a whole. Thus, they were eager protagonists of American nationalism, and because they were widely scattered in important centers, they served as a cement to hold the new republic together. The new America made possible a whole gallery of personalities: Moses E. Levy with his hope of a cultural enclave; Mordecai Noah, writer, journalist, politician, proto-Zionist; Harmon Hendricks, industrialist and philanthropist; Isaac Moses, merchant-shipper; Moses M. Hays, capitalist and Masonic pioneer; Judah Touro, whose legacies were to enrich Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish institutions.

Was American Jewry a unique part of World Jewry? It was the first completely free Jewish community in all Diaspora history and Christian society. It is true that, with certain exceptions, no European state limited the right of Jews to worship in accordance with the dictates of their conscience, but only here in the United States were these non-Christian sectarians formally accepted and accorded an increasing respect and recognition. This is eloquently reflected in the wholehearted participation of

Gentile community leaders and Christian clergymen in synagog consecrations. Every country produces a Jew who is distinctive. America was no exception—though the type would vary over the years. The new Jew emerging in the United States was an amalgam of Anglo-Saxon culture, French political thought, American rugged individualism, and commitment to an “Oriental” religion that had already flourished for more than twenty centuries.³⁹

How many Jews and congregations were there in the United States in 1840? This is not easy to determine, since the United States at that time was not interested in collecting religious statistics of any sort. However, statisticians and others have made guesses and have engaged in demographic studies since the early nineteenth century on the basis of oral traditions, government documents, town records, and synagogal papers. The problem is that many Jews left no trace of their existence in the cities and villages where they led uneventful lives; their number was probably not inconsequential. By 1840, there may have been as many as 15,000 Jews in the United States, but possibly no more than 10,000. For the early days of the Revolution, estimates run anywhere from 1,500 to 2,500 souls; in 1811, on the basis of contemporary reports, one may assume that there was a national community of no fewer than 2,000. In his 1818 *Discourse*, Noah guessed that there were 3,000 Jews on this continent; a present-day careful demographer believes that there were about 3,000 souls here in 1820. There may have been many more. Talking to Charleston’s Unitarian minister in 1826, Isaac Harby said that he thought there were about 6,000 Jews in the country. In retrospect, it is patent that American Jewry had increased more rapidly than the generality since 1776; the increase was at least 500 percent and may well have been much more.

By 1840, there were at least twenty-one congregations in sixteen cities. Six synagog adhered to the Sephardic or Iberian rite; the others were Ashkenazic, “German.” From 1654 to 1801, only eight congregations were established in North America. (Included here is Canada’s Montreal as well as Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where Joseph Simon, the fur entrepreneur, maintained a private conventicle.) In the next thirty-nine years, at least sixteen congregations or prayer groups were established. The New York community, founded in 1654/1655, ceased soon after to hold services for a while but was firmly established by 1700. Charleston may have had a religious quorum as early as 1695, when several Spanish-Portuguese refugees arrived from France; the South Carolina congregation was well-established by 1749. The Savannah Jewish colonists organized a congregation on landing in 1733, but there was no well-structured religious community until 1790. Philadelphia Jews met to pray together in the 1740’s, but about twenty years elapsed before a permanent kehillah came into being. By 1789, Richmond had a chartered congregation; it was

probably several years older. Cincinnati Jews were holding services in 1819, Columbia, South Carolina, in 1822, New Orleans, in 1827; Baltimore, in 1829. The Louisville Jews first assembled together in prayer during the years 1834-1838.

The pace was accelerated in the last years of this decade. St. Louis had a prayer group in 1837, Albany in 1838, Cleveland, Easton, and Syracuse in 1839. Hanover, in Eastern Pennsylvania, had a congregation before 1840, but it was not destined to last. This village of fewer than a 1,000 people turned out to be but a temporary foothold for Jewish adventurers as they continued their trek westward. All the above towns were organized as congregations or prayer groups, but there is reason to believe that Jews in ten other towns met for services, if only rarely. The important cities were in the tidewater; Richmond was in the piedmont, on a river that flowed into Chesapeake Bay. Charleston was the most important Jewish community till the 1820's; then New York took over. From 1819 on, the Jews began to make their presence felt in the West as they followed the trails and turnpikes leading to the Mississippi. They were a generation late, but as urban shopkeepers they waited till the towns across the mountains were firmly rooted. By the late 1830's there was a Philadelphia adventurer in a northern California Mexican village. A very substantial percentage of all American Jews were immigrants, but despite the relatively large influx of immigrants from Central Europe, the Jews here still numbered less than one in a thousand.⁴⁰

THE COMING OF THE GERMANS AND THE SYMBOLIC ABDICATION OF SEPHARDIC LEADERSHIP

Ashkenaz is the medieval Hebrew word for Germany. The Ashkenazic congregations were patronized primarily by Central Europeans, although they also sheltered many East Europeans and Englishmen. Settlers from the lands between the Vosges Mountains and the Dnieper River had found their way across the Atlantic as early as the 1660's; by 1720 most Jews in North America were of Ashkenazic origin. For all Jews, distant America was looked upon as a land of opportunity; Russia, Poland, and Germany were lands of disability. Goethe's mother was dismayed that a public park was to be opened to Jews in 1807 at Frankfurt on the Main; she might even have to sit on the same bench with Jews. New York's Jews were well aware that there was a "push to America." While dedicating the Mill Street Synagogue in 1818, Noah made clear that this new building was necessary because of the influx of immigrants; seven years later the city's first Ashkenazic rebels announced publicly that another house of worship was necessary "because the increase of our brethren is so great." In 1833 when a Hebrew Benevolent Society was first established

in Baltimore, the constitution was published in German. Shearith Israel looked upon the newcomers as inferiors; they were socially unacceptable. Thus, when a city-wide protest was organized to protest against the Damascus outrages, some of the leaders at Shearith Israel were wary. They were not pleased with the prospect of working closely with Ashkenazim. When, in August, 1840, the Sephardic banker Solomon I. Joseph wanted to use the synagog to stage the meeting, these lay leaders refused: "No benefits can rise from such a course." This was on the 13th. Even more, when on the 30th of the month a resolution was offered at a board meeting that Shearith Israel work closely with Sephardic Richmond in this crisis, it was not even seconded. The congregation's trustees would have nothing to do with any Jewish group involved in this affair.⁴¹

The rejection of the opportunity to protest publicly the tortures of fellow-Jews—Sephardim at that—is difficult to understand. It may be that there are reasons which historians today cannot even begin to fathom. Or is the reason patent: they were too timid? The Sephardim, with their crypto-Jewish Marrano tradition dating back to the fifteenth century, were a frightened group determined to maintain a low profile. Or it may well be that the reason why Shearith Israel's board members would not join in the August mass meeting was because they were not overly fond of Ashkenazim. These old-timers knew that they were outnumbered and could not dominate the proceedings. In a sense, the refusal of the majority of the board to participate in this public gathering meant abdication of a leadership that had been exercised for over a century. Actually, in all other towns, the Sephardim, the natives and the acculturated immigrants, did join in the protests against the Syrian bigots. There is no question, however, that by refusing to allow New York's Jews to use its sanctuary, Shearith Israel as an institution had relinquished its authority; it was a symbolic renunciation, but a very real one. Shearith Israel sensed that the hegemony of the Sephardim was fading rapidly; the scepter of rule would soon pass to the Ashkenazim. Were the "Germans" from non-Iberian Europe ready to take over? The protest mass meeting was held in the Bnai Jeshurun sanctuary, New York's first Ashkenazic synagog, founded only fifteen years earlier. This was prophetic.



KEY

ABBREVIATIONS, SYMBOLS, AND SHORT TITLES IN THE NOTES

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NOTES

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CHAPTER 1

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CHAPTER TWO

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2. *PAJHS*, 27:31-32; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1262-66.
3. Morison, *History*, 224; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1285-86, 1297.
4. *AJHQ*, 67:21, n. 22; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1292-95, 1300-2; Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots*, 39-40.
5. *PAJHS*, 1:70 ff., 31:33 ff.; Marcus, *CAJ*, 2:715, 755, 3:1253, 1282 ff., 1290, 1296-99; Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:93; Marcus, *AJD*, 241 ff.; *PMHB*, 98:131 ff.; *RJHJN*, 7:266 ff., 271; R. Morris, "The Jews, Minorities, and Dissent in the American Revolution," *Proceedings of the Anglo-American Jewish Historical Conference* (London, 1971); Clark, *Naval Documents*, 2:767 ff., 3:1180-82, 1273-74.
6. Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1278 ff., 1292, 1580, n. 18; Noah, *Travels*, xxiv; Marcus, *EAJ*, 1:143-50; Clark, *Naval Documents*, 1:649, 955, 3:167, 423, 4:1057-58, 1224, 1230-31, 1421-22; Marcus, *AJD*, 233.
7. Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots*, 113-14; Clark, *Naval Documents*, 1:811-12; "Levy, Benjamin," *UJE*; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1281-82, 1341.
8. Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1272-73, 1294; Marcus, *Studies*, 54 ff.
9. Marcus, *EAJ*, 1:152-57; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1270-71, 1289-90, 1293.
10. Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1275 ff.; Marcus, *Memoirs*, 1:40 ff.; *AJHQ*, 62:348 ff.
11. Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1306; Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 68 ff., 108 ff.
12. Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1122, 1249 ff., 1278 ff., 1306 ff.; *PAJHS*, 9:107-22.
13. *PAJHS*, 18:35, 41:108 ff.; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1251 ff., 1303-5; Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots*, 65; "Nones, Benjamin," *UJE*; Morais, *Philadelphia*, 26; R. & E., *Charleston*, 69, 272, nn. 92, 95; Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 78 ff.; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1305; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 95-96.
14. Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1310-14; "Pinto, Abraham (4)," "Pinto, Solomon (3)," "Pinto, William," *BDEAJ*.
15. B. & B., *JOUS*, 1:70-73; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1295, 1309-10; "Hays, Baruch," *BDEAJ*.
16. *PAJHS*, 19:151 ff., 27:462; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1274, 1305; Daly, *Settlement*, 54; Marcus, *AJD*, 425-26; *Minutes of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania*, 12:151; Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:73-94, 502-3, 531; Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots*, 25-27, 171-72.
17. Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1266 ff.; Marcus, *EAJ*, 1:chaps. 10-11, 254; "Judah, Samuel (1)," "Solomons, Levi (1)," *BDEAJ*; *PAJHS*, 4:81 FF., 224, 23:184; Sack, *Canada*, 70 ff.; Shortt and Doughty, *Documents*, 2:590.
18. Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1267-69; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 93 ff., 406, n. 98; Marcus, *AJD*, 275 ff.; Marcus, *EAJ*, 1:251-55, 2:508-9, 531; *PAJHS*, 1:76 ff., 5:157 ff., 10:101 ff.; *Papers of Robert Morris*, 1:255, n. 9, et passim; Marcus, *Memoirs*, 1:45-49.
19. *Pennsylvania History*, 16:77 ff.; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 158-64; *PAJHS*, 1:76 ff., 2:92-93, 10:101 ff. For another Canadian with strong Whiggish leanings see "Solomons, Levi (1)," *BDEAJ*; Marcus, *EAJ*, 1:251-55; Clark, *Naval Documents*, 3:1273; Baltimore

- Jewish Comment*, Sept. 29, 1899, p. 1, Oct. 6, 1899, p. 1; "Franks, David Salisbury," *BDEAJ*; *AHR*, 82:8. There are numerous references to Franks in the *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vols. 6-13, 16; see especially, 6:241, 251, 11:95, 16:158-59. See also, Scharf and Westcott, *Philadelphia*, 1:401-3; Robert L. Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania, 1776-1790* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1942), 88; *Pennsylvania Archives*, first series, 12:495; Reznick, *Unrecognized Patriots*, 31-35, et passim.
20. Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1269-70; Friedman, *Pilgrims*, 71 ff.; *PAJHS*, 3:151, 17:167 ff.; Marcus, *AJD*, 237 ff.; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1316 ff., 1323 ff.; *JCC*, 7:188.
 21. Marcus, *Memoirs*, 1:47 ff.; *JQR*, n.s., 45:565 ff.; East, *Business Enterprise*, 72; Marcus, *EAJ*, 1:225, 228, 232 ff., 253-58, 265-66, 2:266-69; "Solomons, Levi (1)," *BDEAJ*; "Solomons, Levy," *UJE*, Clark, *Naval Documents*, 3:1273; Marcus, *CAJ*, 2:707, 3:1269, 1317, 1322; Lebeson, *JPA*, 209; *Elzas*, *Jews in S.C.*, 100; Rosenbaum, *Myer Myers*, 41; Petition of Manel (Manuel) Myers to the Conn. General Assembly, Jan. 7, 1782, Conn. Archives, Revolutionary War, 1763-89, series 1, vol. 23, doc. 286; *AJA* 1(no.2):3 ff.; *PAJHS*, 2:119 ff.
 22. Marcus, *AJD*, 237-40, 269 ff., 426-28. Documents throwing light on some of Sheftall's activities as an army supplier may be found in the following depositories, collections, and references: Nathan-Kraus Collection, *AJAR*; *JCC*; the Levy collection in Savannah; NYPL; NYHS; the Sheftall Papers in the *AJHSL*; the Historical Society of Georgia; *AJA*, 27:174-75. *AJHQ*, 57:26; Clark, *Naval Documents*, 3:1106, 4:85; Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:364; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1316 ff.; Marcus, *Memoirs*, 1:40 ff.; *PAJHS*, 1:86-87, 17:180-82.
 23. Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1318-19, 1324-25, 1583, n. 7; "Zuntz, Alexander," *BDEAJ*; Barrett, *Old Merchants*, 2(no.2):87 ff., 3:150, 225; Philip Marc papers in *AJAR*; E. & L., *Richmond*, 27-28; Mordecai, *Richmond in By-Gone Days* (Richmond, 1856), 108-12; "Darmstadt, Joseph," *BDEAJ*; Marcus, *AJD*, 243 ff., 253, 423; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1319, 1324; *JCC*, 7:302; *PAJHS*, 1:66-67, 23:99, 38:48.
 24. *PAJHS*, 1:67-68, 32:12; Byars, B. and M. Gratz, 18-19, 23, 204, 210, 215, 370, et passim; *Michigan Jewish History*, 4:9-11; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1323, 1325.
 25. Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1317, 1325; *PAJHS*, 1:67, 29:144; Marcus, *AJD*, 428-29; "Polock, Cushman," "Minis, Mrs. Abigail," "Minis, Philip," *BDEAJ*; Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:356-57; *AJA*, 27:174-75.
 26. East, *Business Enterprise*, 184; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1320.
 27. Wallace, *History of S.C.*, 2:86; *PAJHS*, 2:126-27, 37:103-15; Friedman, *Pilgrims*, 47 ff.; *CRI*, 2:55-56, 80-81; The Revolutionary War prize cases: Records of the Court of Appeals in cases of capture, 1776-1787, case no. 28: The schooner *Hope* and cargo, Lopez claimant, NA, copy in *AJAR*.
 28. Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1320-21; Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:368-69; *PAJHS*, 23:163 ff.; Byars, B. and M. Gratz, 22, 227, see also Index sub "Privateers"; Lebeson, *JPA*, 210; *Calendar of records, High Court of Vice-Admiralty, Jamaica, Cases of La Hardi (1779), the Johanna and Allita (1779), the Adventure (1780)*; Marcus, *AJD*, 423-28; East, *Business Enterprise*, 160; *JCC*, 13:213.
 29. Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1265, 1267, 1316, 1320-21, 1323; *Calendar of records, High Court of Vice-Admiralty, Jamaica, Case of Riche (1778), Johanna and Allita, (1779), Adventure (1780), Polly (1782)*; PCC; Isaac Moses, Petition to Continental Congress, July 27, 1779; Isaac Moses, N.Y., to Thomas Mifflin, Phila., Mar. 10, 1784, LC; "Moses, Isaac," *UJE*; Marcus, *EAJ*, 1:99 ff.; *PAJHS*, 3:84, 19:72, 23:174, 27:331-32.
 30. *PAJHS*, 6:53-54, 25:128 ff.; Phillips, Jonas," *UJE*; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1272; Marcus, *AJD*, 424-45.
 31. East, *Business Enterprise*, 216; *CRI*, 2:66-67; *Calendar of records, High Court of Vice-Admiralty, Jamaica, Case of Riche (1778), Johanna and Allita (1779), Adventure (1780)*; Samuel Myers, Phila., to Aaron Lopez, Newport, June 18, 1781, copy in Lopez Papers,

- AJAr; *PAJHS*, 2:123-26, 25:130; Marcus, *EAJ*, 1:166 ff., 174 ff.; 2:266 ff.; Marcus, *AJD*, 424-25, 428-29; *AJA*, 1(no.2):3 ff., 27:183 ff.; Kenneth P. Bailey, *The Ohio Company Papers, 1653-1817* (Arcata, Calif., 1947), 466 ff.; Marcus, *CAJ*, 2:773, 3:1273; "Levy, Eleazar (1)," *BDEAJ*.
32. Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1326, 1342; *RIJHN*, 7:12 ff.
33. Schappes, *DHJUS*, 69; *PAJHS*, 1:86-88; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1315-16; *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 3:315, 316, 320-24, 327, 328, 428, 4:282-84, 5:61, 87-89, 110-11, 152-53, 266, 334-35, 6:197, 200-201, 270, 319-24; Samuel Oppenheim, "Simon Nathan's Important Service to the American Cause in the Revolution," paper read before the AJHS, Feb. 7, 1925, copy in AJHSL; Temple Bodley, *George Rogers Clark* (Boston, 1926), 229-30.
34. Pool, *Portraits*, 387, 411-12. Students of the life of Salomon will find the following works helpful when evaluating the work and career of this man: Schappes, *DHJUS*, 52-53, 63-66, 578 ff.; Schappes, *JJUS*, 32ff.; Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:132-64, et passim; Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots*, 12, et passim, 115; Kohler, *Haym Salomon; Manuscript Catalogue of American Jewish Archives*, sub Haym Salomon. See also vol. 4 of Appendices of AJAr catalogue, 169, 452. Copies of reports on the claims of the family of Haym Salomon are found in the AJAr. Some are listed in the *Manuscript Catalogue of the American Jewish Archives*, 3:297 ff. Other claims on the government are listed in *PAJHS*, 2:18. These lists are not necessarily complete. *PAJHS*, 2:5 ff., 3:7 ff., 4:94, 6:50-53, 11:67-68, 16:189-92, 19:51, 21:121, 145, 22:196-97, 27:40, 43, 51, 156, 227-28, 253, 461, 463, 466-73, 33:1-2, 251, 34:107-16, 67:9 ff., 140 ff.; *AH*, Apr. 19, 1918, pp. 702-3, Mar. 27, 1931, pp. 492 ff., Apr. 10, 1931, p. 586; Russell, *Haym Salomon; The Picket Post*, Oct. 1950, p. 38; *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, Aug. 2, 1927, pp. 2-4, Mar. 17, 1931, p. 3, Apr. 6, 1931, p. 1; *Hebrew Standard*, June 7, 1918, pp. 1 ff.; *New York World* (editorial section) July 31, 1927; Lebeson, *JPA*, 217 ff.; P. & K., *Tourist's Guide*, 153-54, 530-32; *Jewish Life*, 32(no.6):21 ff.; Glanz, *Milieu*, 52; *Haym Salomon: Gentleman*; H.M. Salomon, N.Y., to W.H. Seward, Washington, D.C., Dec. 2, 1863, copy in Marcus Collections; Friedman, *Pilgrims*, 58 ff.; Markens, *Hebrews*, 66-70; Marcus, *AJD*, 41 ff., 65, 74, 116, 119, 205, 288, 442-44; Marcus, *CAJ*, 1:260, 2:541, 712, 1027, 1086, 3:1128, 1274, 1311, 1316, 1318; "Haym Salomon Letter Book," AJHSL; "Salomon, Haym," *Americana* (1907), vol. 13; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 3, 98-113, 116, 120-21, 132-37, 146, 156, 171, 255-56, 408, 410-15, 419, 429-30, 447-48; Gaillard Hunt (ed.), *The Writings of James Madison*, (N.Y., 1900), 1:237, 242; E. & L., *Richmond*, 18-19; *AJA*, 27:114-15, 146-47, 207-16; "Salomon, Haym," *JE*, *UJE*, *EJ*, *DAB*; East, *Business Enterprise*, 69, 73, 107, 146, 157-58, 163, 166, 230, 258, 272, 290.
35. "Revolutionary War, Loyalist Troops in the," *DAH* (1976-1978); Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1273-74; Schappes, *DHJUS*, 580, n.7; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 101-3; *AJHQ*, 67:12; *PAJHS*, 21:121.
36. W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 97, et passim for Isaac Franks; *PAJHS*, 4:201, 5:7 ff., 6:49 ff., 54 ff., 10:168 ff., 19:41, et passim; "Franks, Isaac (2)," *BDEAJ*; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1311-12; release and sale of property by Isaac Franks and wife to his sister Rachel, Mar. 24, 1800, in Phila. city records, copy in AJAr.
37. *AJHQ*, 67:21, n. 22; Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:139; Russell, *Haym Salomon*, 277; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 107-8; *AJA*, 27:211.
38. East, *Business Enterprise*, 146; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 104 ff.; *PAJHS*, 67:21; *AJHQ*, 67:9-15; "Revolutionary War, Foreign Volunteers in," *DAH* (1976-1978).
39. *AJHQ*, 67:9 ff., 24, 28-45, 47, 140 ff.; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 107; *AJA*, 27:210 ff.; *PAJHS*, 2:9-10; *AH*, Apr. 19, 1918, p. 703; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1316; East, *Business Enterprise*, 146, 158, 258; *Papers of Robert Morris*, 1:121-23, 2:32, 37-38, 43-44, 47, 50, 60, 92-93, 107-10, 137-39, 269; Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots*, 86-89.

40. W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 107; *AJA*, 27:211; Russell, *Haym Salomon*, 246, 249; *Papers of Robert Morris*, 1:272, n. 1; *PAJHS*, 2:5 ff.; "Revolution, Financing of the," *DAH* (1976-1978); *Papers of James Madison*, 2:78-79, 96-98, 251-53, 3:37-39; Byars, B. and M. Gratz, 204; *PAJHS*, 2:9-10, 27:468; E. & L. *Richmond*, 18-19; Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:142; Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots*, 92-94; *AH*, Apr. 19, 1918, p.703; Kohler, *Haym Salomon*, 19; Gaillard Hunt, *The Writings of James Madison* (N.Y., 1900), 228, 237, 242.
41. Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:156 ff.; *AJA*, 27:213 ff.; Marcus, *AJD*, 40-46; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 111-13, 173; Robert L. Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania, 1776-1790* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1942) 88 ff., 150-51.
42. *Haym Salomon: Gentleman*; *AJHQ*, 67:25, 48; East, *Business Enterprise*, 146, 158, 162, 258, 290; Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots*, 83-84, 98, 258, n. 35; Russell, *Haym Salomon*, 190-91; *PAJHS*, 2:5 ff., 3:9, 6:51-52; *Pennsylvania Packet and Daily Advertiser*, Sept. 21, 1784; Kohler, *Haym Salomon*, 21; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 107 ff., 171; *AJA*, 27:211; Lebeson, *Pilgrim People*, 143 ff.; "Haym Salomon Letter Book, 1781-1783," *AJHSL*; *PMHB*, 98:131 ff.
43. Unrecorded Chapter in the History of Philadelphia's Mikveh Israel Congregation . . . Collection of Sigmund and Felicia Harrison, copy in *AJHSL*; Mikveh Israel, Phila., Trustees Minutes, 1782, 90; *PAJHS*, 27:461-63; *AJA*, 27:211 ff.; *Haym Salomon: Gentleman*, 12; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 101, 116.
44. W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 101, 116, 171, 448, n. 35; The J. R. Cohen Mohel Book, 1782, in *AJHQ*, 59:23 ff.; *PAJHS*, 21:145, 27:461 ff., 33:251, 34:107 ff.; Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:148-54; Unrecorded Chapter in the History of Philadelphia's Mikveh Israel Congregation . . . Collection of Sigmund and Felicia Harrison, copy in *AJHSL*; Marcus, *AJD*, 286 ff.; Haym Salomon, Phila., to Philip Moses, Charleston, S.C., June 20, 1783, H. S. to Bar't Spitzer, Charleston, S.C., June 20, 1783, H.S., Phila., to Israel Myers, N.Y., Apr. 29, 1783, Hyam Salomon, Phila., to Cushman Polack, Carolina, June 20, 1783, "Haym Salomon Letter Book, 1781-1783," *AJHSL*; *AJA*, 27:211-13; *Horeb* (Hebrew), 1(1934):222-24.
45. Elzas, *Leaves*, Second Series, no. 8, p. 4; *PAJHS*, 19:51, 22:196-97; *AJHQ*, 67:152, n. 92; Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots*, 91; Marcus, *AJD*, 286 ff.
46. Stern, *FAJF*, 257; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 429-30, n. 33; Kohler, *Haym Salomon*; *AJHQ*, 67:160, n. 114; East, *Business Enterprise*, 258; Goodman, "Spruce Street Cemetery," Aug. 29, 1912, p. 102.
47. H. M. Salomon, N.Y., to J. Madison, Jan. 9, 1827, NYPL; *AJHQ*, 67:11; *PAJHS*, 27:466 ff., 471; Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots*, 234.
48. Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots*, 231.
49. *JOAH*, 55:5 ff.; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 102; Kohler, *Haym Salomon*; Congressional Committee on Revolutionary Claims reports are listed in *PAJHS*, 2:18; additional reports—and this list may not be exhaustive—U.S. Senate, *Report*, 35th Cong., 2d sess., Jan., 1859, no. 353; U.S. House, *Report*, 52d Cong., 2d sess., Feb. 24, 1893, no. 2556; *JTA-DNB*, Aug. 2, 1927, pp. 2-4, Apr. 6, 1931, pp. 1, 3-4; *PAJHS*, 2:5 ff., 16:189 ff., 27:466-73; *Hebrew Standard*, June 7, 1918, pp. 1 ff.; Marks, *Hebrews*, 66-70; Daly, *Settlement*, 58-60; "Salomon, Haym," *Americana*, (1907); "Salomon, Haym, *DAB*; Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots*, 259, 274, n. 19, 277, n. 24; Russell, *Haym Salomon*, xiii; Memorandum for a note to Secretary of Treasury by Senator W.H. Seward, Mar. 1849, Seward Papers, Rush Rhees Library, Univ. of Rochester; *AJA*, 5:56; U.S. Senate, 31st Cong., 1st sess., Aug. 9, 1850, S. Rept. 177; *The Patriotic Foundation of Chicago* (Chicago, n.d.); Madison C. Peters, *The Jews Who Stood by Washington: An Unwritten Chapter in American History* (N.Y., 1915) (2d counting), 3 ff., 24 ff.; Madison C. Peters, *The Jew as Patriot* (N.Y., 1902), 53 ff.; Madison C. Peters, *Justice to the Jew: The Story of What He Has Done for the World* (N.Y., 1921), 91; Madison C. Peters, *The Jews in America*, etc. (Phila., 1905), 40-43.

50. *AJHQ*, 67:9-15, 33, 44-45, 160; Marcus, *AJD*, 46; Kohler, *Haym Salomon*, 4-5; *AH*, Mar. 27, 1931, p.492; *AJA*, 16:132; *Papers of Robert Morris*, 1:544-46.
51. Kohler, *Haym Salomon*; P. & K., *Tourist's Guide*, 42, 139, 153-54, 537.
52. Stern, *FAJF*, 12, 118; Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:162-64; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1316; P. & K., *Tourist's Guide*, 153-54; *Jewish Life*, 32(no. 6):29 ff.; *Collector*, 84, no. 10, 1971, whole no. 819.
53. *AJA*, 27:209-10; Morison, *History*, 280; Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:372-73, 547-49; Dale Rosenkrantz, "A Study of the Military, Economic, and Financial Contributions of the Jews in the American Revolutionary Period, 1776-1783," (HUC term paper, 1977). See also, *Modern Judaism*, 1:149-60; Azriel Eisenberg and Hannah Grad Goodman (eds.), *Eyewitnesses to American Jewish History*. Part 1: From the Colonial Period through the Revolution, 1492-1793 (N.Y., 1976), 55 ff.

CHAPTER THREE

POLITICAL GAINS IN THE EARLY NATIONAL PERIOD

1. Ellis, *Am. Catholicism*, chap. 2; Channing, *History*, 5:210-12; Luzzatti, *God in Freedom*, 687 ff.; *PAJHS*, 27:33-34; Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte*, 7:291-92; Thorpe, *Constitutions*, 5:2623 ff., 2636-38; *AJA*, 10:16 ff.
2. Adams, *Dictionary*, 358; Morison, *Hour*, 45; *RJHN*, 7:536; Stokes, *Church and State*, 1:369; Commager, *Documents*, 125; Friedman, *Pioneers*, 142 ff.; Thorpe, *Constitutions*, 7:3812-14; *AJA*, 10:42 ff.
3. Thorpe, *Constitutions*, 1:537, 544-45, 568, 2:785, 6:37-62, art.3, 3258, 3767, 7:3801; *AJA*, 10:45, 46, 51; *American State Papers* (1911), 527-28; Edgar E. Siskin and Rollin G. Osterweis (eds.), *Centennial Volume: Congregation Mishkan Israel, New Haven, Connecticut, 1840-1940*, 10 ff.; *The Public Statute Laws of the State of Connecticut, etc.* (Hartford, 1821), Title 94, 430 ff., 434, 436.
4. *Occ.* 7:226-28; Stokes, *Church and State*, 1:865 ff., 870.
5. "Naar, David," *UJE*, *ACOAB*; Markens, *Hebrews*, 265-66; *Eastern Union*, 7, 21-24; Thorpe, *Constitutions*, 4:2491-92, 5:2800 ff., 2814-15; *AJA*, 10:16 ff.
6. Commager, *Documents*, 111, 130; *AJA*, 10:22-23, et passim; Beard, *Rise of Am. Civilization*, 512-13.
7. Theodore Calvin Pease (ed.), *The Laws of the Northwest Territory, 1788-1800* (Springfield, Ill., 1925), 377-78; *AJA*, 10:22, et passim; Ray Allen Billington, *Westward Movement in the United States* (Princeton, N.J., 1959), 30-31; *American State Papers*(1911), 136; Commager, *Documents*, 128 ff.
8. Schlesinger, *New Viewpoints*, 189 ff.; Commager, *Documents*, 145-46; Farrand, *Federal Convention*, 2:335, 342, 461, 468, 579, 616, 663; 3:227, 310, 362, 609; *American State Papers* (1911), 143 ff., 152 ff.; Pfeffer, *Church, State, and Freedom*, 121.
9. W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 150; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1279-80; New York Constitution, Article 38 in Thorpe, *Constitutions*, 5:2636-37; the South Carolina constitution of 1790, Article 8 in Thorpe, *Constitutions*, 6:3264; Cohen, "Isaac Leeser," 4:16.
10. Farrand, *Federal Convention*, 3:78-80; Luzzatti, *God in Freedom*, 691; Pfeffer, *Church, State, and Freedom*, 82 ff., 102, 108, 112; Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:534-35; *PAJHS*, 2:107 ff.; *AJA*, 20:21-22; Schappes, *DHJUS*, 68 ff.
11. Beard, *Rise of Am. Civilization*, 291; Allan Nevins & Henry Steele Commager, *The Pocket History of the United States* (New York, 1943), 183.
12. *PAJHS*, 10:47; Philipson, *Max Lillenthal*, 96; *AJA*, 7:65-67, 27:246-50; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 150-51; *NYHSQ*, 46:24; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 9, 1788, no. 84; Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:533-34.
13. Paul P. Gordon and Rita Simon Gordon, *The Jews Beneath the Clustered Spires* (Fredericktown, Md., 1971), 21-22; R. & E., *Charleston*, 37; Thorpe, *Constitutions*, 3:1889-90,

- 1900, 1903, 1908, 1914; *AJA*, 10:35 ff.; Markens, *Hebrews*, 28-29; "Portugal," *EJ*; "Franks, Isaac," "Phillips, Zalegman," "Sheftall, Mordecai(1)," "Simson, Sampson," *BDEAJ*; B. & B., *JOUS*, 1:243, n. 47; *A Volume of Records Relating to the Early History of Boston Containing Boston Town Records, 1796-1813* (Boston, 1905), 39, 183, 194; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1275 ff., 1307; *PAJHS*, 2:68; Minutes of Mayor's Court, New York City, volume dated Sept. 1789 to Dec. 1792, 354-55; *PMHB*, 78:99; "Noah, Mordecai Manuel," *DAB*; Goldberg, *Major Noah*, 122; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 302; E. & L., *Richmond*, 121. The Ephraim Hart who served in the state senate of New York was a Gentile from Utica and is not to be confused with Ephraim Hart, a New York Jew, who was a stockbroker and land speculator (Franklin B. Hough, *The New-York Civil List, etc.*, (Albany, 1855), 146).
14. Berman, *Richmond*, 72, et passim. Biographies of the Cohens are found in *Md. Hist. Mag.*, 18:357, 19:54 ff. For Ettings see Fein, *Baltimore*, 22, et passim; "Etting," *UJE*; *PAJHS*, 27:483; "Myers, Moses(1)," *BDEAJ*; *Calendar of Virginia State Papers* (Richmond, 1890), 8:282, 305; E. & L., *Richmond*, chaps. 10, 17; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1316.
 15. Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 127-28, 194-207, 242-43; R. & E., *Charleston*, 103-4, 285-86, n. 111; Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:255-57; Luzzatti, *God in Freedom*, 691; *Records of the Georgia Department of Archives and History*, Atlanta, for Mordecai Sheftall, Sheftall Sheftall, and Moses Sheftall. There is detailed information on the earliest Georgia Jews in the Department of Archives and History. The records include data on the Sheftalls, Abraham R. Abrahams, Isaac Abrahams, Benjamin Jacobs, and Philip Minis. "Sheftall, Moses," *BDEAJ*; *PAJHS*, 17:167 ff., 20:129 ff., 27:185, 483; Marcus, *CAJ*, 3:1275-76; B. & B., *JOUS*, 1:60, 2:347; Markens, *Hebrews*, 50.
 16. *SCHGM*, 3(1902):62; *PAJHS*, 12:163, 16:37 ff., 17:192, 19:39; Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 68 ff., 128, 140, 202; Robert Pooler Myers, "Biographical Sketch of Dr. Levi Myers," original in the Southern Historical Collection, U. of N.C., Chapel Hill; Charles P. Finlayson, Edinburgh University Library, to JRM, Aug. 24, 1977, copy in AJAr; "Myers, Levy," *BDEAJ*; "Myers, Mordecai," *UJE*, *BDEAJ*; *AJHQ*, 62:351-61; Markens, *Hebrews*, 127-28; Marcus, *Memoirs*, 1:50 ff., 75.
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CHAPTER FOUR

THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE AMERICAN JEW:

THE TRADITIONAL ECONOMY 1776-1840

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32. Trachtenberg, *Easton*, 68 ff.
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36. Stern, *FAJF*, 276.
37. Porter, *John Jacob Astor*, 2:696, 708, 735-36, 777, 779, 826, 829-30, 860; John O. Holzhueter, Madison, Wis., to JRM, Apr. 11, 1986; *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 64:3-27; Publius V. Lawson, *History, Winnebago County, Wisconsin, etc.*, (Chicago, 1908), 1:140-43; B. & B., *JOUS*, 3:834-42, 983-84; C. E. Carter (ed.), *Territorial Papers of the United States, The Territory of Michigan* (Washington, D. C., 1943), 11:308, 384. John Lawe: I wish to express my thanks to the staffs of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and the History Division of the Michigan Department of State. They have been most helpful. For details of Lawe's life and especially for the story of his trip down the river see *Biography of John Lawe*, Wisconsin Historical Society.
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CHAPTER FIVE

THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE AMERICAN JEW:

THE NEW ECONOMY 1776-1840

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5. Byars, *B. and M. Gratz*, 14-15; "Gratz, Benjamin," *BDEAJ*; "Louisville," *EJ*.
6. Henry Hart, Kingsbury, N.Y., to A. Hart, Three Rivers, Canada, Oct. 21, 1787 (1797?), Hart Papers in Seminaire du St. Joseph, Three Rivers, Canada; Henry and Moses Hart letters in NYHSL; see Moses Hart, Three Rivers, to Jeremiah van Rensselaer, Aug. 1, 1797, Misc. Mss., NYHSL; also Henry Hart, Albany, to Jeremiah van Rensselaer, Apr. 22, 1782, Misc. MSS, NYHSL; B. & B., *JOUS*, 3:835-36.
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9. Sarna, *Mordecai Noah*, 114; "Swartwout, Samuel," *DAB*; *NYHSQ*, 48:307 ff.; E. & L., *Richmond*, 47; Mordecai Sheftall to the Georgia Senate and Legislature, Nov. 9, 1794, Levy collection in Savannah; R. & E., *Charleston*, 111-12; Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 32, 40, 161-64, 192, 206; release by AJAr on South Florida, 1965.
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18. "Cohen," *UJE*, 3:223 ff.; Markens, *Hebrews*, 94-95; Fein, *Baltimore*, 22-23; B. & B., *JOUS*, 1:152 ff.; Blum, *Baltimore*, 5; E. & L., *Richmond*, 29-31; Stern, *FAJF*, 82.
19. Marcus, *AJD*, 142-43, 202-3, 217-18, 221 ff., 461-62; B. & B., *JOUS*, 1:119-22, 2:648, n. 27; *N.Y. Spectator*, July 1, 5, 1815, June 5, 1818, p. 3, lottery ads; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 354; *R*, no. 147; *PAJHS*, 20:20, 105; *Md. Hist. Mag.*, 18:364 ff., 68:288 ff., 307-8; copy of advertisement for a lottery for the benefit of the Surgical Institution of Baltimore, 1817, is in the *AJAR*; Commager, *Documents*, 228 ff.; *Washington Republican and Congressional Examiner*, Sept. 18, 1822, has a large advertisement of a lottery run by the Cohens.

20. *PMHB*, 76:214; Korn, *New Orleans*, 110-19, et passim.
21. Markens, *Hebrews*, 113; "Rivera, Aaron," *BDEAJ*; Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 143, 188, 190, 192, 196, 205; R. & E., *Charleston*, 282, n. 76; B. & B., *JOUS*, 3:1003, n. 97; Daniel Clark, Richmond, to Isaiah Isaacs, Richmond, Dec. 26, 1783, Ayer Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago; Hening, *Laws of Virginia*, 13:599(1792); E. & L., *Richmond*, 48, 129-30.
22. Blum, *Baltimore*, 4; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 342 ff.; "Etting, Solomon," *BDEAJ*.
23. Henry Wysham Lanier, *A Century of Banking in New York, 1822-1922* (N.Y., 1922), 18; Markens, *Hebrews*, 23-24; Schappes, *JJUS*, 39; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 342 ff.; Byars, *B. and M. Gratz*, 266; Marcus, *AJD*, 443; *AJHQ*, 66:70; Circular of Philip Speyer, N.Y., Mar. 1, 1840, American Fur Company Papers, NYHSL.
24. W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 164; Markens, *Hebrews*, 23-24; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 342, 351, 354; B. & B., *JOUS*, 3:873; "Salomon, Ezekiel," *BDEAJ*; R, no. 448.
25. W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 111, 167, 412, n. 68; Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 130; Gras and Larson, *Casebook*, 325 ff.; Markens, *Hebrews*, 139-40; "New York City," *UJE*, 8:180; P. & K., *Tourist's Guide*, 379; Kull and Kull, *Chronology*, 89; Schappes, *JJUS*, 38; N.Y. *Spectator*, Mar. 21, 1801, p. 3; Robert Sobel, *The Big Board: A History of the New York Stock Market* (N.Y., 1965), 14 ff.
26. Pool, *Old Faith*, 316-17, et passim; Pool, *Portraits*, 289-90; *PAJHS*, 4:215 ff., 21:167, 169, 27:491-92; B. & B., *JOUS*, 1:606, n. 13; Stern, *FAJF*, 266.
27. Barrett, *Old Merchants*, 2:119-29; Pool, *Portraits*, 33, 44-45, 49, 74, 82, 101-3, 142, 161, 307; "Hart, Bernard," *EJ*, *UJE*, *BDEAJ*; *PAJHS*, 21:167, 32:104 ff.; Porter, *John Jacob Astor*, 1:409-10; B. & B., *JOUS*, 2:591-92, 666, n. 231; Glanz, *Folklore*, 166 ff.; *Md. Hist. Mag.*, 19:54-57; Baltimore *Jewish Times*, June 28, 1974, pp. 18, 20, 21.
28. Marcus, *AJD*, 224 ff.; *AJHQ*, 54:99-100, 412, 67:154, n. 100; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 343; *Commentary*, 15(1953):492; Byars, *B. and M. Gratz*, 265; B. Aycrigg to Jacob Gratz, President of the Union Canal Company, privately printed letter, Harrisburg, Pa., 1836, cited in *Aldine Catalogue*, no. 783; "Richmond," *UJE*; E. & L., *Richmond*, 48; Richard D. Arnold, Savannah, to Governor Wilson Lumpkin, Jan. 16, 1834, Georgia Department of Archives and History; *GHQ*, 3:45 ff.; "Charleston," *UJE*; Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 192; *PAJHS*, 27:378; *Charleston Courier*, Sept. 20, 1862, necrology of Michael Lazarus.
29. E. & L., *Richmond*, 30-31, 136; Adams, *Atlas of American History*, 108-9; Markens, *Hebrews*, 94-95; *Md. Hist. Mag.*, 18:365, 376; Blum, *Baltimore*, 4-5.
30. Stern, *FAJF*, 151; B. & B., *JOUS*, 1:92-95, 155-57; Aaron Lazarus, Wilmington, N.C., to John Huske, Nov. 30, 1839, copy in *AJA*; "North Carolina," *UJE*, 8:238; Adams, *Atlas of American History*, 108; Kull and Kull, *Chronology*, 100; Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 205-6; R. & E., *Charleston*, 277, n. 24; Marcus, *Memoirs*, 3:144.
31. Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 192.
32. Marcus, *CAJ*, 2:692 ff.; Marcus, *AJD*, 393 ff.; Faulkner, *American Economic History*, 305; Stern, *FAJF*, 140; *AJA*, 5:46, sub "Judah, Moses." *PAJHS*, 27:398 has a reference to a Moses Judah as a bank director. This may be the same non-Jew.
33. Lopez as garment manufacturer in Marcus, *CAJ*, 2:677 ff.; "Cohen, Abraham Hyam," "Seixas, David G.," *BDEAJ*; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 352; Morais, *Philadelphia*, 343-44, 355; *AJA*, 14:29-30.
34. Marcus, *CAJ*, 2:672 ff.; *PAJHS*, 20:18 ff., 27:370, 377; Pool, *Portraits*, 371-72 (D. G. Seixas); Markens, *Hebrews*, 23, 25-26; R. & E., *Charleston*, 109; Harry Hart, Kingsbury, N.Y., to Aaron Hart, Three Rivers, Canada, Oct. 21, 1787?, Hart Papers, Seminaire de St. Joseph, Three Rivers, Canada; Marcus, *AJD*, 436-38, 461-62; re Levi Bernd (Berndt) and his harness shop in NYC in 1836: Helen Frank, Brookline, Mass., to JRM, n.d., Marcus Collections; for the tanyard and shoe factory in Cheraw, S.C., owned by Joshua Lazarus, see Cora Page Godfrey, Cheraw, S.C., to Mrs. Jacob Raisin,

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36. Rhodes, *Newport Mercury*, no. 166; Marcus, *CAJ*, 2:537; Glanz, *Folklore*, 100, 129, 147-48, 154, 160; *Historia Judaica*, 8:212; *AJA*, 12:3; "United States," *JE*, 12:375; Michael, "Cincinnati," 109, 113, 116, 118-22.
37. *PAJHS*, 6:102, 9:155; Marcus, *CAJ*, 2:688; Trachtenberg, *Easton*, 81; *Report on the Remission of Customs Duties*, 14th Cong., 2d sess., Executive Document, Rep. W. Lowndes, Jan. 2, 1817: C.H. Saunders and Manuel Judah; "Mordecai, Mordecai M.," "Wolfe, Benjamin," *BDEAJ*; *Biographical Encyclopaedia of Kentucky* (Cincinnati, 1878), 650; *History of the Ohio Falls Cities and Their Counties* (Cleveland, 1882), 312-13; Jefferson County, Kentucky, Marriage Book 3, abstract, p. 55, sub Nathaniel Wolfe; Jefferson County, Kentucky, Will Book No. 6, sub N. Wolfe, d. July 3, 1865; Barrett, *Old Merchants*, 3:152-59; E. & L., *Richmond*, 39, 65-66, 77-80, 85, 87-88, 122, 133, 240, 283, 316; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 346, 462, n.18; Davis, *Rodeph Shalom*, 40-41. The Philadelphia distiller, Benjamin Wolf, is not to be confused with the Richmond Benjamin Wolfe (d. 1818); Pool, *Crosby Street Synagogue*, 48-49 for the Wolfes; Stern, *FAJF*, 304.
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39. "Hendricks, Uriah," "Hendricks, Harmon," *BDEAJ*; "Hendricks," *EJ*; Roth, *Anglo-Jewish Letters*, 220; Marcus, *EAJ*, 1:45-47; Stern, *FAJF*, 124; Whiteman, *Hendricks*, 30-324; *PAJHS*, 13:139-41, 43:199 ff., 48:170 ff.; Markens, *Hebrews*, 16-17; Barrett, *Old Merchants*, 1:116-18, 330-31.
40. "Gomez, Benjamin(3)," *BDEAJ*; *R*, nos. 93, 95; *The Colophon*, Part Nine, 1932, n.p.; "Gomez, Benjamin," *UJE*; Gottesman, *Arts and Crafts, 1777-1799*, no. 945, p. 284; B.W. Korn, notes on B. Gomez and N. Judah sent to JRM in Marcus Collections; Friedman, *Pioneers*, 180 ff.
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42. Brigham, *American Newspapers*, 1:672; *R*, nos. 239, 453; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 186; R. & E., *Charleston*, 280, n. 53; *PBSA*, 30:1 ff.; Elmer T.(?) Hutchinson to George J. Miller, July 22, 1951 in Marcus Collections; Borrenstein was suspended from the First Presbyterian Church of Princeton for fraud (1829).
43. Elizer, *A Directory for 1803*; Stern, *FAJF*, 130; Marcus, *AJD*, 117; "Jackson, Solomon Henry," *UJE*, *EJ*; Grinstein, *New York City*, 43, 79, 116, 214, 218, 255, 385; *R*, nos. 190, 258, 265, 272, 278, 284, 291, 352, 382, 395, 418.
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46. Thomas Carlyle to A. Hart, Phila., Jan. 7, 1846, *PAJHS*, 28:xxxiv; R, nos. 375, 407, 408, 460; Markens, *Hebrews*, 77-78; "Hart, Abraham," *DAB, EJ*; Morais, *Philadelphia*, 53 ff.; Louis Ginsberg, *A. Hart: Philadelphia Publisher, 1829-1854* (Petersburg, Va., 1972), 1 ff.; S. Morais, *A Tribute of Respect to the Memory of Abraham Hart* (Phila., 1885), July 24, 1885; Scharf & Westcott, *Philadelphia*, 1:703; *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publication No. 43* (1971):3 ff.; David Crockett and the Jews, *AJA* release, June 22, 1955; *EIAJH*, 217, no. 108; Letters of Abraham Hart to J. Fenimore Cooper, 1844-1845, Yale Library; *AJA*, 5:45.
47. Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 140-43; "Phillips, Henry Myer," *UJE*; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 216. Journalists: "Noah, Mordecai Manuel," *DAB*; R. & E., *Charleston*, 88, 282, n. 73. Economists: "Cardozo, Jacob Newton," *DAB*. Druggists: W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 329-30; B. & B., *JOUS*, 1:134. Dentists: Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 128, 140-43, 203-4. Engineers: "Mordecai, Alfred," *DAB*. Naval Officers: "Levy, Uriah Phillips," *DAB*. Beatrice St. Julien Ravenel, *Architects of Charleston* (Charleston, 1945), 156, 210, 215, 222, 223. Theatre: "New York City," *JE*, 9:271; "Phillips, Aron J.," "Phillips, Jonas B.," *UJE*; *AJA*, 15:21-57; Markens, *Hebrews*, 28-29. For lawyers and physicians, see *infra*; also see the chapter on General Culture.
48. Curti, *American Thought*, 142; *PAJHS*, 19:179-80, 40:119 ff.; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 315; Morais, *Philadelphia*, 331; Henriques, *Jews and the English Law*, 202-6; "Montefiore, Joshua," *DAB, EJ, JE*.
49. Marcus, *Memoirs*, 3:133 ff.; "Myers, Abraham," "Myers, Moses(4)," "Moïse, Abraham(2)," *BDEAJ*; "Phillips, Philip," *Biographical Directory of the American Congress*; Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 128, 141, 163-64, 193, 196, 202, 205-6; B. & B., *JOUS*, 1:251, n. 124, 3:1003, n. 98; Wallace, *Hist. of S.C.*, 2:456; Chapman Levy: B. & B., *JOUS*, 2:376 ff., 384-89, 621-22, nn. 153 ff.; "Levy, Chapman," *UJE, BDEAJ; PAJHS*, 27:483; *AJHQ*, 53:149; Heydenfeldt: *PAJHS*, 10:129 ff.; "Benjamin, Judah Philip," *JE, UJE, EJ, DAB*; Korn, *New Orleans*, 191; "Phillips, Philip," *UJE*.
50. Marcus, *Memoirs*, 1:239; B. & B., *JOUS*, 1:110; Mordecai, Moses(2)," *BDEAJ*; Stern, *FAJF*, 201; Rachel Mordecai, Warrenton, N.C., to Samuel Mordecai, Richmond, May 9, 1807, Mordecai Papers, Duke University; Cohen, *Records of the Myers, Hays, and Mordecai Families*, 40-42.
51. *JSJHS*, 1:7; Stern, *FAJF*, 217; E. & L., *Richmond*, 60-62, 89.
52. Markens, *Hebrews*, 21-22; *PAJHS*, 10:108 ff., 22:147 ff.; "Zuntz, Judah," "Judah, Samuel B.H.," "Simson, Sampson (2)," *BDEAJ*; "New York City," *JE*, 9:270-71.
53. W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 202, 350-51; "Levy, Moses(4)," "Levy, Samson(2)," "Levy, Daniel(2)," *BDEAJ; PAJHS*, 22:139 ff.; Morais, *Philadelphia*, 38-41, 49, 202, 409 ff., 431; David Paul Brown (ed.), *The Forum, or Forty Years Full Practice and the Philadelphia Bar* (Phila., 1856), 542 ff.; *National Genealogical Quarterly*, Sept., 1956, 96; Friedman, *Pilgrims*, 79 ff.; Byars, *B. and M. Gratz*, 278. Alexander Hamilton, as lawyer, was attorney in a number of cases in which Jews were involved. See Julius Goebel, Jr. (ed.) *The Law Practice of Alexander Hamilton, etc.* (N.Y., 1964), 170, 175, 293, 448, et passim. See also *Alexander Hamilton Legal Papers*, 2d series, vol. 11, LC.
54. *PAJHS*, 22:147; Yogev, *Diamonds and Coral*, 329, n.100; Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:398-99; Marcus, *CAJ*, 1:375-76.
55. Marcus, *EAJ*, 1:282-83; "Hart, Benjamin," *BDEAJ*; "Hart," *UJE*; Kagan, *Contributions*, 2-8; E. & L., *Richmond*, 140, 201; *PAJHS*, 2:151, 46:101 ff.; Korn, *New Orleans*, 327, n. 35.
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57. Kagan, *Contributions*, 26-27; "Horowitz, Jonathan Phineas," *UJE*; *Md. Hist. Mag.*, 19:58-59; "Myers, Naphtali Hart," *BDEAJ*; B. & B., *JOUS*, 2:606, n. 9; Wolf, *Essays*, 244-45. Diabetes: "Medicine," *EJ*, 11:1185. Hart: *PAJHS*, 22:161-62; "Hart, Joel," *BDEAJ*; *PAJHS*, 4:217, 22:162-63; "Abrahams, Isaac," "Judah, Walter," *UJE*, *BDEAJ*; Pool, *Portraits*, 268-70; *AJA*, 14:26 ff.; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 330, 482-83, nn. 40-44.
58. W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 325 ff., 480; Kagan, *Contributions*, 9, 484-85; Morais, *Philadelphia*, 416, 428; *Elzas*, *Jews of S.C.*, 141-42, 241-42; R. & E., *Charleston*, 88-89, 281, n. 71.
59. "Phillips, Aaron J.," "Phillips, Jonas," "Phillips, Manuel," "Phillips, Naphtali," "Phillips, Zalegman," *BDEAJ*; Stern, *FAJF*, 243; *AJHQ*, 67:101 ff., 108-9; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 184-85, 413-14, 417.
60. For Barnard and Michael Gratz, see the Indices to Marcus, *CAJ*, and Marcus, *EAF*; see also *DAB* and Byars, *B. and M. Gratz*, 7 ff., 256-304; East, *Business Enterprise*, 271, 316; E. & L., *Richmond*, 33 ff., for Myer Derkheim, and W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 331 ff., for D. G. Seixas as illustrations of vocational mobility.
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63. B. & B., *JOUS*, 1:193; R. & E., *Charleston*, 51; *Papers of James Madison*, 9:256-57, n. 2, 298, 408, 10:52-53; Schappes, *DHJUS*, 92 ff.; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 174, 429, n. 33; Russell, *Haym Salomon*, 272-75.
64. Stern, *FAJF*, 29; Trachtenberg, *Easton*, 92 ff.; *AJHQ*, 67:121-24; Bayard Tuckerman (ed.), *Diary of Philip Hone* (N.Y., 1889), 2:98; B. & B., *JOUS*, 3:802; Isaac Franks, Ephrata, Pa., to Benjamin Rush, Phila., June 25, 1810(1818?), Library Company of Phila.; *PAJHS*, 10:98, 27:337; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 174.
65. *PAJHS*, 21:2-3; E. & L., *Richmond*, 81, 83.
66. E. & L., *Richmond*, 80, 83; Byars, *B. and M. Gratz*, 236-38; Appearance Docket, Court of Common Pleas, 1789-1794, Allegheny County Court House, Prothonotary Office; Whiteman, *Hendricks*, 45; Petition of Isaac Suares and Bernard Johnson, Charleston, to President Jefferson, Feb. 28, 1805, Bixby Collection, MOHSL; *AJHQ*, 66:315, 67:115-20, 250; Petition of Philip Lyon and Daniel Longstreet re the absconding broker Lazarus Barnet to the Pennsylvania State Assembly, Feb. 28, 1785, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission Library, copy in Marcus Collections; Glanz, *Folklore*, 107; Barrett, *Old Merchants*, 3(no. 2):45-49; *Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, 26:29-30, 32-33, 302-4, for Isaac Roget who collected insurance fraudulently; J. S. Levi & G. F. J. Bergman, *Australian Genesis: Jewish Convicts and Settlers, 1788-1850* (Adelaide, Australia, 1974), 122 ff.
67. Rupp, *He Pasa Ekklesia*, 360; Schappes, *DHJUS*, 20-22; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 173-75; "Charleston," *UJE*, 3:116; *AJHQ*, 67:258.
68. Marcus, *CAJ*, 1:279, et passim; Taxlists: NYHS *Collections* (1912), 319-20, 322-23, 325-27, 337, 345, 358-59, 362, 369-70, 372; "Beach, Moses Yale," *DAB*; Carman and Syrett, *History*, 488-89; Donald B. Cole, *Handbook of American History* (N.Y., 1968), 115. For the Hermanns and Judah Touro, see Korn, *New Orleans*; for Joseph Marx, Samuel Myers, and Slowey Hays, see E. & L., *Richmond*; for Ettings and Cohens, see *UJE*; for John Moss and the Gratzes, see W. & W., *Philadelphia*; for Moses M. Hays and Abraham Touro, see *UJE*; for the Simsons, Gomezes, Frankses, Isaac Moses, see Marcus, *CAJ*; for Benjamin Seixas, Simon Nathan, see *BDEAJ*; for the Hendrickses, see

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69. Meade, *Judah P. Benjamin*, 47 ff.; "Benjamin, Judah Philip," *EJ*; Wills of Esther and Mordecai Sheftall, Abigail and Philip Minis, in Chatham County Court of Ordinary, copies in the AJAr; Sheftall Records in the Levy collection in Savannah; *AJHQ*, 53:148-49; B. & B., *JOUS*, 1:104-5; R. & E., *Charleston*, 70.
70. Elcan: Inventory and appraisal record in the Chancery Court of the City of Richmond; E. & L., *Richmond*, 335; 1788 manuscript taxlist in the Heth Collection of the University of Virginia Library; Morais, *Philadelphia*, 50-51, 447; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 266, 350, 352, 461, n. 16, 490, n. 94; Leeser, *Discourses*, 2:399.
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73. "Elizer, Eleazer," "Elizer, Isaac," *BDEAJ*; Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 128, 141, 172-204; Elizer, *A Directory for 1803*.
74. *AJHQ*, 67:104 ff., 123, 246 ff., 258-59; E. & L., *Richmond*, 133.
75. Michael, "Cincinnati," 116; Brickner, "Cincinnati," 254-55; Lewis, "Cincinnati Jewish Businessmen"; Wm. A. Greenebaum, "A Study of the Economic Activity of Cincinnati Jewry Prior to the Civil War," (M.A. thesis, HUC, 1957); Morais, *Philadelphia*, 444 ff.; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 354-56; Tarshish, "American Judaism," n. 89; Schappes, *JJUS*, 38; Kraus, "Philadelphia Jewish Businessmen."
76. Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 166, et passim.
77. Fish, *Common Man*, 71.
78. Marcus, *AJD*, 211, 213, 217-27; *PAJHS*, 2:83; "Simson, Sampson," *BDEAJ*; Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 194; Fein, *Baltimore*, 22.
79. Morais, *Philadelphia*, 444-47; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 183; Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:428; *Memorial of the 90th Birthday Anniversary of Jonas Friedenwald* (Baltimore, 1891), 12.
80. Morais, *Philadelphia*, 445 ff.; Marcus, *CAJ*, 2:535, et passim; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 351 ff.

CHAPTER SIX

JUDAISM IN THE UNITED STATES:

THE STRUCTURE 1776-1840

1. Byars, B. and M. Gratz, 271-72; *Journal of Lancaster County Historical Society*, 80(no.4):230.
2. *SCHGM*, 3:63; Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 116; Ellis, *Am. Catholicism*, 44; Byars, B. and M. Gratz, 52.
3. Rodeph Shalom, Phila., Minutes, Mar. 22, 1840; Skirball, "Rodeph Shalom," 40; Davis, *Rodeph Shalom*, 11-58, esp. 15 ff., 32; "Philadelphia," *JE*, *UJE*, *EJ*; *PAJHS*, 9:123-27; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 225-27; Morais, *Philadelphia*, 84-85.
4. Harris, *Columbia*, 8-9; Michael, "Cincinnati," 31; *PAJHS*, 8:43 ff., 10:97-99; Schappes, *DHJUS*, 177 ff.
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6. Bloom, *Amsterdam*, 27; Hertz, *Authorized Daily Prayer Book*, 491; Stern on the Chatham Square Cemetery; Goldstein, *Cent. of Jud. in NYC*, 56, et passim.
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12. *PAJHS*, 1:100-101; "Louisville," *EJ*; Makovsky, *The Philipsons; "St. Louis," JE, UJE, EJ*.
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14. Trachtenberg, *Easton*, 115-16, 129 ff., 319, n. 3.
15. Berman, *Richmond*, 135-40; Edward N. Calisch, *The Light Burns On, 1841-1941* (Richmond, Va., 1941), 13-14; *PAJHS*, 4:23; "Richmond," *EJ*.
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19. "Savannah," *UJE, EJ; Occ.*, 1:249, 486-89; Mickve Israel, Savannah, Minutes, Sept. 20, 1795, June 6, 1832, July 13, 1838, Aug. 19, 1839, Aug. 3, 1840; Sussman, "Religious Life of Savannah," 12; Hershman, "Mikveh Israel," 20-21; Markens, *Hebrews*, 50-52; Mikveh Israel, Phila., Trustees Minutes, 1790-1843; Marcus, *AJD*, 172-81; Schappes, *DHJUS*, 77-78; B. & B., *JOUS*, 2:572-77; 3:686-90; *PAJHS*, 4:219-20, 20:21; R, no. 212.
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23. E. & L., *Richmond*, 32 ff., 236 ff., 239-41, 281-82; Marcus, *AJD*, 144-48; "Richmond," *EJ; PAJHS*, 4:21 ff.; Cohen, "Isaac Leeser"; Berman, *Richmond*, 102-3.
24. Joseph Gratz, Phila., to J. I. Cohen, Jr., Baltimore, May 11, 1824, and Joseph Gratz, Phila., to Solomon Etting, Baltimore, May 11, 1824, Mikveh Israel, Phila., Correspondence; E. & L., *Richmond*, 31; *Baltimore Jewish Times*, June 28, 1974, the Aberbach articles; Stiffman, "Baltimore," 36; Mikveh Israel, Phila., Managers Minutes, Jan. 14,

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 27. Pool, *Mill Street Synagogue*, 55; *PAJHS*, 27:252; *Beth Elohim, Charleston Constitution* (1820), 14; *Beth Elohim, Charleston, Constitution* (1836), 15.
 28. Mikveh Israel, Phila., "Report of Treasurer of the Building Committee to the Parnas, 1822-24," *AJA*; see also Mikveh Israel, Phila., Managers Minutes, Mar. 6, 1825, for the report; Liebowitz, "Mikveh Israel of Philadelphia," 9-12; Morais, *Philadelphia*, 43 ff.; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 228-29, 244 ff.; *PAJHS*, 31:181; R, no. 278; *AJA*, 27:216-19; Zimmerman, "Mikveh Israel," 10-14; *Niles Weekly*, 23:275, Jan. 4, 1823; *Dedication of the New Synagogue of the Congregation Mikveh Israel at Broad and York Streets on September 14, 1909 Elul 29 5669* (Phila., 1909), 17, 24; Rebecca Gratz, Phila., to B. Gratz, Lexington, Feb. 27, 1825, copy in *AJA*; Mikveh Israel, Phila., Trustee Minutes, Mar. 27, 1825; *Occ.* 13:60. Under Leeser a member of the congregation began publishing Jewish liturgical music for the first time in the U.S. Karff, "Mikveh Israel"; Fox, "Mikveh Israel," 9-10, 13-14.
 29. Marcus, *AJD*, 144-46, 148 ff., 150; Pool, *Old Faith*, 262 ff.
 30. Pool, *Mill Street Synagogue*, 67.
 31. Marcus, *CAJ*, 2:869; *PAJHS*, 6:131, 27:134 ff.; Marcus, *AJD*, 148; B. & B., *JOUS*, 2:517-18; Morison, *History*, 293; Stokes, *Church and State*, 1:861; Stern, *AJD*, 190; Pool, *Mill Street Synagogue*, 59; Whiteman, *Hendricks*, 147.
 32. Pool, *Portraits*, 428 ff.; Stern, *FAJF*, 265; R, nos. 134, 382, 395; *PAJHS*, 21:xxiii-xxiv, 196-210, 27:134 ff., 37:203 ff.; Pool, *Old Faith*, 170-80; Jerusalem, "Shearith Israel," 1-3; New York State Act: passed Apr. 6, 1784, as cited in Shearith Israel, N.Y., Minutes, 1784; Grinstein, *New York City*, 39; Shearith Israel, N.Y., Constitutions, 1805, 1835; *Report of the Proceedings in the Case of Mrs. Anne Seixas* (N.Y., 1823), Aug. 12, 1823 (Mrs. Seixas's pension was to run till 1827 though the report was in 1823); Pool, *Crosby Street Synagogue*, 22 ff.; E. & L., *Richmond*, 73-74, 83, 129-30.
 33. Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 132, n.2, 288; Trachtenberg, *Easton*, 129, 131; see Shearith Israel, N.Y., Constitution, 1805, Art. 10; Skirball, "Rodeph Shalom," 26; Pool, *Mill Street Synagogue*, 57 ff.; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 118; Pool, *Crosby Street Synagogue*, 32-33; Anshe Chesed, N.Y., Minutes, May 10, 1840.
 34. Pool, *Portraits*, vii, 509; Devine, "Sephardic Jews," 122; R, no. 291; Fein, *Baltimore*, 19-23.
 35. Anshe Chesed, N.Y., Minutes, Feb. 9, Aug. 29, 1836, June 2, 1839; Korn, *New Orleans*, 196-97; E. & L., *Richmond*, 281-84; Fein, *Baltimore*, 54; Blum, *Baltimore*, 4; *Md. Hist. Mag.*, 15:9-10. Cemeteries: Devine, "Sephardic Jews," 122; Trachtenberg, *Easton*, 79-80; *PAJHS*, 8:54-55; Marcus, *CAJ*, 2:872, 888-89; Korn, *New Orleans*, 203-5; "Savannah," *EJ*; Elzas, *Old Cemeteries*, 103-4; R. & E., *Charleston*, 152-53, 301, n. 208; Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 35, 293; Grinstein, *New York City*, 66, 313 ff. Burial of intermarried: *Beth Elohim, Charleston, Constitution* (1836), 16-17; *Gates of Mercy, New Orleans, Constitution*, 12; Marcus, *AJD*, 122, 128 ff., 139-41; *Mikveh Israel, Phila., Constitution* (1824); *Mikveh Israel, Phila., Constitution* (1841); Shearith Israel, N.Y., Minutes, 1776-1840; Beth Shalome, Richmond, Resolution (before 1818); W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 24-25; R, no. 169; Bloom, "Mikveh Israel"; Berman, "Mikveh Israel"; Rules and Regulations of the Congregation K.K. Mikveh Israel, Phila., 1813, copy in *AJA*; Mickve Israel, Savannah, Minutes; Hershman, "Mikveh Israel," 7, 14, 16; Sussman, "Religious Life of

- Savannah," 9, 17; Mikveh Israel, Phila., Trustees Minutes, 1782-1840; Shearith Israel, N.Y., Constitution (1805); B. & B., *JOUS*, 2:517; *PAJHS*, 6:131-32, 27:270 ff., 42-430; Channing, *History*, 5:208; *Nitzy Israel, Baltimore, Constitution*; Guttmacher, *Baltimore*, 20, 21; Anshe Chesed, N.Y., *Auszug*, 1839; Margolis, "Shearith Israel"; Pool, *Old Faith*, 178, 305; S.F. Chyet, "Early Nineteenth Century American Jewry as Reflected in the Minute Book of Congregation Mikve Israel, Philadelphia, 1796-1811," (HUC term paper, 1956); Beth Shalome, Richmond, Constitution; E. & L., *Richmond* 281-85; *SCHGM*, 27:223-24; Elzas, *Beth Elohim*; Fox, "Mikveh Israel," 6-7.
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 37. This was the case of The State vs. Solomon Moses; Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 154-55, 246, 282 ff.; Elzas, *Beth Elohim*; Tobias, *Hebrew Benevolent Society*, 2, 4-8; *PAJHS*, 42:431; Pool, *Portraits*, 93-104; W. & W. *Philadelphia*, 266-70; Saul Jacob Rubin, *Third to None: The Saga of Savannah Jewry* (Savannah, 1983), 5, 38, 46, 59, 188; Richmond also had an Ezrat Orechim; Pool, *Old Faith*, 263, 268, 352-53, 354-57; Grinstein, *New York City*, 313 ff.; Jerusalem, "Shearith Israel," 10-11; Mikveh Israel, Phila., Trustees Minutes, 1782-1840; *Md. Hist. Mag.*, 18:369; Mickve Israel, Savannah, Minutes, 1790 and on; Davis, *Rodeph Shalom*, 6, 13, 14-15, 20, 28-29; Goldstein, *Cent. of Jud. in NYC*, 78; *PAJHS*, 6:131-32, 42:431; R, no. 291; "Cemeteries," *Philadelphia*, *EJ*; Fein, *Baltimore*, 19-20; Guttmacher, *Baltimore*, 24-25; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 261; Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 246, 282 ff.; R. & E., *Charleston*, 302; Harris, *Columbia*, 7-8, 15; Elzas, *Old Cemeteries*, 3-4, 103-4; Goodman, "Spruce Street Cemetery."
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 39. Anshe Chesed, N.Y., Minutes, June 6, 1836. A reference to an *Inlag* (*Einlage*?) Book; Guttmacher, *Baltimore*, 26-27; New York, 1805: R, no. 134; see also R, nos. 169, 246, 256, 262, 270, 272, 302, 307, 316, 357, 395, 401, 403, 423, 443; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 229, 447, n. 28; Skirball, "Rodeph Shalom," 9-17; Davis, *Rodeph Shalom*, 15 ff.; Marcus, *AJD*, 144-46; *Beth Elohim, Charleston, Constitution* (1820), 17-18.
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 44. Pool, *Old Faith*, 46, 94.
 45. Devine, "Sephardic Jews," 78; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 255; Liebowitz, "Mikveh Israel of Philadelphia," 24-25; R. & E., *Charleston*, 245-46.
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48. Davis, *Rodeph Shalom*, 18; Goldstein, *Cent. of Jud. in NYC*, 77 ff.
49. Moses, *Oration*, 26–27; Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 132, n. 2.
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52. *PAJHS*, 27:185 ff.; Byars, *B. and M. Gratz*, 52; Cohen, "Isaac Leeser"; R., nos. 284, 411, 418, 636; Pool, *Portraits*, 358–59; Schappes, *DHJUS*, 155; Berman, *Richmond*, 103; Mikveh Israel, Phila., Resolutions, Jan. 9, Mar. 27, 1825; *Occ.*, 1:143–44.
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55. Grinstein, *New York City*, 286; "Etting, Samuel," "Etting, Henry," *BDEAJ*; B. & B., *JOUS*, 2:588; for the Etings, see Marcus LB, 875–76.
56. "Levirate Marriage," *JE*; Devine, "Sephardic Jews," 98–99; Marcus, *AJD*, 134 ff.; *PAJHS*, 2:69–70, 27:172–73, 239.
57. Berman, *Richmond*, 103; Sheftall Sheftall, Phila., to Mordecai Sheftall, Savannah, Apr. 6, 1792, Marcus LB, 689, no. 96; Gutstein, *Newport*, 103; George Champlin Mason, *Reminiscences of Newport* (Newport, 1884), 55; Samuel Mordecai, Richmond, to Rachel Mordecai, Warrenton, N.C., Sept. 16, 1805, Marcus LB, 774, no. 113.
58. "Dietary Laws," *JE*, *UJE*; Beerman, "Rebecca Gratz," 43; R. Gratz, Phila., to Miriam Moses Cohen, Savannah, July 31, 1836, Gratz Papers, Univ. of N.C.
59. Grinstein, *New York City*, 140–41, 300.
60. Marcus, *CAJ*, 2:938, 986; "Etting, Solomon(1)," "Hart, Ephraim," Sheftall, Mordecai(1)," *BDEAJ*; *PAJHS*, 21:164, 25:31–62, 27:327–28, 399; Pool, *Old Faith*, 239 ff.; B. & B., *JOUS*, 2:524–28, 652–53, nn. 62–63; Trachtenberg, *Easton*, 75; Beerman, "Rebecca Gratz," 43; Markens, *Hebrews*, 31–32; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 125, 416, n. 54; Isaac Moses Receipt Book for Apr. 22, 1785–July 23, 1787, payment to A. Van Ottingen, for killing poultry for Moses, May 1, 1785, *AJHSL*; Berman, *Shehitah*, 287 ff.; Shearith Israel, N.Y., Minutes, 20th of Nissán 5569 (Apr. 1809), 190 ff.
61. Aguilar, *Spirit of Judaism*, Preface; B. & B., *JOUS*, 3:955.
62. Duschinsky, *Rabbinate of the Great Synagogue*, 133; Grinstein, *New York City*, 266–67; R. & E., *Charleston*, 290, n. 134; Marcus, *AJW*, 56; Marcus, *AJWD*, 133–34; Marcus, *Memoirs*, 1:172–73; B. & B., *JOUS*, 1:199–201, 2:524–32, 3:872–74; *AJA*, 6:93–94; Goldstein, *Cent. of Jud. in NYC*, 50, 83 ff.; *PAJHS*, 27:104, 239, 344; Henry Etting, Washington, D. C., to Benjamin Etting, Phila., Jan. 8, 1826, Etting Correspondence, HSP; Lebeson, *Pilgrim People*, 154; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 125, 139–41; Devine, "Sephardic Jews," 121; Marcus, *CAJ*, 2:877; Marcus, *AJD*, 140–41; Beerman, "Rebecca Gratz," 43; 1782 prayer for George Washington and the Continental Congress by Seixas in *Memorable Documents in American Jewish History* (*AJHS*, N.Y., 1946), 7; Marcus *Festschrift*, 540.
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64. Goldstein, *Cent. of Jud. in NYC*, 81 ff.; E. Lyte, N.Y., to Abraham Pinto, N.Y., Feb. 2, 1796 Marcus LB, 730–32, no. 104; Shearith Israel, N.Y., Minutes, Apr. 30, 1832; "Hart, Emanuel Bernard," *Biographical Directory of the American Congress*. Pollack:

- Mickve Israel, Savannah, Minutes, Aug. 25, Sept. 1, 1793; Mikveh Israel, Phila., Trustees Minutes, 1783; B. & B., *JOUS*, 2:522-23; Marcus, "Gershom Seixas," 418-19; *PAJHS*, 21:157 ff.
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66. *AJHQ*, 53:345; Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, 365; Grinstein, *New York City*, 343-44.
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68. Marcus, *AJD*, 180; Leeser, *Discourses*, 1:90, 162, 199, 366; Hershman, "Mikveh Israel," 3, 5-6; Mickve Israel, Savannah, Minutes, Oct. 2, 1791, Mar. 11, 1792; *PAJHS*, 21:157 ff.; Shearith Israel, N.Y., Minutes, Aug. 11, 1809, re Lyon Jonas; "Jonas, Lyon," *BDEAJ*.
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72. Leeser, *Discourses*, 1:14-25, 349, 396-97, 2:1-17, 74, 161-82, especially p. 168, 232-53, especially p. 251; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 131; Grinstein, *New York City*, 372-81; Rebecca Gratz, Phila., to Miriam G. Cohen, Savannah, Apr. 29, 1839, Marcus LB, 1036-37, no. 147. J.R. Cohen and the widow: W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 126 ff.; Mikveh Israel, Phila., Trustees Minutes, for 1782; Marcus, *AJD*, 52-53, 138 ff.
73. Slowey Hays, Richmond, to Rebecca Gratz, Phila., Oct. 19, 1832, Bortman-Larus Collection. Petersburg: Marcus, *AJD*, 51 ff.; Schappes, *DHJUS*, 187 ff.; Leeser, *Discourses*, 1:396-98, 3:164-66; Berk, *History of the Jews*, 302; T. Seixas, N.Y., to I.L., Oct. 27, 1833, Leeser Papers in Marcus Collections; Mrs. Benjamin I. Cohen(?), Baltimore, to her daughter, June 25, 1840, Marcus LB, 940-42, no. 135.

74. Berman, *Richmond*, 99, 117-19; B. & B., *JOUS*, 2:502-5; *PAJHS*, 27:158-59; Marcus, *Studies*, 121 ff.
75. Shearith Israel, N.Y., Constitutions, (1790) (1805); Marcus, *AJD*, 148-67; B. & B., *JOUS*, 2:517-21; *Beth Elohim, Charleston, Constitution* (1820); Grinstein, *New York City*, 298; Devine, "Sephardic Jews," 133; Bloom, "Mikveh Israel"; *PAJHS*, 21:158-59; Liebowitz, "Mikveh Israel of Philadelphia," 38.

CHAPTER SEVEN

JUDAISM IN THE UNITED STATES:

LEADERSHIP 1776-1840

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2. Berman, *Richmond*, 36 ff., 47; Stern, *FAJF*, 217; E. & L., *Richmond*, 17 ff., 60-62; *Richmond News Leader*, Sept. 15, 1922; "Mordecai, Jacob," "Kursheedt, Israel Baer," *BDEAJ*.
3. Bartlett, *Familiar Quotations*, (13th ed., Boston, 1955), 1012a. Dyer: Fein, *Baltimore*, 47-48; Guttmacher, *Baltimore*, 27 ff.; Stern, *FAJF*, 62; *PAJHS*, 2:148-49; Dyer Papers in *AJA*.
4. Rosenbach, *Dedication of the New Synagogue of the Congregation Mikve Israel, etc.* (Phila., 1909), 25; Pool, *Old Faith*, 502-3.
5. Duschinsky, *Rabbinat of the Great Synagogue*, 95; Goldstein, *Cent. of Jud. in NYC*, 92-93; Fein, *Baltimore*, 54 ff., et passim; Guttmacher, *Baltimore*, 27.
6. Korn, *New Orleans*, 195-96, 197, 199-209, 214-15, 237, 240-45; Marcus, *AJD*, 67-68; Powell, *Bring Out Your Dead*, 104-5; Pool, *Portraits*, 430 ff.
7. R, no. 181.
8. Markens, *Hebrews*, 279-80; *Menorah Journal*, 24:278-88; Carvalho, *Seixas*; *PAJHS*, 27:463-64, 35:189 ff.; R, nos. 176, 181; B. & B., *JOUS*, 1:294-95, n. 90; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 249 ff.; Goldberg, *Major Noah*, 51-53; Morais, *Philadelphia*, 43; G. Seixas, N.Y., to Sarah Kursheedt, Richmond, May 24, 1815, *AJHSL*.
9. "Hart," *UJE*, 5:224; Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:157.
10. Pool, *Portraits*, 360 ff.; Grinstein, *New York City*, 229; Marcus, "Gershom Seixas," 409 ff.; Marcus, *AJD*, 189; G. Seixas, Phila., to Hayman Levy, N.Y., Dec. 21, 1783, in Marcus, *EAJ*, 1:96-98; Seixas, N.Y., to Electors of S.I., Nov. 22, 1801, Marcus LB, 946-48, no. 136; *PAJHS*, 27:130 ff., 35:190, 197, 203-4 for the letter of Jan. 23, 1814.
11. *PAJHS*, 21:146, 27:129-30; *PAJHS*, 21:148; Marcus, "Gershom Seixas," 431.
12. Carvalho, *Seixas*.
13. Jacob Mordecai, Richmond, to M.I., Phila., June 15, 1824, in W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 455, n. 57; Marcus, "Gershom Seixas," 409 ff.; *AJHQ*, 58:445 ff.; Carvalho, *Seixas*, 17; *PAJHS*, 27:129 ff.; R, nos. 181, 185, 187; Grinstein, *New York City*, 84-88; Finkelstein, *The Jews* (1960), 490-91, 493.
14. Leeser, *Discourses*, 1:iii.
15. David H. Solis, Phila., to I.L., Phila., Mar. 7, 1837, Emily Solis-Cohen Collection in Marcus Collections. The Cohen Collection no doubt was originally part of the Leeser Collection; Stern, *FAJF*, 153; E. & L., *Richmond*, 38-39, 54-56; Bevis Marks correspondence with Philadelphia, Dec. 29, 1828, copy in Marcus Collections; Beerman, "Rebecca Gratz," 17; Philipson, *Rebecca Gratz Letters*, 108-9, 193; Cohen, "Isaac Leeser"; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 372-73; Jacob Mordecai, Richmond, to Raphael de Cordova, Phila., June 10, 1829, Leeser Papers in Marcus Collections; Raphael de Cordova, Phila., to I.L., Richmond, June 29, 1829, Marcus LB, 1000, n.145a; *Occ.*, 1:258, 2:463, 10:21 ff., 11:355, 25:593 ff.; *AJA* 21:140 ff.; M. & M., *History*, 650; Adler, *Cat.*

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16. Jung, *Guardians*, 252-53; Berman, "Mikveh Israel"; I.L. to M.I., Aug. 25, 1831, copy in Leeser Papers in Marcus Collections; *Occ.*, 7:376-77, 567 ff., 9:105 ff., 110, 10:21 ff., 16:46 ff.; I.L. to Uncle Zalma, Baltimore, Ab 28, 5597 (Aug. 1837), Zalma Rehine, Baltimore to I.L., Apr. 21, 1836, I.L. to M.I., Phila., May 15, 1840, I.L. to M.N. Nathan, N.O., Mar. 1, 1850, copies in Marcus Collections; Cohen, "Isaac Leeser"; I.L. to Uncle Zalma, Cheschwan 28th, 5597 (Nov. 1836), copy in Marcus Collections; Zimmerman, "Mikveh Israel," 14; H. Shapiro, "Was Isaac Leeser an Orthodox Jew, a Modern Orthodox Jew, or a Conservative Jew?," (HUC term paper, 1966); Beerman, "Rebecca Gratz," 37-38; Rebecca Gratz, Phila., to Maria G. Gratz, Lexington, Ky., Apr. 18, 1830, *AJHS*; Leeser, *Discourses*, 3:76; Mikveh Israel, Phila., Managers Minutes, Oct. 21, 1849, Sept. 24, 1850, Apr. 14, June 8, 1851; *Review of the Late Controversies*: R. no. 681; Mikveh Israel, Phila., Trustees Minutes, May 13, 1849, Mar. 24, Apr. 28, 1850; *A Review of "The Review" of the Late Controversy Between the Rev. Isaac Leeser and the Philadelphia Congregation, "Mikveh Israel," by An Israelite* (N.Y., 1850): R., no. 682; Bennett, "Isaac Leeser," 168 ff.; Kohler, *Simon Wolf Addresses*, 97 ff.; Leeser, *Form of Prayers*, Preface; Liebowitz, "Mikveh Israel of Philadelphia," 30-32.
 17. Hudson, *Am. Prot.*, 90-96; Krout and Fox, *Completion of Independence*, chap. 10.
 18. Sweet, *Story of Religion in America*, chap. 1; Koch, *Republican Religion*, 205 ff., 292, 297; Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, 364-80, 387, 416, 513, 637-38; Hudson, *Am. Prot.*, vi, 81-83; Hudson, *Religion in America*, 131-57, 173 ff.; D. Runes, *The Dictionary of Philosophy* (N.Y., n.d.), "Transcendentalism"; Curti, *American Thought*, 185-204; Cohen, *Elements of the Jewish Faith*, 7; Leeser, *Instruction in the Mosaic Religion*, 13.
 19. "Theology," JE.
 20. Hertz, *Authorised Daily Prayer Book*, 254; References for messianic name: Isa. 11:12, Dispersed of Judah; see Marcus, *CAJ*, 2:868-69, 877; R, no. 97.
 21. Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, 575 ff.; Stiles, *Diary*, 1:19, 42; *PAJHS*, 27:34-37, 129, 26:127 ff., 35:203-4; R, nos. 97, 98, 99, 106, 107, 110, 113, 174, 206, 352; Marcus, *AJD*, 147; Roth, *History of the Jews in England*, 243, 287-88; Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 130, n. 22; Seixas, *Discourse* (1798); Marcus, "Gershom Seixas," 447-62; *Zion*, 15:105-34, English summary ix-x; Raphael Mahler, *A History of Modern Jewry* (London, 1971), 12-14; Noah, *Discourse* (1818); Leeser, *Instruction in the Mosaic Religion*, 94; Leeser, *Discourses*, 1:251-60, 2:253 ff., 7:395-96; Grinstein, *New York City*, 443 ff.; Bennett, "Isaac Leeser," 44-45; Seller, "Isaac Leeser," chaps. 4-5.
 22. Cohen, "Isaac Leeser"; Leeser, *Catechism*, 30, 33 ff.; Leeser, *Discourses*, 1:312-14, 324, 353-54, 3:291, 7:250, 9:95; *PAJHS*, 20:158; Curti, *American Thought*, 206; James M. Bennett, "A Study of the Mind of Isaac Leeser as Reflected in his Published *Discourses*, Volumes VII-VIII, 1847-1850," (HUC term paper, 1981), 11; Seller, "Isaac Leeser," chap. 3.
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 24. Leeser, *Discourses*, 2:51, 7:173, 9:120-21, 218-20; Bennett, "Isaac Leeser," 44; Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, xviii.
 25. Leeser, *Discourses*, 1:261, 9:73 ff.; Seller, "Isaac Leeser," chap. 5, 116 ff.; *CCARYB*, 28:246; *Occ.*, 25:1-13; Cohen, "Isaac Leeser."
 26. Cohen, *Elements of the Jewish Faith*, 7; *CCARYB*, 28:227; *Occ.*, 1:524-25; Leeser, *Discourses*, 2:385 ff., 3:301 ff., 9:1 ff.; Rosenbloom, "Rebecca Gratz," 246-47; Leeser, *Catechism*; Leeser, *Jews and the Mosaic Law*, Part 2, 225 ff.; Marcus, "Gershom Seixas," 464-66; Sussman, "Jewish Intellectual Activity," 141-44; Theodore S. Levy, "The Place of

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27. Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, xvii.
 28. Leeser, *Instruction in the Mosaic Religion*, 80-85, 104; Cohen, "Isaac Leeser"; "Sutro, Abraham," *JE, JL; A Review of the late Controversies*; Leeser, *Discourses*, 3:135-37, 6:43, 82, 9:73 ff.; *Conservative Judaism*, 23:67-75; Bennett, "Isaac Leeser," 178; "Lichtenstein, Hillel," "Johlnson, Joseph," *JE*; "Johlnson, Josef," *JL*.
 29. Marcus, *Memoirs*, 2:58-87; Seller, "Isaac Leeser," chap. 5; Channing, *History*, 5:222; Sweet, *Story of Religion in America*, chap. 16; CCARYB, 28:230; Cohen, "Isaac Leeser"; Sanford Seltzer, "Theology of Isaac Leeser as Imparted to the Children of the First Half of the 19th Century," (HUC term paper, n.d.); *Occ.*, 1:410-12; Leeser, *Discourses*, 2:365-66, 3:322; I.L. to M.I., Mar. 31, 1833, copy in Marcus Collections.
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 32. Louis Bernstein, "The Emergence of the English Speaking Orthodox Rabbinate" (Ph.D. diss., Yeshiva U., 1977), 4-6; Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, xiv; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 292; Grinstein, *New York City*, 86-89, 269-70, 543, n. 13; B. & B., *JOUS*, 2:543, 566-71, 661, n. 169; *PAJHS*, 21:221, 223, 27:342, 48:213, n. 34; R, nos. 39, 80, 118, 181, 185, 187, 199, 212; "Leeser, Isaac," *JE*; Hyamson, *Jews in England*, 241, 254-56; Leeser, *Discourses*, 1:1-2; Lance Sussman, "Another Look at Isaac Leeser and the First Jewish Translation of the Bible in the U.S.," (paper delivered at HUC, Mar. 1984), p. 9, copy in Marcus Collections; *Review of the Late Controversies*, 15; Cohen, "Isaac Leeser"; Joseph L. Blau, *Judaism in America* (Chicago, 1976), 37-38; I.L. to Congregation, Aug. 28, 1842, copy in Marcus Collections; R. & E., *Charleston*, 123, 139-42, 144, 295-96, n. 175; Mendes Cohen, Baltimore, to I.L., July 22, 1849, *AJAR*; *Occ.*, 13:401; Marcus, *Memoirs*, 2:87; Rosa Mordecai, "Necrology on Isaac Leeser," typescript, Feb. 4, 1868, copy in Marcus Collections.
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 34. *Occ.*, 2:411.
 35. Stern, *FAJF*, 242; Levine, *Am. Jew. Bibliography*, 63, no. 639.
 36. Aguilar, *Spirit of Judaism*, Preface; R, no. 488 (1842). There was a second edition, 1849.
 37. Sweet, *American Culture*, 184.

38. Mocatta, *Inquisition*, v-xv; also a *Reply to the Sermon by Carlos Vero* (Phila., 1860); *TJHSE*, 12:52 ff.
39. Sarah Harris, *Thoughts Suggested by Biblical Texts Addressed to My Children*, ed. by I. Leeser (Phila., 5621) 3-4; Seller, "Isaac Leeser," chap. 3, v; [Ennery] *Imre Lev*, Preface (1864).
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41. Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, xii; Leeser, *Instruction in the Mosaic Religion*, 94-96; *CCARYB*, 28:231-32; *Occ.*, 1:532, 2:412, 23:258 ff., 24:293; Cohen, "Isaac Leeser"; Seller, "Isaac Leeser," chap. 3.
42. Morais, *Philadelphia*, 155; Leeser, *Discourses*, 9:2-3, 12, 14-15.
43. Seller, "Isaac Leeser," chap. 5.
44. *Occ.*, 25:593 ff.; *AJA*, 19:127 ff.; Tarshish, "American Judaism," 145 ff.; Morais, *Eminent Israelites*, 195 ff.; Morais, *Philadelphia*, 46 ff., 154; Jonathan V. Plaut, "Isaac Leeser and *The Occident*" (rabbinical thesis, HUC, 1970); Cohen, "Isaac Leeser"; E. & L., *Richmond*, 54-56; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 373; Leeser, *Discourses*, 1:vii, 1-2, 3:164; "Leeser, Isaac," *JE*, *UJE*, *EJ*; *CCARYB*, 28:213 ff.; *JM*, Feb. 21, 1868; Kohler, *Simon Wolf Addresses*, 97 ff.; "Philadelphia," *EJ*; Jung, *Guardians*, 250, 253-54; M. & M., *History*, 650; Elbogen, *Cent. of Jewish Life*, 122-23; Marcus, *Memoirs*, 2:58-59; Markens, *Hebrews*, 291-93; Wiernik, *History*, 171-72; Ableser, "Isaac Leeser"; Korn, *New Orleans*, 246 ff.; Parzen, *Architects*, 8-11.
45. W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 254; R. Gratz, Phila., to Maria Gist Gratz, Lexington, Apr. 18, 1830, this is no. 609 of the AJHS Collection; Beerman, "Rebecca Gratz," 110, no. 13; R. Gratz, Phila., to Miriam Cohen, Savannah, Mar. 29, 1841, copy in AJAr.
46. *PAJHS*, 27:3-4; *AJA*, 19:127 ff., 21:140 ff.; Tarshish, "American Judaism," 148; Ableser, "Isaac Leeser"; Cohen, "Isaac Leeser."
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49. Rossiter, *Seedtime of the Republic*, 38; *EAH*, 582.
50. Davis, *Rodeph Shalom*, 17.
51. Rebecca Gratz, Phila., to Maria Gratz, Lexington, July 23, 1826, AJAr; Fish, *Aaron Levy*, 1-3, 56.
52. B. & B. *JOUS*, 2:576.

53. Stern, *AJD*, Preface; Marcus, "Gershom Seixas," 464; *PAJHS*, 35:191-92.
54. Hudson, *Am. Prot.*, 95-96; Michael, "Cincinnati," 24-27; "Religion," *DAH*; Karff, "Mikveh Israel"; Rossiter, *Seedtime of the Republic*, 38; Margolies, "Shearith Israel"; Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, 381, 508; Will of Sarah Da Costa, Oct. 7, 1793, "Will Book, XXV, 1793-1800," pp. 89-91, Charleston Court House; Gershom Seixas, N.Y., to Sarah Kursheedt, Richmond, Mar. 22, 1813, *AJHSL*; *PAJHS*, 35:189-205; B. & B., *JOUS*, 1:190-91, 2:494, 497, 502, 576, 585-86; Oscar I. Janowsky (ed.), *The American Jew, A Reappraisal* (Phila., 1964), 5; Goldstein, *Cent. of Jud. in NYC*, 63-64; Bloom, "Mikveh Israel"; Marcus, *Memoirs*, 1:247; Cohen, "Isaac Leeser"; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 228, 234; Bernard J. Bamberger, *The Story of Judaism* (N.Y., 1957), 14-15; Devine, "Sephardic Jews," 93; George Alexander Kohut, *Ezra Stiles and the Jews* (N.Y., 1902), 6-7; Stiles, *Diary*, 3:499; Thomas Cooper and David J. McCord (eds.), *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina* (Columbia, S.C., 1840), 8:162-63; Beerman, "Rebecca Gratz," 35, 43; T. J. Seixas, N.Y., to I.L., Oct. 27, 1833, Marcus LB, 903-6, no. 132; Pool, *Crosby Street Synagogue*, 7; Channing, *History*, 5:238; Sweet, *Story of Religion in America*, 9-10; Hudson, *Religion in America*, 129-30; Koch, *Republican Religion*, 296.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SOCIAL WELFARE IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY 1776-1840

1. Hebrew Society for the Visitation of the Sick and Mutual Assistance, Phila., Minutes, in Mikveh Israel, Phila., Trustee Minutes; Gryn, "Hebra Kaddisha," 3; Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:481; Leeser, *Discourses*, 2:35 ff., 375, 385 ff., 401; Seixas, *Discourse* (1798), 18 ff.
2. Marcus, *EAJ*, 1:171-74, 178; Marcus, *AJD*, 137-38; Tobias, *Hebrew Benevolent Society*, 1 ff., 6; Will of Israel Joseph, 1804, Charleston Probate Court, copy in *AJA*; *AJHQ*, 52:303 ff.; *AJA*, l(no. 2):15-17; Marcus, *Studies*, 68 ff., 101-2.
3. *PAJHS*, 27:461; Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:204-5, 276, 330, 340; *AJHQ*, 59:25; Anshe Chesed, N.Y., Minutes, Dec. 15, 1835; Grinstein, *New York City*, 136, 140-41; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 114 ff., 275; George E. McCracken, Des Moines, to Malcolm Stern, Nov. 23, 1969, re Easton, Marcus Collections; Abraham Touro, Boston, to Solomon Jacobs, Richmond, June 28, 1822, Marcus Collections; B. & B., *JOUS*, 3:832-33; Pool, *Mill Street Synagogue*, 61; Huhner, *Judah Touro*, 70-71; Pool, *Old Faith*, 346; Pool, *Portraits*, 269 ff.; T.J. Seixas, N.Y., to I.L., Phila., Oct. 27, 1833, Marcus LB, 903-6, no. 132; Curti, *American Thought*, 122 ff., 169-70, 299; "Charity," *JE*; Temkin, "Jewish Charities"; for Abraham Touro, the philanthropist, see *PAJHS*, 27:428-29; Will of Mordecai Levy, Oct. 4, 1786, Book T, p. 414, Register of Wills, Orphans' Court, Phila.; "Philanthropy," "Social Legislation," *UJE*; Marcus, *AJD*, 137-38; Tobias, *Hebrew Benevolent Society*, 3-7; Sweet, *American Culture*, 234-35; David Zielonka, "Public and Private Charity," (HUC term paper, 1961), 8; Rutman, "Private Charities," 14 ff.; Seixas, *Discourse* (1798).
4. W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 271; Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:437; Baron, *The Jewish Community*, 2:319 ff.; V. D. Lipman (ed.), *Three Centuries of Anglo-Jewish History* (Cambridge, 1961), 62-63; Ephraim Frisch, *An Historical Survey of Jewish Philanthropy* (N.Y., 1924); Marcus, *AJD*, 176 ff., 181 ff.; Schappes, *DHJUS*, 181; Beth Elohim, Charleston, Minutes, Nov. 26, 1838.
5. W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 233; Lipman, "Synagogal Philanthropy," 50; Grinstein, *New York City*, 139.
6. Lipman, "Synagogal Philanthropy," 46; *PAJHS*, 27:137-39; Leeser, *Discourses*, 2:376 ff.
7. Marcus, *Communal Sick-Care*, 6 ff. The immigrant society is on one occasion called *Haknasat Orhim* which would imply the existence of a building to house immigrants temporarily. *AJHQ*, 59(no. 1):25-27; Anshe Chesed, N.Y., Minutes, Nov. 21, 1835; W. &

- W., *Philadelphia*, 274-76; Mickve Israel, Savannah, Minutes, Aug. 17, 1795; *PAJHS*, 27:255-57; Grinstein, *New York City*, 139-43; 518-19; Shearith Israel, N.Y., Minutes, Aug. 1, 1809; *Boston Jewish Advocate*, Sept. 15, 1939, 16 ff.; B. & B., *JOUS*, 2:592; Pool, *Old Faith*, 347-48, 359 for the 1813 poorhouse; Leeser, *Discourses*, 2:385 ff.
8. Shearith Israel, N.Y., Minutes, 1811; *PAJHS*, 27:350; Pool, *Old Faith*, 346-47; Elzas, *Beth Elohim*; R. & E., *Charleston*, 154, 246.
 9. Emmanuel, *Netherlands Antilles*, 1:124 ff.; Grinstein, *New York City*, 419-20; Mikveh Israel, Phila., Trustees Minutes, Sept. 2, 1795; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 136; *PAJHS*, 27:107.
 10. W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 55, 272 ff.; Marcus, *EAJ*, 2:50, 482-85; Pool, *Old Faith*, 344, 345, 349-52; Anshe Chesed, N.Y., Minutes, 1835-40; Blum, *Baltimore*, 9; Jerusalem, "Shearith Israel," 14; *AJYB*, 57:3 ff.; Korn, *New Orleans*, 239; Lipman, "Synagogal Philanthropy," 31, 50, 55, 63-64, 74, 81; Liebowitz, "Mikveh Israel of Philadelphia," 37; Hershman, "Mikveh Israel," 11-12; Fein, *Baltimore*, 52-53; Mickve Israel, Savannah, Minutes, 1837-40; Zimmerman, "Mikveh Israel," 4; Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 288; Grinstein, *New York City*, 131-36, 139-40, 550; *PAJHS*, 1:17, 21:99, 27:81, 103, 104, 107; E. & L., *Richmond*, 258 ff.; Guttmacher, *Baltimore*, 24; Mikveh Israel, Phila., Correspondence, Mar. 30, Sept. 1, 1814; B. & B., *JOUS*, 2:591; Marcus, *AJD*, 171-72. Financing charities: *PAJHS*, 27:132-34; Anshe Chesed, N.Y., Minutes, Jan. 19, 1840. Relief and pensions: Devine, "Sephardic Jews," 43; Mickve Israel, Savannah, Minutes, Jan. 3, 1816; Shearith Israel, N.Y., Minutes, Dec. 21, 1803. Immigrant aid: Mikveh Israel, Phila., Trustees Minutes, Heshvan 29, 1782; Anshe Chesed, N.Y., Minutes, Dec. 26, 1835, Aug. 8, 1839. Redemption of captives: Shearith Israel, N.Y., Minutes, Aug. 21, 1815; Davis, *Rodeph Shalom*, 127. Transients: Anshe Chesed, N.Y., Minutes, Apr. 10, 1836, May 7, 1837, Nov. 10, 1839; Marcus, *CAJ*, 1:98, 185; Shearith Israel, N.Y., Minutes, June 7, 1807; Goldstein, *Cent. of Jud. in NYC*, 75; Mickve Israel, Savannah, Minutes, Oct. 13, 1793, Nov. 5, 1815.
 11. Krout and Fox, *Completion of Independence*, 215-16; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 136.
 12. W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 267; R., no. 357.
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 23. Blum, *Baltimore*, 7-8; B. & B., *JOUS*, 3:857 ff.; Fein, *Baltimore*, 73-74.
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 44. Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, 637 ff.; Greene, *Revolutionary Generation*, chap. 13; Fish, *Common Man*, chap. 12; Hudson, *Religion in America*, 197 ff.; Curti, *American Thought*, 121-22, 169-70, 299, 368-69, 375 ff.; Carman and Syrett, *History*, 1:492 ff.; Leeser, *Discourses*, 3:328 ff. Female Hebrew Benevolent Society, Phila., 1838, Constitution: R, no. 423; the report with this constitution speaks of the arrival of immigrants. *PAJHS*, 23:178-79; Grinstein, *New York City*, 119 ff.
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CHAPTER NINE

JEWISH EDUCATION AND CULTURE 1776-1840

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11. MacDonald, *Education of the Heart*, 13-16, 23, 27-28, 33, 199, 316-17; Harrison Hall, *Selections from the Writings of Sarah Hall* (Phila., 1833), 57 ff.; Rosenbloom, "Rebecca Gratz," 74 ff.; Berman, *Richmond*, 88-89.
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CHAPTER TEN

EDUCATING AMERICAN JEWISH YOUTH 1776-1840

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE GENERAL CULTURE OF THE AMERICAN JEW 1776-1840

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73. *Sulamith*, 7(no.2):360.
74. Adams, *History of the Jews*, 2:217-20; B. & B., *JOUS*, 1:87-93; Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 130, 143, 145, n. 72, 206; Stern, *FAJF*, 38-39.
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76. Pinckney & Moïse, *Selection*, 190.
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CHAPTER TWELVE

ASPECTS OF THE GENERAL CULTURE OF THE AMERICAN JEW 1776-1840

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2. Korn, *New Orleans*, 88, 292, n. 33; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 314; "Hays, Judah(2)," "Hays, Moses Michael," *BDEAJ*; Smith and Tatsch, *Moses Michael Hays*, 40-41; *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings*, 49(Oct. 1915-June, 1916):418 ff.; "Massachusetts," *UJE*, 7:404; "Libraries," *DAH* (1976-1978); *PAJHS*, 27:215-16, 449-51.
3. Marcus, *Memoirs*, 1:153-54, 285, 287; Trachtenberg, *Easton*, 75; Mary M. Cohen, "A Memoir of Louisa B. Hart with Extracts from Her Diary and Letters," in *Jewish Record*, Oct. 11, 1878 - Jan. 3, 1879; Morais, *Philadelphia*, 30, et passim.
4. W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 314-15, 323-24, 331; "Gratz, Hyman," "Gratz, Simon," *BDEAJ*; Morais, *Philadelphia*, 271 ff.; Byars, *B. and M. Gratz*, 262-65, 327.
5. "Gomez," *UJE*, 5:50; R, no. 209; Pool, *Old Faith*, 131, 216, 242-45, 477, 483; *PAJHS*, 27:306, 308.
6. Whiteman, *Hendricks*, 152; Marcus, "Gershom Seixas," 409 ff.; Pool, *Old Faith*, 170 ff.; Pool, *Portraits*, 344 ff.; *PAJHS*, 35:203; G. Seixas, N.Y., to Sarah Kursheedt, Nov. 4, 1813, Jan. 23, May 5, 1814, *AJHSL*.
7. Pool, *Portraits*, 438 ff.; *PAJHS*, 37:203 ff.; Grace Nathan, N.Y., to Sarah Kursheedt, Richmond, Mar. 28, 1815, same to same, Aug. 26, 1816, *AJHSL*; Marcus, *AJW*, 19-20; Marcus, *AJWD*, 72 ff.
8. The Hymns appeared in Charleston in 1842; there were at least four editions of this book; some, it seems, were published with a slight change in title. R. & E., *Charleston*,

- 82 ff.; Moise, *Fancy's Sketch Book*, 67, 97; *Works of Penina Moise*, v; Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 181 ff.; Elzas, *Leaves*, Second Series, no. 5; "Moise, Penina," *DAB*; *AJYB*, 7:17 ff.; *American Jews' Annual for 5646 A.M.* (1885-1886), article on Penina Moise by Mrs. S.A. Dinkins; Markens, *Hebrews*, 59-60; Moise, *Moise Family*, 61-69; Lebeson, *Pilgrim People*, 214-17; B. & B., *JOUS*, 2:417-18; Marcus, *AJW*, 35-36; Marcus, *AJWD*, 124 ff.
9. Octavia Harby Moses, *A Mother's Poems: A Collection of Verses* (n.p., 1915), 24; Marcus, *AJW*, 36; Marcus, *AJWD*, 200-203.
 10. Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 190-91; "Harby, George Washington," *BDEAJ*.
 11. "Tutoona, or the Indian Girl," incomplete copy in *AJAR*; Korn, *New Orleans*, see Index sub "Theatre," and especially 182 ff., 190-91, 240 ff., 323, nn. 48-49.
 12. "The Petition for Hearing on Opening a Theatre, to the Selectmen of Boston," Oct. 8, 1791, *MHS*; "Silva, Antonio José Da," *JE*; Cohen, *Records of the Myers, Hays, and Mordecai Families*, 14; Curti, *American Thought*, 143; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 316 ff.; McMaster, *History*, 1:83 ff., 93 ff.; "Cumberland, Richard," *UJE*; Harap, *Image of the Jew*, 203-4.
 13. *EIAJH*, 207-9; *R*, nos. 287-288; Gustavus A. Myers, *Nature and Philosophy, or The Youth Who Never Saw a Woman* (Boston, 1856), 22; E. & L., *Richmond*, 62.
 14. *Harvard Library Bulletin*, 1(Winter, 1947):117-18. Dr. Jonathan Sarna drew this reference to my attention; I am grateful. Phlogobombos, *The Buccaneers*, 1:263; "Judah, Samuel Benjamin Helbert," *DAB*; "Judah," *UJE*, 6:232; Stern, *FAJF*, 139; Harap, *Image of the Jew*, 261-63, et passim; Daly, *Settlement*, 139 ff.; Arthur Hobson Quinn, *A History of the American Drama, etc.* (N.Y., 1923), 155, 197; George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage* (15 vols., N.Y., 1927-49), 2:557; B. & B., *JOUS*, 2:410 ff., 627, n. 15; *R*, nos. 211, 225-226, 242-43, 361; *EIAJH*, 217, no. 108B; Morais, *Philadelphia*, 378; *PAJHS*, 26:242-43, 27:314; Samuel B.H. Judah, N.Y., to T. Jefferson, Monticello, June 12, 1822, T. Jefferson to S. B. H. Judah, June 27, 1822, copies in Marcus Collections; Judah, *Gotham and the Gothamites*, 58, 68, for Noah, see ix, xii-xiii, xxxvi-xxxix, 54, 74, 83, 92.
 15. Morais, *Philadelphia*, 340-41; *PAJHS*, 25:128 ff.
 16. Brigham, *American Newspapers*, 1:672; "Phillips, Naphtali," *BDEAJ*; Rezneck, *Phillips Family*, 193; *PAJHS*, 21:172 ff.; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 316.
 17. "Phillips, Aaron J.," *BDEAJ*; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 319-20; "Theatre," *UJE*; *AH*, May 5, 1905, p. 731.
 18. Stern, *FAJF*, 243-44; Rezneck, *Phillips Family*, 26, 28, 32, 185 ff. Naphtali Phillips: W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 316 ff., 351; *PAJHS*, 21:212; Morais, *Philadelphia*, 372 ff.; Korn, *New Orleans*, 160-61; Daly, *Settlement*, 103-4. Jonas B. Phillips: W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 316; *EIAJH*, 209, no. 74; *R*, nos. 336, 365, 393, 629; Rezneck, *Phillips Family*, 189-95; B. & B., *JOUS*, 2:415-16, 627, n. 17, 630-31, nn. 30-37; Pool, *Old Faith*, 477; *Aldine Catalogue*, nos. 1740-45; Moses, *Full Annals*, 131-32.
 19. The best biography is Jonathan D. Sarna's *Jacksonian Jew: The Two Worlds of Mordecai Noah*. See also Goldberg, *Major Noah*; Daly, *Settlement*, 96 et passim; Lebeson, *Pilgrim People*, 167, et passim; Marcus, *Memoirs*, 1:117 ff.; Kohler, *Simon Wolf Addresses*, 108 ff.; Jacob N. Blanck, *Bibliography of American Literature* (New Haven, 1973), 6:447-54; Stern, *FAJF*, 232, 243; "Noah, Mordecai Manuel," *DAB*, *JE*, *UJE*, *EJ*; Morais, *Philadelphia*, 396 ff.; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 286, et passim; Rezneck, *Phillips Family*, 3, et passim; *PAJHS*, 27:55, 57; *Canadian Jewish Historical Journal*, 3:117 ff.; MS biography of Noah in Marcus Collections, source not given.
 20. Sarna, *Mordecai Noah*, 15 ff.; *Menorah Journal*, 24:276, 287-90.
 21. Marcus, *Memoirs*, 1:133-34; Sarna, *Mordecai Noah*, chap. 2; Goldberg, *Major Noah*, 74 ff.; B. & B., *JOUS*, 2:317 ff.; Noah, *Travels*, 312.
 22. Marcus, *Memoirs*, 1:117 ff., 135-38, *AJH*, 68:206 ff.; Noah, *Travels*, 412 ff.; Sarna, *Mordecai Noah*, 16-33; *R*, nos. 186, 205; Noah, *Correspondence*, 125-28; Rezneck, *Phillips Family*, 139-40; B. & B., *JOUS*, 1:9.

23. *AJHQ*, 64:208; "Hays, John Jacob," *BDEAJ*; B. & B., *JOUS*, 2:317 ff.; *AJA*, 7:68; "Harby, Isaac," *DAB*; Moses M. Russell, Baltimore, to Dr. Moses Sheftall, Savannah, Feb. 19(?), 1817, Levy collection in Savannah; Noah, *Travels*, 415; James Madison, Montpelier, to Mordecai Noah, N.Y., May 15, 1818, in *Travels*, Appendix, xxv-xxvi.
24. M. M. Noah, *Oration delivered by appointment before Tammany Society of Columbian Order, etc.* (N.Y., 1817); *R*, no. 193; Noah, *Travels*, title page shows membership in the New-York Historical Society; Schappes, *DHJUS*, 637, n. 6; *Jewish Daily Bulletin*, Apr. 29, 1931, pp.3-4; Sarna, *Mordecai Noah*, chap. 7.
25. *PAJHS*, 21:200 ff.; William Wirt, Washington, to John Myers, Norfolk, June 12, 1818, Myers Papers, *AJAR*; Sarna, *Mordecai Noah*, 178, n. 65.
26. B. & B., *JOUS*, 3:994, n. 16; Korn, *Eventful Years*, 199-200; *Occ.*, 1:301-7; *AJA*, 12:143 ff.
27. "Noah, Manuel," *BDEAJ*; Grinstein, *New York City*, 184 ff.; Sarna, *Mordecai Noah*, chap. 7; Schappes, *DHJUS*, 642, n. 3.
28. Sarna, *Mordecai Noah*, chap. 7; Schappes, *DHJUS*, 318-19, 651, n. 10.
29. Sarna, *Mordecai Noah*, chap. 7, especially 204-5, nn. 41-42; Schappes, *DHJUS*, 279 ff.
30. Goldberg, *Major Noah*, 189 ff., 220, 290 ff.; *Young Israel*, 25(no. 6):5 ff.; *Menorah Journal*, 24:276 ff., 293.
31. Rezneck, *Phillips Family*, 136-37; *PAJHS*, 6:5 ff.; Marcus, *CAJ*, 1:361 ff.; cf. letter of Mordecai Noah, N.Y., to Sir (John Myers of Norfolk), Feb. 28, 1819, copy in Myers Papers, *AJAR*.
32. B. & B., *JOUS*, 875 ff., 884 ff., 891 ff., 849 ff.
33. Sarna, *Mordecai Noah*, chap. 4; Goldberg, *Major Noah*, chap. 8; *PAJHS*, 11:132, 21:229 ff., 41:1 ff., 43:170 ff.; Rezneck, *Phillips Family*, 136-37; B. & B., *JOUS*, 3:875-911; *AJHQ*, 55:162 ff., 64:195; Schappes, *DHJUS*, 603, n. 4; Mordecai Noah, N.Y., to Duff Green, London, May 24, 1843, Duff Green Papers, LC; *JSJHS*, 1:12, n. 31.
34. Mordecai Noah, N.Y., to Sir (John Myers of (Norfolk)), Feb. 28, 1819, copy in Myers Papers, *AJAR*; *PAJHS*, 27:34-37, 140-43, 240, 253.
35. *PAJHS*, 21:230-32; Roth, *Bibliotheca*, 372 ff.; *R*, nos. 97-99; "Alexander, Michael Solomon," "Way, Lewis," *JE*; Gelber, *Zionismus*, 126 ff.
36. Meyer, *Early History of Zionism*, 1 ff.; "Cresson, Warder," *JE*, *UJE*.
37. Noah, *Discourse* (1818); *AJHQ*, 64:195 ff.; Goldberg, *Major Noah*, 139 ff.; Meyer, *Early History of Zionism*, 55-56, 62; *PAJHS*, 50:11-12.
38. Noah, *Travels*, Appendix, xxv ff.; *PAJHS*, 3:94 ff., 4:220-21; *AJHQ*, 64:195 ff., 209; B. & B., *JOUS*, 1:12, 81-85, 241, n. 25; Mordecai Noah, N.Y., to Thomas Jefferson, Monticello, May 7, 1818, copy in *AJAR*.
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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

ACCEPTANCE OF THE JEW 1776-1840

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

REFORM JUDAISM 1776-1840

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32. The State vs. Ancker, 253-54; Beth Elohim, Charleston, Minutes, Dec. 27, 1840, p. 149.
33. R. & E., *Charleston*, 140. Poznanski: *PAJHS*, 27:344, 54:420 ff., 431; Beth Elohim, Charleston, Minutes, July 10, 1839; Elzas, *Jews of S.C.*, 208 ff. Harby: R. & E., *Charleston*, 99; *Judaism*, 3:333 ff.; Noah, *Discourse* (1818), 19; Moise, *Isaac Harby*, 118-19, 121; Pool, *Old Faith*, 178, 247, 400, 430.
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36. R, no. 483; *Sinai*, 1:171 ff.; *PAJHS*, 54:432-33, 439 ff.; Elzas, *Cent. of Jud. in S.C.*, 16-18; Moïse, *Isaac Harby* 42, 83 ff.; *The State vs. Ancker*, 259-60.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

AMERICAN JEWRY 1776-1840:

A SUMMARY AND SOME COMMENTS

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4. Shearith Israel, N.Y., Minutes, Sept. 16, Oct. 28, 1832; *PAJHS*, 27:xvi, 103, 233 ff., 250, 34:288 ff.; Avraham Yaari, *Sheluhe Erets Yisrael* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1950), 184, 446, 581 ff., 592, 647, 692, 764, 769, 787-88, 855-56; Marcus, *CAJ*, 2:1042 ff.; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 138, 280-91; Marcus, *AJD*, 100 ff.; *Brandeis Avukah Annual*, 536 ff.; Pool, *Old Faith*, 398 ff., 536 ff.; Grinstein, *New York City*, 440 ff.; B. & B., *JOUS*, 3:917-19; Leeser, *Discourses*, 1:410; *Constitution and Bye-Laws of Hevrat Terumat-hakodesh, the Society for the Offerings of the Sanctuary* (N.Y., 1832-33); *Jewish People*, 4:243; Anshe Chesed, N.Y., Minutes, Mar. 23, 1836; Duschinsky, *Rabbinat of the Great Synagogue*, 132-33.
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 29. Berman, *Richmond*, 28; Korn, *New Orleans*, 209.
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 32. M. M. Russell, Baltimore, to Dr. Moses Sheftall, Savannah, Feb. 19, 1817, Levy collection in Savannah; Trachtenberg, *Easton*, 75; Marcus, *AJD*, 159; Marcus, *Memoirs*, 1:155; Grinstein, *New York City*, 168.
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 34. Will of David Nathans, July 27, 1817, Phila., copy in Marcus Collections; Sarna, *Mordecai Noah*, 1-2; W. & W., *Philadelphia*, 177; B. & B., *JOUS*, 1:162-70, 192 ff.; Byars,

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