

THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS IN NEW YORK CITY  
1854 to 1850

A DISSERTATION

by

ADOLPH H. FINK

1930

*mic. 8/78*

## P R E F A C E

It will be observed by the reader of the following pages that original source material, rather than the writings of others, has been most considerably employed in the preparation of this dissertation. The many articles pertaining directly or indirectly to the subject matter of this paper, appearing in the publications of the American Jewish Historixal Society, the American Jewish Year Books, the Jewish Quarterly Review, the Jewish Encyclopaedia and elsewhere, have been carefully read by the present writer. But he has incorporated his findings from these sources in his paper only to a limited extent. The present writer has preferred to construct a history of the Jewish community of New York City on the basis of sources, such as court minutes, congregational minutes, press reports and other original documents.

The present writer has presented in great detail the hitherto unwritten account of the administrative and religious organization of the congregation She'erith Israel. He has traced minutely the unpublished record of educational and philanthropic activities as well as the problems and

internal difficulties of the early Jewish community of New York City. For these sections of the paper source material was almost exclusively utilized. The writer has attempted, in short, to write at length upon those aspects of the Jewish history of New York City which have been neglected by students of American Jewish History and he has used original sources when possible. At the same time the author of this paper has refrained from filling his pages with tales told not twice but a hundred times. He has given the briefest treatment, for example, to those personalities who are best known and about whom much has already been published. For the same reason the present writer has presented a very brief account of the dramatic experiences of the Jews in New Amsterdam during the years 1654 to 1658. Samuel Oppenheim has done magnificent work in connection with this last period.

It is a note-worthy fact that the writer could find in the many volumes published by the New York Historical Association very few references to Jews. There should be no cause for surprise in the fact that few references can likewise be discovered in the volumes forming the Collections of the New York Historical Society . . . for the reasons that there were few Jews in the village of

New York during the whole of the Eighteenth Century and until comparatively recent times. For the same reason infrequent mention of Jews is made in the Documents Relating to the Colonial History of New York.

It will be noted that volumes 21 and 27 of the Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society have been exploited for material. These volumes are great store rooms, holding a wealth of original data related to the subject matter of this paper.

That the court minutes of New Amsterdam do often refer to Jews becomes understandable in the light of the fact that the Jewish population, during the first few years, of their residence in the colony, composed from three to five per cent of the total population (in the year 1664 the total population of New Amsterdam numbered 1500). The Jews became an element of importance because of their numbers; but there was another reason for frequent mention of Jews in the court minutes of New Amsterdam. The Jews constantly demanded privileges which the court was compelled to consider; and, engaging in business, it is natural that recourse to legal processes became frequently imperative.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bogen, Boris D., Jewish Philanthropy, New York, 1917

Cohen, George, The Jews in the Making of America

Collections of the New York Historical Society, New York.,

Published Annually, 60 Volumes

Daley, Charles, The Settlement of the Jews in America

Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of

New York, edited variously by Edmund Bailey

O'Callaghan, John Romeyn Broadhead and Berthold

Fernow, Albany, 1854-1883, 14 Volumes

Fernow, Berthold, The Records of New Amsterdam-Minutes of the  
Court, 7 Volumes

Graetz, H., History of the Jews, Philadelphia, 1896, 6 Vol.

Innes, J. H. New Amsterdam and its People, N.Y. 1902.

Jameson, J. Franklin, Editor, Narratives of New Netherland  
in series. Original Narratives of Early American  
History, New York, 1909

Janvier, Thomas Allibane, The Dutch Founding of New York,  
New York, 1903

Markens, Isaac, The Hebrews in America

O'Callaghan, Edmund Bailey, The Documentary History of the  
State of New York, Albany, 1849-1851, 4 Vol.

Peters, Madison C. The Jews in America, Philadelphia, 1905

Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society,  
published annually, 32 volumes.

The Jewish Encyclopaedia, New York, 1925, 12 Volumes.

The Occident, Philadelphia, published beginning 1843, 7 vols.

Stern, Myer, History of Emanuel Congregation, New York.

Vallentine, David Thomas, History of the City of New York,  
N. Y. 1853.

Van Rensellaer, Mrs. Schuyler,  
New York, 1909, 2 Vols..

Wiernik, Peter, History of the Jews in America.

Wolf, Simon, The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier  
and Citizen, Philadelphia, 1895.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. THE ARRIVAL OF THE FIRST JEWS IN NEW YORK CITY.  
pp 1-10
- II. THE EARLY RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE JEWS IN NEW YORK CITY.  
pp 10-14
- III. POSITION OF THE JEWS IN THE GENERAL COMMUNITY.  
pp 15-24
  - A. Political status.
  - B. Economic status.
- IV. CONGREGATIONAL ADMINISTRATION.  
pp 24-42
  - A. Congregational employees.
    - 1. The Hazan.
    - 2. The Shohet and Bodek
    - 3. The Shamash.
  - B. The Parnas and his Board of Directors.
    - 1. The Hatanim, or assistants, and the Board of Trustees.
    - 2. Other officers.
- V. CONGREGATIONAL HISTORY.  
pp 43-99
  - A. Aspects of Jewish life.
    - 1. Missionary activity.
    - 2. Inter-marriage.
    - 3. Religious indifference.
  - B. Congregational Problems.
    - 1. The Budget.
    - 2. Internal difficulties.
  - C. Jewish Education, from 1728 to 1850.
    - 1. Within Congregation She'erith Israel.
    - 2. Other Congregational Schools.
  - D. Contacts with other Congregations.
  - E. Philanthropy.
    - 1. Unorganized social service.
      - a. Local.
      - b. Dependents of deceased employees.
      - c. The itinerant poor.

2. Organized Philanthropy.
  - a. The Hebra Gemilas Hasadim.
  - b. The Matan Basether.
  - c. The Hebra Hesed Ve'Emet.
3. d. Philanthropic organizations affiliated with other congregations.

Other instalces of Jewish Philanthropy.

VI. THE POSITION OF THE JEWS IN THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE  
BEFORE THE YEAR 1850. pp 110-129.

- A. Economic.
- B. Cultural and Political.
- C. Patriotism.
  1. The War of the American Revolution.
  2. The War of 1812.
- D. Attitude of non-Jews.

VII. SYNAGOGUES FUNCTIONING BEFORE 1850. pp 130-139.

- A. The Polish, and East European.
- B. The German.
- C. The Netherdutch.
- D. She'erith Israel.

Jacob Barsimson, the first Jew to settle permanently in the territory which is the present United States, reached the village of New Amsterdam, New Netherland, on August 22, 1654, with the ship, "de Perebom" (The Peartree).<sup>1</sup> He travelled on a passport from Holland.<sup>2</sup> It has been stated that Barsimson's arrival was July 8, 1654. This was the date upon which the ship departed from Holland.<sup>3</sup> It had been thought that another Jew, Jacob de Aboaf or Jacob Aboab, came with Barsimson to New Amsterdam.<sup>4</sup> Aboab left the Perebom near Wight, England following a fight with Barsimson.<sup>5</sup> Historians have claimed that Jews were in New Amsterdam as early as 1652;<sup>6</sup> other writers have entirely overlooked the fact that Barsimson was in New Amsterdam before the arrival of more Jews in early September of 1654;<sup>7</sup> while still other students of the subject have stated incorrectly that Barsimson

- 
1. Publication: American Jewish Historical Society 32 Vols.  
Vol. 29, p. 39; Pub. Vol. 18, p. 3
  2. Pub. Vol. 29, pp. 40-43
  3. Pub. Vol. 18, p. 3
  4. Pub. Vol. 2, p. 71
  5. Records of New Amsterdam, edited by Fernow and others, 7 Vols.  
Vol. 2, pp. 173-174; Pub. Vol. 18, p. 3 quoting New York Collection, MSS. Vol. 14, p. 83
  6. Peters, Madison C., The Jews in America, Philadelphia, 1905
  7. Cohen, George, The Jews in the Making of America  
p. 61; Wiernik, Peter  
p. 62

was included among those Jews who came to New Amsterdam<sup>1</sup> in September, 1654.

In any event a Jewish community was established in the present New York City as early as twenty eight years after Manhattan island had been purchased from the Indians.<sup>2</sup> An original record shows that children were in the group from which it may be inferred that women, likewise were among the 23 Jewish passengers on the "St. Charles."<sup>3</sup> The names of Jewish men in the first group are: Jacob Cohen,<sup>4</sup> David Israel,<sup>5</sup> Asser Levy,<sup>6</sup> Moses Ambrosius,<sup>7</sup> Salvadore D'Andrada,<sup>8</sup> Abraham de Lucina,<sup>9</sup> and Solomon Pieterse.<sup>10</sup> The name Abraham Israel, mentioned once in the Records, should not be included as it was obviously confused with the name, David Israel which name occurs several times.

The question presents itself: From whence came these first Jewish settlers. The question can not definitely be answered until some more data upon the subject can be discovered. Two thorough students of American Jewish history disagree. Leon Hühner maintains that the first Jews came from or via some portion of the West Indies, though originally he agrees that they probably came from Brazil which had just been conquered by the Portuguese in a bloody

- 
1. (It has been incorrectly said that 27 Jews were in this group. cf. Markens, p.3 and Daly, p.6.)
  2. Rec. N.A. Vol. 1, p.240
  3. cf. Rec. N. A. Vol. 3, p.174 (Not conclusive)
  4. Rec. N.A. Vol. 1, p.244,252
  5. Rec. N.A. Vol. 1, p.242, 244
  6. Rec. N. A. Vol. 1, p.242, 254
  7. Rec. N. A. Vol. 1, p.244
  8. Pub. Vol.18, pp. 29-30
  9. Documents Relating to the Colonial History of N.Y.Vol. p.117
  10. Rec. N.A. Vol. 1, p. 240

war with Holland. Because in the court action previously mentioned, Jacques de la Mottbe, Master of the St. Charles, claimed payment for transportation from "Cape St. Anthony,"<sup>1</sup> which he maintains is near Cuba, and because in a suit by Asser Levy vs. Rycke Nounes in which Levy demanded payments of certain sums advanced "at Gamonike," which Hühner translates Jamaica, he holds that the ship came from or via the West Indies. In connection with the same dispute Rycke Nounes on October 19, 1654 sued for monies she "paid for freight for him (Asser Levy) from the West Indies."<sup>2</sup> Thus Huhner argues his case.<sup>3</sup>

Samuel Oppenheim contends that the 23 Jews who landed in New Amsterdam in September, 1654 had departed from Brazil in one of sixteen ships bound for Holland, following the surrender of Dutch Brazil to Portugal, but that one of the ships was captured by a pirate ship and subsequently rescued by the St. Charles. The Cape "St. Anthony" is a well-known spot in Brazil. Gamonike was probably the crude translation of Tamarike or Tamarica, Brazil. The charge for transportation, 2500 guilders, was a fair charge for the voyage from Brazil, but would have been incredibly large for the trip from Cuba. If the Jews had come from Cuba they undoubtedly would have argued that they were being charged excessive rates.<sup>4</sup>

The present writer believes that the 23 Jews came originally from Recife or Pernambuco, Brazil, that they were

1. Rec. N.A. Vol.1, p.240

2. Rec. N.A. Vol. 1, p.254

3. cf. Pub. Vol. 9, pp.75-85

4. cf. Pub. Vol. 18, pp.37-49

captured by a pirate and subsequently rescued by the St. Charles which was on its way to New Amsterdam and consequently brought them to New Amsterdam. The Jews had naturally been robbed by the pirates, but had contracted with de la Mottbe to pay him upon arrival in New Amsterdam, doubtless believing that other Jews would be in New Amsterdam who would assist them with funds.

Since Barsimson was the only other Jew present, and himself just arrived, he was in no position to advance the large sum required to satisfy the ship master. Difficulties arose, difficulties that were destined to harass the Jews of New Amsterdam for several years. The first trouble was the law suit of de la Mottbe. The court ordered that payment be made to him within two days.<sup>1</sup> Three days later the court ordered all the goods belonging to all of the 23 Jews to be sold at auction to satisfy the claim.<sup>2</sup> The monies realized from the sale were still inadequate; so upon request of the ship master David Israel and Moses Ambrosius were imprisoned. The Jews promised to pay if de la Mottbe would wait until money could be forwarded from Holland. He agreed<sup>3</sup> and Israel and Ambrosius were evidently released for no further mention is made of their imprisonment; nor do other references to the whole affair appear in the court minutes.

The troubles of the strangers had only started.

- 1. Rec. N.A. Vol. 1, p.240  
 2. ib. p.241  
 3. Pub. Vol. 18, p.72



Petrus Stuyvesant, Director General or Governor of New  
 Netherland, hastened to write on September 22, 1654 to the  
 Directors of the Dutch West India Company for permission to  
 expel the Jews forthwith.<sup>1</sup> Although he dared to do no violent  
 act in this connection without authorization from his super-  
 iors in Holland, he proceeded to harass the penniless and  
 friendless Jews in every possible manner. His hostile atti-  
 tude which surely occasioned spiritual as well as material  
 discomfort can be inferred by a glance at a lengthy petition  
 addressed by the Jews of New Amsterdam to the Directors of  
 the Dutch West India Company.<sup>2</sup> This communication asks for  
 the Jews privileges of residence, travel and trade in New  
 Netherland and alleges that the Jews deserve good treatment  
 from the company because of their proved loyalty to Holland,<sup>3</sup>  
 the Jews will strengthen the country economically,<sup>4</sup> and Jews  
 are among the shareholders of the Dutch West India Company.<sup>5</sup>

The Directors of the Dutch West India Company en-  
 tertained no affection for the Jews of New Amsterdam, but  
 recognized in them valuable economic assets. The company was  
 interested primarily in considerations of profit,<sup>6</sup> and the  
 Jews had been valuable to Holland economically; they had  
 proved loyal in time of war and...Jews were among the chief

1. Pub. Vol. 18, p. 9 ff.
2. Pub. Vol. 18, pp. 9-11 (found among M.SS. relating to the Dutch West India Company, in the library of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia.
3. History of the Jews,
4. ib. pp. 675-677
5. Docs. Rel. Col. Hist. N.Y., Vol. 14, p. 315
6. Janvier, Thomas Allibane, The Dutch Founding of New York, pp. 54, 60.

shareholders of the company. Stuyvesant received a reply to his first letter on April 26, 1655, which was dated January, 1655 saying that though the company would like to grant Stuyvesant's request, they can not do so in view of the above considerations. On the contrary, Stuyvesant was informed that the petition of the Jews, just mentioned, is granted.<sup>1</sup> They can live, travel, and trade in New Netherland on condition that they support their poor.

On March 1, 1655, Van Tienhoven, a crafty, cruel and thoroughly debased person, the sheriff of New Amsterdam, and the Burgomasters and Schepens, passed a resolution to the effect that all Jews must immediately depart.<sup>2</sup> In view of Stuyvesant's absence from the country, and because the letter of January, 1655 from Holland had not yet been received, this action was a meaningless gesture intended only to intimidate the Jews.<sup>3</sup> No Jews left New Amsterdam.

On March 18, 1655, Rev. Johannes Megapolensis wrote from New Amsterdam to the classes in Amsterdam, using violent language in his description of the Jews, and begging that they be exiled.<sup>4</sup>

On October 30, 1655, notwithstanding the official instructions regarding tolerating the Jews which he had received in April, Stuyvesant again wrote to the Dutch West India Company requesting right to banish the Jews.<sup>5</sup>

---

1. Pub. Vol. 18, pp. 9-11

2. Rec. N.A. Vol. 1, p. 291

3. ib.

4. Original Narratives of New Netherland,

5. Pub. Vol. 18, pp. 19-20

A month later Abraham de Lucena, Salvadore D' Andrada, and Jacob Cohen, representing the New Amsterdam Jewish Community, protested to the local government that although they had received express permission from Holland to reside, travel and trade, yet it is denied. They petitioned particularly for the right to trade at the recognized trading posts along the Delaware river and around Albany.<sup>1</sup> This petition was denied on the ground that such privileges would result in enjuries to the general community.<sup>2</sup>

On March 13, 1656, there was written by the Directors of the Dutch West India Company a second letter pertaining to the Jews of New Amsterdam. All civil and political liberties accorded to the Jews in Holland must obtain in New Netherland, although they may not "carry on their religion in synagogue."<sup>3</sup>

In the meantime, the Jews of New Amsterdam had apparently again written to Holland regarding their harsh treatment, for on June 14, 1656 the Directors of the Dutch West India Company sent a very strong rebuke to Stuyvesant severely reprimanding him for insubordination and expressly declaring that Jews may live, travel and trade and own real estate. They may not engage in mechanical pursuit, nor the retail trade; their religion may be observed "quietly in their own homes."<sup>4</sup> On June 10, 1656, Stuyvesant acquiesced to the wishes of the company in a letter which stated that the Jews of his colony would be given rights as ordered by the company.<sup>5</sup>

1. Docs. Col. Hist. N.Y. Vol. 12, p. 117

2. ib. p. 118

3. Pub. Vol. 18, p. 21

4. Docs. C. H. N.Y. pp. 350-351; Pub. Vol. 18, p. 33 (minor cor. in Translation)

5. Pub. Vol. 18, p. 21

Until the year 1658, the lot of the small Jewish community of New Amsterdam was far from pleasant. The general population had long groaned under the yoke of an aristocratic and stupid government. The Dutch West India Company was not a colonizing organization, but a huge commercial corporation interested in monetary returns. It was invested with most of the prerogatives of government. It built forts, instituted legislative and judiciary processes, made treaties and wars.<sup>1</sup> In its territory of New Netherland almost exclusive authority was centered in the person of the governor. He ruled arrogantly, stupidly and harshly.<sup>2</sup> The results were apparent: the people found the business of earning a livelihood difficult--and there was persistent danger of attack from the Indians who had been made hostile by the inexcusable brutalities of the governors.

Although the territory had been established by the Dutch as early as 1623 the population grew very slowly.<sup>3</sup> This fact may be due to the facts mentioned, but surely the general religious intolerance of the Dutch Reformed Church was likewise responsible. The population of New Amsterdam was cosmopolitan; people had come there from everywhere and spoke no less than 18 languages. Rich and poor, prominent and obscure, every element of society was represented in that struggling village. To have ruled capably, unusual diplomacy and other abilities were necessary.<sup>4</sup>

- 
1. Vallentine, David Thomas, History of the City of N.Y. p.23
  2. Docs. Col. Hist. N.Y. Vol. 14 pp. 102-109, 315.
  3. Innes, J.H., New Amsterdam and its People. pp. 99, 137, 183-184
  4. O'Callaghan, E.B., The Documentary History of the State of New York, Vol.2, p.540, Jameson, 392-393.

But the governors were the instruments of a business organization, the directors of which were far removed from the scene and who were, furthermore, greatly disappointed because the economic return from New Netherland was so small. The whole population suffered from these sad conditions. Frequently did they complain to Holland and frequently were the governors rebuked. Until 1658, the Jews were burdened not merely by this unsatisfactory environment, but, in addition, they labored under important restrictions until 1657.

They could not trade at the trading post, and they were not permitted to have retail stores, nor to own real property. The neighboring Indians had become hostile. It seemed impossible to earn a livelihood. They were taxed in lieu of service in the Burgher Guard.

A gallant war, waged against the general intolerance, became finally successful. The indefatigable efforts of individual Jews, particularly of Asser Levy, made an impression.

By 1658, the Jews of New Amsterdam had won the following rights: of citizenship, of serving in the military organization, of operating retail establishments, and of trading in the surrounding territory.<sup>1</sup>

The Jewish community began to grow when the restrictions were removed. New names appear in the records. From this time until today the New York Jewish Community has enjoyed with few comparatively unimportant interruptions those

1. This privilege had been accorded from the beginning though legal restriction presumably prevented it.

privileges which the general population have accorded to them.

#### EARLY RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE JEWS IN NEW YORK CITY

In 1660, Moses Lucena asked permission of the court to be licensed as a "sworn butcher." This request was granted. In taking oath the record states that it was "agreeably to the oath of the Jews, having first requested not to be bound to kill any hogs; which was allowed him."<sup>1</sup> The court records of June 3, 1658 include the following: "Adrian Keyser, Plaintiff vs Jacob Barsimson, A Jew, Defendant. Though Defendant is absent, yet no default is entered against him as he was summoned on his Sabbath."<sup>1</sup>

The sanctity of the Sabbath was recognized by the government as early as 1658 and as early as 1660 definite indication of a shoket at work in New Amsterdam! Under these encouraging conditions and with a growing community it is almost certain that a congregation was established before the year 1660, holding services in the homes of the members of the group, having a shoket and probably their Hazan or minister. That congregation formed the beginnings of the first Jewish congregation in the present United States. It was the beginning of the She'erith Israel congregation which still exists in New York City.

In a Hebrew manuscript written by Sampson Simson, and probably delivered at the commencement exercises of Columbia College in 1800 when he graduated from that institution, he stated that the Jews worshipped in private rooms in their

1. Rec. N.A. Vol. 7, p.261

2. Rec. N.A. Vol. 2, p.396

dwellings until the year 1730.<sup>1</sup> The synagogue was unquestion-  
 ably in existence in the year 1682 and probably before that  
 date.<sup>2</sup> The first Hazan of the congregation was probably Saul  
 Brown during the Dutch period. In 1691 a specific hall of  
 worship was used.<sup>3</sup> The location of the first synagogue site  
 has been fixed as having been situated on the northwestern  
 side of Mill Street near the site of the second synagogue.<sup>4</sup>  
 This synagogue must surely have been in existence before  
 1700.<sup>5</sup> Reference has been made to the first synagogue by  
 a reputable non-Jewish historian. In the minute books of  
 the congregation, attention is directed to certain regula-  
 tions enacted, approximately, or during the year 1706.<sup>6</sup> Judah  
 Monis was probably the Hazan of Sheerith Israel before the  
 year 1722.<sup>7</sup> Upon their arrival in New Amsterdam the Jews  
 formed their congregation, meeting in the homes of individ-  
 uals until about 1685 when they rented a hall which was used  
 as a synagogue. A rented hall was employed for the purpose  
 until 1729 when the first synagogue structure, built by the  
 community of New York for that specific purpose was erected.<sup>8</sup>

-----  
 1. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 374

2. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 13; Pub. Vol. 3, pp. 46-47

3. Cohen, p. 62

4. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 217

5. Pub. Vol. 8, pp. 36, 38, 39

6. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 1

7. Pub. Vol. 22, p. 1

8. Detailed reference to the first synagogue building will be made elsewhere in this paper.

Not only did the Jews enjoy freedom of worship in the community of New Amsterdam, but as early as the year 1656 had a separate Jewish cemetery.<sup>1</sup> This is the oldest Jewish cemetery in New York,<sup>2</sup> and the oldest in the present United States. The possession of this cemetery undoubtedly marked the beginnings of Jewish communal life in this country. The oldest grave that can be identified in it is that of Benjamin Bueno de Mesquita who was buried in the year 1683.<sup>3</sup> The tombstone on this grave, which was imported, the deceased having been a man of means, was strangely enough,<sup>4</sup> placed flat on the ground covering the grave.

The Jews, through their committee composed of Abraham de Lucena, Salvador D'Andrada and Jacob Cohen, had petitioned Stuyvesant and his council for cemetery grounds as early as July, 1655. Their request was refused with the statement that the Jewish community did not, at the time, need a cemetery, but advised the Jews that when the necessity is present, grounds will be made available for cemetery purposes.<sup>5</sup> On February 22, 1656, the council was again asked for cemetery facilities and this time a committee of the council was authorized "to point out to the petitioners a little hook of land situate outside of this city for a burial place."<sup>6</sup>

- 
1. History of the City of New York, Van Rensselaes, Mrs. S. New York, 1909, 2 volumes. Vol. 1, p.450
  2. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 272
  3. Pub. Vol. 1, p. 91
  4. ib. p. 92
  5. Pub. Vol. 18, p. 75
  6. Pub. Vol. 18, pp. 75-76



In the year 1903, a tablet was erected on the walls of the cemetery stating that it was consecrated in the year 1656 and was the first in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

The section characterized as "outside the city" began at the water gate, which was located approximately at the present corner of Pearl and Wall Streets, and extended to the present Fulton Street, and on to its junction with Chatham, and on to Harlem. This section had been sliced into farms or Boweries but because of the Indian warfare they had been deserted by the colonists before the arrival of the Jews in New Amsterdam.<sup>2</sup> Samuel Oppenheim, a thorough student, after having made examination of every available source including every deed or other ancient document containing reference to the section, states that he can find no evidence that the grant by the Dutch to the Jews in 1656 of land for a cemetery in a spot "outside the city" was located in New Bowery near Oliver Street and Chatham Square.<sup>3</sup> Because of the foregoing statement there can not be absolute certainty regarding the location of the first cemetery or even concerning the exact date upon which a cemetery was granted.

There can be little doubt, however, that the Jewish community did have its cemetery in very early times. Surely there would be evidence of complaint were this not true. The Jews, who enjoyed other privileges must surely have had a cemetery. Regarding the matter of location, one can not be too certain. It has been generally accepted

1. Pub. Vol. 31, p. 77

2. cf. Daly pp. 35-38.

3. Pub. Vol. 31, p. 78

heretofore that the first synagogue was located in the New Bowery near Chatham Square and Oliver Street.<sup>1</sup>

The cemetery was naturally an integral part of the synagogue. We cannot be sure whether synagogue organization followed the establishment of the cemetery or whether the possession of the cemetery called for an organized congregation. From the records contained in the minute books of the congregation, containing original material from the year 1728 and following, it is apparent that the cemetery was an affiliated organization of the She'erith Israel congregation.<sup>2</sup>

The history of the cemeteries of the synagogue may be summarized as follows:

The first addition to the original cemetery grounds was made in the year 1730 at a cost of \$150.00.<sup>3</sup> Again in the year 1751, when the cemetery grounds were extended, the walls around the old portion were repaired.<sup>4</sup> The cemetery in 1769, was evidently violated in some manner, for on July 25th of that year the congregation protested to the Mayor of the city "in Regard to Incroachments" there.<sup>5</sup>

By the year 1783, a committee of the congregation was authorized to "superintend the Beth Hayyim". In that year the congregation owned its own hearse.<sup>6</sup> A chapel was probably present in the cemetery lot.<sup>7</sup> It was the duty of the Shamash of the synagogue to be caretaker of the cemetery.<sup>8</sup>

Another cemetery was purchased in 1805 on Eleventh Street, near Sixth Avenue. Part of these grounds were sold in the year 1825 and still another cemetery was purchased on Twenty-First St. This last property was used by the congregation for cemetery purposes until after the year 1850.

.....

1. Van Rensselaer Vol.1 p.450, Wiernik p.66, Pub.Vol.31,p.77.
2. Ref. has already been made to this fact.
3. Pub. Vol. 27 p.299, Pub. 21, pp 7-8.
4. Pub. Vol. 21 p.65
5. Pub. Ibid pp 102-103
6. Pub. Ibid p 220
7. Pub. Vol. 27 p. 50
8. Pub. Vol. 21 p. 80
9. Pub. Ibid p. 190.

# THE POSITION OF THE JEWS IN THE GENERAL COMMUNITY

Since the first trying years following the settlement of the Jews in New Netherland, the community apparently encountered little difficulty on religious grounds. Although the policy of the British government caused it to extend to its colonial populations the same restrictions and privileges that obtain in England,<sup>1</sup> it appears that the spirit of this policy was not enforced in New York under British control from 1664 to 1783. In England the Jews suffered from humiliating restrictions at least until the year 1732,<sup>2</sup> but in New York this situation did not prevail. The tolerance extended to the Jews was caused in part by the good character of the English governors and was in some measure due to the good citizenship of the Jewish community.

As early as the year 1657 Asser Levy had loaned money to the Lutherans to aid them in building a church edifice.<sup>3</sup> There were Jewish contributions to the fund established for building the original Trinity church,<sup>4</sup> and it has been pointed out that in 1711 when the steeple of Trinity church was erected, the Jews contributed funds for the purpose.<sup>5</sup> In the year 1682, a number of Jews attended religious services at the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>6</sup> One wonders why. It may have been for purposes of expediency.... in order to secure good will. But more likely it was merely

-----  
1. Pub. Vol. 6, p. 91 ff.

2. ib. p. 90

3. Pub. Vol. 6, p. 125

4. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 383

5. ib. p. 382

6. Pub. Vol. 6, p. 126

a gesture of good will on the part of the Jews.

Nathan Simson and Samuel Levy were elected constables in New York on September 29, 1718. Simson was the grandfather of Sampson Simson, attorney, business leader<sup>1</sup> and founder of Mount Sinai hospital. Jacob Franks, one of the most influential men of the colony was the King's only business agent for the Northern Colonies during the French and Indian war.<sup>2</sup>

Except for an occasion in 1685 when the magistrates of New York City refused to permit the Jews to worship in public and with the exception of the hectic election of 1737, when Jews were not allowed to be witnesses,<sup>3</sup> and this only temporarily, no evidences of Anti-Semitic discrimination was practiced in the early history of New York City.

That there were individuals who disliked Jews can safely be assumed, and that such individuals caused discomfort to the Jewish community can likewise be taken for granted. In this connection a letter written to the editor of the New York Weekly Journal on May 16, 1743, describing a Jewish funeral at which those who "dare stile themselves Christians.....insulted the Dead in such a vile manner that, to mention all would shock the human ear." The writer deplored the actions of the "unthinking wretches;" yet he said that he, himself, had disliked the Jews but had returned from

- 1. Pub. Vol. 25, p. 87  
 2. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 15  
 3. Pub. Vol. 13, p. 9

the funeral "a better friend to that nation which was so much ridiculed and despised by ours." The funeral mentioned<sup>1</sup> was probably that of Abraham Isaacs.

In the year 1727, the colonial legislature of New York enacted a law providing that a Jew might omit the phrase "upon the true faith of a Christian" when taking the oath of abjuration.<sup>2</sup> The Jews were characterized by Lord Cobe in England in the year 1628 as infidels and therefore they could not be regarded as competent witnesses. In 1667 the English Court of King's Bench rendered the unanimous decision that Jews were competent witnesses and seventeen years later, the same matter having been discussed in the English Court of Chancery, the same verdict was made.<sup>3</sup> Unquestionably long before Justice Willes, in 1732,<sup>4</sup> said that Jews had for a long time been giving legal testimony in England, the Jews of Colonial New York were enjoying that privilege.

In general, there is little evidence to support the notion that the Jews, individually or as a group, achieved great prominence or prestige in the community before the War of the American Revolution. The published volumes of Documents Relating to the Colonial History of New York, the documentary material found in the collections made by O'Callaghan, the original data of the New York Historical Society, as well as the earlier court minutes in the Records of New Amsterdam, all of which have been patiently searched, fail

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 31, p. 240-241 and note
  2. Pub. Vol. 8, p. 136
  3. Pub. Vol. 13, pp. 9-10
  4. *ibid*; cf. Pub. Vol. 25, p. 87

to reveal much reference to the Jews. In those instances where Jews are mentioned, there is little indication of great influence or prominence attached to the Jews. On the contrary, whenever an important document is mentioned or an important happening recorded relative to which the names of leading members of the population of the city of New York are mentioned, the names of Jews are omitted. In the year 1761 when a Proclamation was issued on the occasion of the accession to the throne of England of George III no Jewish names are to be found among the signatures of the document.<sup>1</sup>

Prior to the Revolutionary War the Jewish community of New York lived quietly and unobtrusively, enjoying liberties seldom interrupted and then only temporarily. They achieved no fame, no social prominence. But since the records are so silent, it may be inferred that they lived in peace ....at least tolerated.

#### THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN EARLY TIMES

From the very beginning the Jews of New Amsterdam plunged into the economic life of the community. They may not have gained great wealth rapidly, but they did prosper and many Jews of early New York did become exceedingly wealthy. As early as October 11, 1655, after having been in the country for only thirteen months, seven Jews voluntarily con-

-----  
1. New York Historical Society

tributed some 512 florins for the purpose of securing the city against attacks by Indians out of a total of 6,305<sup>1</sup> florins collected from the entire community. Seven Jews gave some 8% of the total subscription, although they constituted only a fraction more than 3% of the subscribers. No contribution of more than 100 florins was received from any individual save Governor Stuyvesant, who gave 150 florins, and several ship owners, who in their absence from the city, were assessed 150 florins each. The general average of the contributions was 25.6 florins per donor, but the average<sup>2</sup> among the Jews was more than 73 florins.

These Jews Contributed as follows:

| Names                 |         | As written in record |
|-----------------------|---------|----------------------|
| Abraham de Lucena     | fl. 100 | Abraham La Cina      |
| Joseph D'Acosta       | fl. 100 | Joseph de Coster     |
| David de Ferera       | fl. 100 | David Frerie         |
| Slavador D' Andrada   | fl. 100 | Salvader Dandrado    |
| Jacob Cohen Henriques | fl. 100 | Jacob Cawyn          |
| Jacob Barsimson       | fl. 6   | Jacob Barstinsen     |
| Asser Levy            | fl. 6   | Assar Leevens 3      |

In order to have made such considerable contributions it is obvious that at least five members of the Jewish community were favorably situated economically. Yet this appears impossible because of the burdensome restrictions under which they labored. The fact is Jews were engaged in the retail trade from the very beginning of their residence in New Amsterdam.

1. The name "Wall Street" probably is derived from the fact that a wall of defense was erected on the site of the present street of that name.
2. cf. Rec. N.A. Vol. 1, pp. 366-375. The various averages were computed on the basis of the figures given.
3. ib. p. 371. Just why the Jews contributed such disproportionately large sums is difficult to understand, unless it was occasioned by the desire to win privileges by ridiculously extreme civic generosity.

Jacob Barsimson was a merchant immediately after his arrival. He became a general trader.<sup>1</sup> In a court action brought by Cornelis Van Tienhoven against Abraham de Lucena under date of March 1, 1655, the latter was charged with the crime of keeping open store "during the Sermon, and sold by retail."<sup>2</sup> In a memorandum listing various matters for deliberation of the local governmental officers, the following item appears, "Of keeping open store and selling by retail practised to the present time both by Jews and all foreigners."<sup>3</sup> It is significant, too, that though the Jews often complained because they were not accorded the privilege of trade at the trading posts in adjacent territory, as has previously been pointed out, they made no complaints regarding restrictions pertaining to the retail trade nor requests for such privileges. Had these been denied, they surely would have battled for such rights.

Jacob Cohen sold nails and imported tobacco from Curacas.<sup>5</sup> Asser Levy conducted a retail business and sold goods on credit.<sup>6</sup> Levy, well known as the champion of the Jews in their fight for rights, became well known in the community at large. His influence may be gleaned from the fact that his name frequently appears as executor of wills of non-Jews as well as Jews.<sup>7</sup> Joseph D'Acosta was evidently engaged in retail trade in 1658.<sup>8</sup>

1. Rec. N.A. Vol. 2, pp.2-3, p.8

2. Rec. N.A. Vol. 1, pp.290-291

3. Rec. N.A. Vol. 2, p.262

4. Rec. N.A. Vol. 2, p.416,419

5. Pub. Vol. 2, p.80

6. Rec. N.A. Vol. 7, p.4

7. Pub. Vol. 8, pp.20-22. Levy was probably Shohet of the New York Congregation in the year 1660. cf. Docs. Rel. Hist. N.Y. III, p.75-76.

8. Rec. N.A. Vol. 2, p.416



In addition to the retail trade in which the Jews engaged from the beginning, they were prominent importers and exporters. It has repeatedly been pointed out by writers that the Jews led in this commercial activity. The reason is almost obvious. It was not due, as has been stated, to the fact that the Jews could not engage in retail trade,<sup>1</sup> but rather, as has been suggested, to the fact that in the period of history we are considering it was exceedingly difficult to carry on business because of the privateering that was prevalent and because the national jealousies and resentment were strong. The Jews felt a comforting feeling of kinship, however, with other Jews no matter how far flung. Furthermore, the Jews could easily communicate with one another because of common language...and Jews lived in most of the commercial capitals of the world. A glorious economic opportunity was placed within the grasp of the Jews of early New York and that opportunity was instantly seized and gradually exploited.<sup>2</sup>

In the year 1656, Joshua Mordecai Henriques imported jewelry while he and Salvador D'Andrada imported tobacco.<sup>3</sup> He also imported goods from Holland. Abraham de Lucena<sup>4</sup> likewise traded in tobacco and in brandy. De Lucena<sup>5</sup> owned at least one commercial vessel and imported wine.<sup>6</sup>

1. Jewish Encyclopoedia, Vol. 9, p.260

2. Cohen, pp.68-72; Pub. Vol. 2, p.78; Pub. Vol. 10, pp.46-47;  
Pub. Vol. 14, p. 221

3. Pub. Vol. 2, p. 81

4. Rec. N.A. Vol. 1, pp.306-307

5. Pub. Vol. 18, p. 87

6. Pub. Vol. 2, p. 83

One writer holds the position that the Jews of the colonies, not the least among which was the New York community, through their commercial activity gave the colonies the basis of their economic future. Another student of the subject writes that the Jews were among the chief importers and exporters of early New York. They traded chiefly with merchants of Holland, London, Curacao, St. Thomas and other foreign countries. Joseph Bueno imported brandy, tobacco, coffee, copper, sugar, jewelry and negroes. The same Bueno loaned money to Lord Bellmont. Judging by the tax list of 1695-1700, Bueno owned more real property than any of the other Jewish residents of New York. The same individual traded with St. Thomas.

Although considerable commerce was carried on through business associates abroad, the Jews of early New York, even as early as the Dutch period were prominent traders with the colonies nearby. They traded with Rhode Island. David Ferera imported tobacco from Virginia. He leased a house in 1655 and deposited 600 guilders security for rent. He brought suit to recover 400 florins due him and received a favorable verdict. David Acosta also imported tobacco from the same colony. Isaac Israel shipped merchandise the Delaware. Jacob Lucena's shipping of hosiery to Albany occasioned two court actions.

- 
1. Cohen, p. 68
  2. Pub. Vol. 14, p. 221
  - 3.
  4. Pub. Vol. 2, p. 85
  5. N. Y. Historical Society Collection of 1911
  6. Pub. Vol. 28, p. 215
  7. Pub. Vol. 6, p. 67

8. Rec. N.A. Vol. 2, p. 401-402
9. Pub. Vol. 18, p. 87
10. Rec. N.A. Vol. 6, pp. 401-402
11. Pub. Vol. 20, pp. 88 The names may have been confused by the writer of this article
12. Docs. Col. Hist. N.Y. Vol. 12 pp. 47-48 cites court action arising from negligence of the ship captain in transporting Israel's goods.
13. Rec. N.A. Vol. 6, pp. 298, 312

The tax lists for the years immediately before 1700 include a house belonging to Moses Levy.<sup>1</sup> Isaac H. Levi & Co. "personal estate valued at 50 pounds."<sup>2</sup> It is possible that this organization was engaged in the money lending business. At this period there were Jewish money lenders in New York.<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Rebecca Gomez was taxed for a house valued at 400 pounds which was situated at 23 Water Street and for another house appraised at 1,000 pounds at 213 Queens Street.<sup>4</sup> Isaac M. Gomez was taxed for personal property valued at 100 pounds.<sup>5</sup> Daniel Coen (Cohen) owned a house located at 32 Maiden Lane which was taxed on a valuation of 500 pounds.<sup>6</sup>

The Jewish population had achieved prominence before the Revolutionary War in one important respect, through their successful commercial enterprises. This recognition had been gained even before 1664.<sup>7</sup> Surely it grew after that date. Reference to the expansion of the economic status of the New York Jewish community after the period of the American Revolution will be made later in this paper.

- 
1. N.Y. Hist. Soc. Collection Vol. 1910-1911, pp. 5, 39, 69, 110, etc.
  2. ib. Vol. 2, p.325
  3. Pub. Vol. 2, pp. 85-86
  4. N. Y. Hist. Soc. Vol. 2, p. 359
  5. ib. p. 372
  6. N. Y. Hist. Soc. Col. Vol. 2, p.372
  7. As has been indicated by the writer in connection with privileges granted as well as by commercial activity.

## CONGREGATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

At a meeting of the congregation held in September 1728, the following officials were in the employ of the synagogue: The Hazan, Moses Lopez de Fonseca, whose salary was 50 pounds per year together with a supply<sup>1</sup> of wood, and matzos for Passover. Samuel Bar Meyer<sup>2</sup> was Bodek; he was also Shohet. The two terms were employed in the congregational minute books synonymously at times. More frequently the two terms were used together, as "Shohet and Bodek." Meyer's salary was 20 pounds per annum which was increased to 30 pounds on May 27, 1729 on the condition that the congregational treasury would be able to afford the additional expense.<sup>3</sup> As will be seen frequently in this paper, salaries were often increased on the same condition. Valentine Campanale was the Shamas<sup>4</sup> with a salary of 16 pounds plus a supply of wood and matzos.

The Hazan

David Mendez Machado relieved Moses Lopez de Fonseca on September 1, 1736 of his duties as Hazan.<sup>5</sup> This was a temporary arrangement which became permanent when Lopez who had gone to Curacao resigned on January 30, 1737. At this time Machado was duly elected Hazan at an honorarium of 40 pounds annually together with wood and matzos

- 1. Pub. Vol. 21, p.4  
 2. ibid  
 3. ib. p. 15  
 4. ib. p. 4  
 5. ib. p. 30

and an agreement to be paid 10 pounds additional if there would be funds available. Machado was also to receive payment from the children whom he would teach in a "publick school in due form for teaching the Hebrew language."<sup>1</sup>

On October 9, 1747 Machado's salary was increased by 20 pounds and on March 17, 1748 Benjamin Pereyra was elected Hazan at a salary of 50 pounds per annum plus perquisites derived from fees for handling Kosher meat.<sup>2</sup> Hazan Isaac Pinto next served the congregation. In 1759 he had occasion to write to the congregation begging forgiveness for past wrongs. He was reinstated and his salary was raised on October 7, 1762 by the amount of 10 pounds.<sup>3</sup> On December 15, 1765, he gave notice of resignation.<sup>4</sup> His difficulty may have been occasioned by his radical religious ideas. In 1766 Pinto published an English translation of the Prayer Book. This is an important fact because he stated as his reason for publishing the book that Hebrew was either imperfectly understood or not at all.<sup>5</sup> The book, though translated into English, did not depart from the Sephardic ritual.<sup>6</sup> On June 8, 1766 Isaac Cohen da Silva was elected Hazan at a salary of 80 pounds plus wood and matzos.<sup>7</sup>

The duties of the Hazan in 1728 were listed as follows: He must attend all religious services. That is he must be at services twice on each week day and three times

1. Pub. Vol. 21, p.36
2. Pub. Vol. 21, pp.56-57
3. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 86
4. Pub. Vol. 21, pp.91-92
5. Pub. Vol. 13, p. 113; Pinto also wrote in orderly arrangement a list of the Hascaboth previously listed only in memory and gave attention to the records and reports of the congregation. cf. Pub. Vol. 11, p.152-153
6. Pub. Vol. 30, pp.56-57
7. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 92

on Sabbaths and holidays "to perform prayers and what more belongs to his function." He was the minister of the congregation. Besides all these duties the Hazan issues certificates for all Kosher beef that is shipped out of the city and is responsible for proper branding of the same. He was given extra remuneration for such services.<sup>1</sup> In their letters to Curacao, London and elsewhere, written at different times, and asking that Hazanim be recommended, the qualities demanded are reminiscent of a passage in the prayer book:<sup>2</sup>

קב"ה תפלת' כהפלת דקן ורגיל ופרקונאה  
ודקנו מגודל יקולו נעים ומערב גדעת

עם הבריות

in Messag Services for  
New Year -

The Hazan must have an agreeable personality, appearance and voice quality. Except for a brief interruption, the Hazanim of the congregation, in addition to all other duties, contracted to instruct the children. The details of such arrangements will be discussed elsewhere in this paper.

At a meeting of the congregation held on July 13, 1768 the members were informed that Gershom Seixas had applied for the position of Hazan, Da Silva having been dismissed. He was thereupon elected by unanimous vote at a salary of 80 pounds. He was to be supplied, moreover, with a home for which he would pay no rent and was to be supplied

1. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 1; Pub. Vol. 27, p.7

2. of. Pub. Vol. 27, pp. 10-11

1

with wood and matzos. Seixas served the congregation long and splendidly. He was the leader of the congregation until the year 1816 when death ended his ministrations as Hazan. This long period was interrupted only by the war of the Revolution during which time Seixas was in Stratford,<sup>2</sup> Connecticut and Philadelphia.

From the very beginning Seixas was put under the necessity of asking repeatedly for increases of salary. On January 1, 1775 he delivered an ultimatum to the effect that his salary must be raised to 140 pounds per annum or he would not serve longer.<sup>3</sup> Since no reply came to him he wrote again on March 29 asking for an immediate answer.<sup>4</sup> The congregation decided to offer Seixas 100 pounds. This amount he refused agreeing to serve for one more quarter (of a year) at the rate of 100 pounds or would remain longer at a salary of 120 pounds. The congregation being unable to meet the demand, Seixas resigned and the school teacher, Abraham Is. Abrahams was requested to officiate on the following Sabbath.<sup>5</sup> Just four days later the congregation agreed to pay Hazan<sup>6</sup> Seixas 120 pounds which was accepted.

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 21, pp. 100-101
  2. This period will be considered at a later date.
  3. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 133
  4. ib. p. 135
  5. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 136
  6. ib. pp. 137-138

The Shohet and Bodek

When Solomon Meyer died in 1729, Solomon Hart became the Shohet, being paid 20 pounds per annum and wood<sup>1</sup> and matzos. Abraham Pinto succeeded Hart with the same salary. On October 17, 1745 Pinto's salary was definitely increased 5 pounds and a further increase of the same amount was promised should there be sufficient funds at the end of the year.<sup>2</sup> On August 5, 1759 Johann Jacobs was elected Shohet at a salary of 25 pounds per year. His salary was increased by 10 pounds on November 11, 1759. On April 22, 1765, Jacobs having resigned, Jonas Philips was elected his successor at a salary of 35 pounds.<sup>3</sup> On December 3, 1769 Philips gave three months notice of resignation whereupon Hart Aaron was elected on a salary basis which brought him "the benefit of tongues" in addition to his remuneration of 25 pounds per year.<sup>4</sup>

By November 25, 1770 Hart Aaron had been discharged and Moshe bar Eliezer was elected at the same salary.<sup>5</sup> On December 23, 1771 Moses Lazarus became Shohet.<sup>6</sup> On November 8, 1772 Abraham Chavas was elected Shohet relieving one Lazarus who had taken the position only temporarily. Chavas proved incapable, and Hart Jacobs took the office.<sup>7</sup> Jacobs was dismissed on November 6, 1774, because he refused to submit himself to an examination for his qualifications.<sup>8</sup>

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 45
  2. ib. p. 48
  3. ib. p. 79
  4. ib. p. 107
  5. ib. p. 108-109
  6. ib. p. 111
  7. ib. pp. 114-115
  8. ib. p. 126



He was reinstated<sup>1</sup> and resigned on February 5, 1775.<sup>2</sup>

Hart Aaron now succeeded Jacobs but Aaron resigned during the Spring or summer of 1775 due to the inadequacy of his salary.<sup>3</sup>

The duties of the Shohet pertained to the slaughtering of animals for use of members of the congregation. In 1729 it was stipulated that he was to "Kill at several places sufficiently for the whole congregation, and must submit to an examination in the Dinimz"(laws), the examination to be conducted by the Hazan or by any shohet whom the Hazan might select for the purpose.<sup>4</sup> Later, as we have seen the duties of the Shohet became more extensive since he was charged with the task of slaughtering beef for export abroad and to surrounding country.<sup>5</sup>

Since the Jewish community was too small to support a Jewish butcher, a rather interesting arrangement was effected with non-Jewish butchers whereby the Shohet would kill and inspect meats and stamp those parts which the Jews could eat. This stamping or sealing meant that no Shomer was necessary, a fact gleaned from a letter written by the congregation to the Haham of Jamaica, a letter replying to a complaint by the Jamaica Jewish community regarding the stamping of meats imported from New York.<sup>6</sup>

A considerable portion of the Shohet's salary was usually derived from the payments made to the congregation by the non-Jewish butchers. The latter benefitted because their slaughtering was done by the Shohet of the

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 127
  2. ib. p. 134
  3. ib. p. 138
  4. Pub. Vol. 21, pp. 4, 15, 30.
  5. ib. p. 67
  6. ib. p. 77

congregation and because of increased business due to Jewish patronage.<sup>1</sup> The Shohet was frequently given certain specified parts of meats which he could sell and thus increase his income.<sup>2</sup> At times the Shohetim were paid a fee for each large animal slaughtered for export.<sup>3</sup> Thus the Shohet collected a regular salary from the congregation, received perquisites from butchers and fees for exported Kosher beef.

The congregation was compelled to endeavor to control the Kosher food supply of early New York City in order to enable it to have a Shohet to insure fair prices of Kosher food and to make certain that no members of the congregation would be compelled to eat trefah meats. At times independent Shohetim would attempt to effect private arrangements with butchers, competing with the Shohet of the congregation and reducing his revenue.<sup>4</sup> In such instances, the congregation would simply declare the meat trefah.<sup>5</sup> It also decreed "No Casheer Beef be shipt or sent away from this place" by any member of the congregation except through the Hazan.<sup>6</sup>

The Jews were occasionally enraged because butchers would affix false Jewish seals to meat. This occurred in 1796 when the Jews made complaint and the Common Council ordered that the license of the offender be suppressed.<sup>7</sup> In 1805 the congregation appealed to the Mayor De Witt Clinton

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 25, pp.45-46
  2. ib. p. 46
  3. ib. p. 44
  4. Pub. Vol. 21, pp.123-124
  5. Pub. Vol. 25, p. 53
  6. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 1
  7. Pub. Vol. 25, p. 32

because of a similar happening. The result was that the offender was no longer allowed to act as a butcher.<sup>1</sup>

### The Shamash

Besides the Hazan and the Shohet and Bodek, the congregation employed, as early as the year 1728, a Shamas.<sup>2</sup> In that year Valentine Campanall occupied the post commanding the salary of 16 pounds plus a supply of wood and matzos.<sup>3</sup>

The duties of Campanall were expressly mentioned. He was "to call the Yechidims" to synagogue service and was expected to summon to "Selicoth" those whose names would be given to the Shamas for that purpose. He must keep the synagogue candlesticks in a clean condition, make candles and keep the cistern supplied with water. On May 14, 1753 it was specified that in addition to the duties of the Shamas already understood, he must act as caretaker

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 25, pp. 33-35
  2. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 4
  3. ib.
  4. ib.

of the cemetery, attend all B'riths and funerals and be responsible for keeping the "Tamid" always lighted.<sup>1</sup> On April 29, 1759 the Shamas was required to set aside a part of his house for the purpose of baking Matzoth. It was further stipulated that if, in the judgment of the congregation's officials, it were necessary, the Shamas must board and lodge (poor) persons. The salary of the Shamas was increased by giving him his house without charging rent because of the last obligations required of him. In 1759 the requirement regarding the baking of matzos was changed. The Shamas must bake the cakes and not merely set aside room for the purpose.<sup>2</sup>

The Shamas was consistently required by the congregation to board and lodge indigent persons, the congregation paying for the board only.<sup>3</sup> A duty of the Shamas not yet listed refers to keeping the Bath cleaned and heated.<sup>4</sup> Besides all these tasks performed by the Shamas he must visit the homes of the members of the congregation on Friday afternoons and on the eves of the holidays.<sup>5</sup>

Riby Kelonimos Bar Samuel succeeded Campanall on January 1, 1744. Upon his death soon afterward, Campanall resumed his old position.<sup>6</sup> Upon the death of Campanall,

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 21, p.69
  2. ib. p. 80
  3. Pub. Vol. 21, pp. 80, 87
  4. ib. p. 83
  5. ib. p. 69
  6. ib. p. 46

Elias Solomons was elected by the congregation on May 14,  
1753 at a salary of 20 pounds and matzoth but no wood.<sup>1</sup>

On April 29, 1759 Judah Israel became Shamas with a salary arrangement whereby he was to be paid a salary of 10 pounds per annum, 7:10 pounds as an allowance for wood, rent of house free and matzos.<sup>2</sup> Israel's salary was increased on June 4, 1760 by 10 pounds and 40 shillings was added for wood to heat the Bath and water.<sup>3</sup> Judah Israel was the next Shamas. In 1768, when he was dismissed for insubordination, Abraham Israel Abrahams, the school teacher, also called Ribbi and Rabbi, acted temporarily in the capacity of Shamas. Israel apologized and continued in his position.<sup>4</sup> Levy Israel, the Shamas following Judah Israel received an increase of salary after having petitioned for the same.<sup>5</sup> On December 4, 1774 one Judah Levy was Shamas. He was granted one "loade wood and carty &ca" for heating the building for the meetings of the trustees of the congregation.

-----

1. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 69
2. ib. p. 80
3. ib. p. 83
4. ib. pp. 95-97
5. ib. p. 116

## THE PARNAS, AND HIS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The official in whose person was centered the greatest degree of authority in the congregation was the Parnas. When elected Parnas, an individual must serve<sup>1</sup> in the office or pay the rather large fine of 3 pounds.<sup>2</sup> The amount of the fine was soon increased to 16 pounds. Only a married man and one who had at some previous time served as one of the Hatanim was eligible for the position<sup>3</sup> of Parnas. He presided at all congregational meetings<sup>4</sup> of whatever nature. In his absence the following officials in the order stated assumed charge: oldest elder, any elder, Hatan Torah, Hatan Bereshith and finally the oldest ordinary member of the congregation.<sup>5</sup> In the earliest existing congregational records we find that the Parnas was invested with sufficient authority to appoint two<sup>6</sup> "Hatanims" as assistants and more.....the Parnas together with his two appointed aides have the power to select the following Parnas.<sup>7</sup> The Parnas not merely could exert great control through his personal authority, but through the

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 2, p. 2
  2. ib. pp. 49, 73, 57
  3. ib. p. 2
  4. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 68
  5. ib
  6. ib. p. 1
  7. ib. p. 2

power of appointment could guide the congregation very considerably while in power, and through the same power could direct policies even during the year after he had relinquished office! The Parnas and his two assistants acted as the supervisory board of the congregation, directed its activities and was expected "to act conscientious for the well being of the congregation." In a general congregational meeting the Parnas could exercise two<sup>1</sup> votes. He was not merely the President, but likewise the treasurer of the congregation.<sup>2</sup> The Parnas was, in the early years, the clerk of the congregation, too. He kept the files and the important records and documents of the congregation.<sup>3</sup> In the year 1760, due to some difficulties that had presented themselves regarding the disposition of seats, it was concluded that the Parnassim should thereafter assign seats to the members.<sup>4</sup> The Parnas and the elders formed the school board of directors.<sup>5</sup> He distributed charity within certain set limits.<sup>6</sup>

As has been stated the Parnas and his two "assistants"<sup>7</sup> or the Hatanim constituted the governing board

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 5
  2. ib. pp. 29, 31, 32, 33, 48, 66, etc.
  3. ib. pp. 119-120, 122
  4. ib. pp. 81-82
  5. ib. p. 72
  6. ib. pp. 2-3 (This matter will be considered in detail elsewhere in this paper.)
  7. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 14

of the congregation. Together they were often called adjuntas.<sup>1</sup> In the deliberations of this body, the Parnas could not be overruled by the Hatanim for in case of disagreement some impartial person would be called upon to arbitrate. This was decided in the meeting of the whole congregation which took place on September 15, 1728.<sup>2</sup> The Parnas and the two Hatanim dispensed all charity to the local Jewish poor or to itinerant poor families from congregational funds; the Parnas was permitted to take charge of itinerant poor Jews who were alone.<sup>3</sup> At first the Parnas and the two Hatanim constituted the school board.<sup>4</sup> This was determined at a meeting of April 15, 1747. Later the action was altered and a new arrangement effected by which the Parnas and the "Elders" formed the school Board.<sup>5</sup>

There can be no cause for wonder that it was exceedingly difficult to secure qualified candidates for the position of Parnas. The obligations involved in the office were so numerous and varied, the responsibility so heavy and the duties so strenuous that few able men were willing to assume the position. This fact very likely accounts for the monetary fine required of individuals who refused to accept the office when requested to do so. The increasing difficulty in securing proper individuals probably explains the increase in the amount of the fine imposed.

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 21, pp. 154, 155
  2. ib. pp. 1-2
  3. ib. pp. 2-3
  4. ib. p. 54
  5. ib. p. 72



For the same reason the former regulation that only married men could serve as Parnas was changed.<sup>1</sup> The situation finally became so desperate that it was necessary on October 22, 1748 for the congregation to ask that several men sign an agreement to the effect that they were willing to take the office in turn, the congregation reserving the right to elect others at will.<sup>2</sup> The same difficulty caused the congregation to reorganize its methods of administration by having two Parnasim elected on the first day of Rosh Hashanah.<sup>3</sup> The minutes of the congregation do not make clear the exact status or duty of the Parnas who presumably would be inactive until half the year had elapsed. It may be inferred, however, that while both Parnasim shared responsibilities and obligations; one was more directly responsible at a given time and he was expected to perform more tasks in connection with the work of the synagogue.<sup>4</sup> Both served together on the Board. The Board of Directors of the synagogue was enlarged, perhaps as a result of the mistake previously made of centralizing too much work in the hands of a few people.

It had become very difficult not merely to secure desired Parnasim, but it was no easy task to find

- 1. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 57  
 2. ib. pp. 59-  
 3. ib. p. 65  
 4. ib. p. 85

able Hatanim.<sup>1</sup> This fact may be responsible for the fact that on March 1, 1762 it was determined to make the duties of the Hatanim less strenuous by electing five of these officers rather than two as had been customary.<sup>2</sup> Finally an experiment was adopted by which "two out of the six following gentlemen should be Ellected by drawing two promiscuously out of their number." This action was made on August 28, 1774. On September 14, 1768 six Hatanim or assistants were chosen.<sup>3</sup> Before Sept. 8, 1771 it was probably discovered that the increased number of officers merely created the increased problem of securing them for on that date it was decided to elect only one Parnas, according to their original procedure and only two Hatanim as had been their earlier custom. It was determined that the two Hatanim, acting with the Parnas, would form the governing board of the congregation. The Hatan Torah and the Hatan Bereshith would serve respectively as first and second vice presidents. After one year of service the Hatan Torah would automatically succeed to the office of Parnas and the Hatan Bereshith to the status of Hatan Torah. To complete the picture it would become necessary then only to secure a new Hatan Bereshith each year and he would be appointed by the Parnas and the Hatanim. This scheme appears intelligent, but it did not operate successfully. Approximately two years later the congregation reverted to at least

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 110
  2. ib. p. 85
  3. ib. p. 102
  4. ib. p. 110

1 39.

part of the old method; again two Parnasim were elected. The single Parnas was compelled to serve too strenuously and for too lengthy a period.

Originally as has been stated the Parnas had the power to appoint the Hatanim. This matter was altered on December 4, 1774 when it was decided that the Parnas might appoint only half the number of Hatanim; the others to be elected by the members of the congregation.<sup>2</sup> Among the more prominent men who served the congregation in the capacity of Parnas may be mentioned the following names:

3                      4                      5                      6

Abraham Isaacs, Daniel Gomez, Joseph Simson, David Hays,

7                      8                      9

Jacob Franks, Sampson Simson, Benjamin Gomez, Samuel

10                      11                      12                      13

Hart, Myer Myers, Hayman Levy, Samuel Judah, Isaac Gomez,

14                      15                      16

Manuel Josephson, Moses M. Hays, Moses Gomez, Mathias

17                      18                      19                      20

Gomez, Solomon Simson, Jacob Hart, Joshua Isaacs, and

21

Bernard Hart.

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 21, pp.115-116
  2. ib. p. 129
  3. ib. p. 36
  4. ib. p. 49
  5. ib. p. 56
  6. ib. pp. 61-62
  7. ib. p. 68
  8. ib. p. 88
  9. ib.
  10. ib. p. 70
  11. ib. p. 79
  12. ib. pp. 83, 139
  13. ib. p. 85
  14. ib. p. 86
  15. ib. p. 94
  16. ib. pp. 111, 140
  17. ib. p. 117
  18. ib. p. 140
  19. ib. p. 167
  20. ib. p. 167
  21. ib. p. 167

We have already referred to the fact that the power of appointment of the Hatanim had been shifted to some degree from the hands of the Parnas to the congregation at large. But his powers were further restricted when the congregation became larger and when the German element in the membership increased. On October 22, 1748, during the incumbency of David Hays in the office, it was ruled that the Board of Directors of the Congregation, that is the group composed of the Parnas and the Hatanim, could no longer use its discretion in expending congregational funds. Beginning in 1748 the Board could pay the salaries of the congregation's paid officials and could make expenditures of a few dollars for certain specified expenses. In 1748 the total amount that the governing Board could spend amounted to 170 pounds and 10 shillings.<sup>1</sup> Now a more systematic arrangement of handling funds was devised. An account of disbursements must be rendered regularly at half year intervals to the elders of the congregation.<sup>2</sup> They must keep a regular account book.<sup>3</sup>

The term "Board of Trustees" which frequently appears in the congregational records is difficult to understand. It seems, however, that the "trustees" at times

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 21, pp. 61-62
  2. ib. p. 64
  3. ib. p. 66

either displaced the "Hatanim" or "Assistants" or was simply used interchangeably or synonymously with these more familiar terms. Surely two different executive bodies of the congregation did not function simultaneously.

In 1774 there were eight trustees. These were<sup>1</sup> elected by the entire membership of the congregation. Among the duties of the trustees was included the custodianship of synagogue properties.<sup>2</sup> The group of trustees very likely acted as the business agent of the congregation besides performing the usual duties which pertain to a supervisory board; these have been listed.

#### Other Officers

Beginning with the year 1797 there were official congregational treasurers.<sup>3</sup> Prior to that date the Parnas and his board had exercised the functions of treasurer; while at first the Parnas alone had been treasurer of the congregation.<sup>4</sup>

The "Elders" of the congregation together with the Parnas of the congregation formed the school board.<sup>5</sup> That the "Elders" were important officials may be observed from the fact that the oldest "Elder", in 1728, presided at congregational meetings in the absence of the Parnas.<sup>6</sup>

1. Pub. Vol. 21, pp. 131-132

2. ib. p. 130

3. ib. p. 169

4. These two facts have been presented elsewhere, cf. Vol. 21, p. 150

5. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 72

6.

In the year 1764 there were five "Elders" all of whom<sup>1</sup> were elected by the general congregation. This number<sup>2</sup> was increased to six in the year 1768. Since there is so little reference to elders in the original records of the congregation, we may suppose that the office was not continuously employed; it may be that the position partook of an honorary character.

In 1796, the office of "Clerk" was established.<sup>3</sup>  
The clerk is referred to in the year 1824.<sup>4</sup>

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 87
  2. ib. p. 102
  3. ib. p. 170
  4. ib. p. 167

## CONGREGATIONAL HISTORY

The first synagogue erected by the Jewish community of New York was consecrated on April 8, 1730, that date<sup>1</sup> being the seventh day of Passover. Construction had started<sup>2</sup> during the year 1725, the lot having been purchased on December 19, 1728 from Cornelius Clapper and was located on Mill Street.<sup>3</sup> Worship in the new synagogue had commenced<sup>4</sup> in the year 1729.

The members of the community contributed with apparent generosity toward the building fund.<sup>5</sup> They gave original donations which many of them increased from time to time. The largest single subscription came from Jacob Franks in the amount of 25 pounds. This contribution represented more than 9% of the total amount raised which was<sup>6</sup> 25;.13.6 pounds. It was during Franks' administration as Parnas that the new synagogue was constructed.<sup>7</sup> He gave an additional 5 pounds for a foundation stone,<sup>8</sup> and later made<sup>9</sup> further contributions as did other members of the congregation.

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 197
  2. ib. p. 18, 30
  3. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 259
  4. ib. p. 259. cf. An interesting item in the congregational minutes appears: "To cash paid for a Bail of strong Beer dd (donated) to them (referring to the carpenters) as per agreement 18 shillings." Pub. Vol. 21, p. 20
  5. Pub. Vol. 21, pp. 10-11
  6. ib.
  7. ib. p. 13
  8. ib. p. 12
  9. ib. pp. 22, 23, 24

Not only did Franks give of his money with great generosity, but he gave of himself, his time and work to the building arrangement.

Jacob Franks was a member of the building committee which consisted, in addition to himself, of Moses and Mordecai Gomez and Benjamin Mendez Pacheco who were elected in 1728. These gentlemen "gave bond to Messrs. Daniel Gomez, Abraham Isaacs and Nathan Levy that said work should be done for the use of the body congregation<sup>1</sup> Shearith Israel." Moses Gomez was also one of the greatest benefactors of the congregation in connection with the building of the first synagogue. He advanced personal funds<sup>2</sup> for expenses of construction, and he contributed a very large sum to the building fund.<sup>3</sup>

In this synagogue on Mill Street the Jewish community worshipped (except for the period of the Revolutionary War) until the year 1817, when it was wrecked and the second synagogue building of the congregation was constructed. Until the new structure was prepared for occupancy, the congregation worshipped temporarily in a large room of<sup>4</sup> "an engine house" on Beaver Street near Broad Street. The second synagogue was consecrated on April 17, 1818. Mordecai Manuel Noah delivered an address. An inscription on the front of the second synagogue building reads that the congregation had erected its first edifice in 1730 and had

-----  
1. Pub. Vol. 21. pp. 9-10

2. ib. p. 18

3. ib. p. 30

4. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 251; Pub. Vol. 21, p. 98



rebuilt in 1817.<sup>1</sup>

Efforts in the direction of securing a second synagogue had started as early as 1803 when "offerings" for a building fund were given to the extent of \$410.00.<sup>2</sup> On June 8, 1806 the congregation appointed a committee to confer with the governing board of the congregation with a view toward securing a new house of worship. If the trustees would not act, the committee was empowered "to buy, lease, or hire" a synagogue. The committee consisted of Benjamin Seixas, Harmon Hendricks and Ephraim Hart.<sup>3</sup> As early as 1790 an attempt had apparently been made to build a second synagogue for there is a record of a receipt of 100 pounds being given by the contractor, who was to construct the building, to Isaac Gomez who turned it over to the congregation.<sup>4</sup> The lot located on Mill Street, purchased in 1722 for 300 pounds which was "kept in trust" by Daniel Gomez, Joseph Simson and Myer Myers for the congregation,<sup>5</sup> was probably intended to be used as the lot for the second synagogue.

The Crosby Street Synagogue was occupied on May 24, 1834, being the third structure for religious worship constructed by the congregation. At its consecration, Mordecai Manuel Noah, who had delivered an address on the occasion of the dedication of the former synagogue, spoke. The

whole service was in the Hebrew language save Noah's address which was presented in English. The Boston Courier and the New York Times carried comparatively lengthy and complimentary reports of the dedicatory exercises which took place on June 12, 1834.<sup>1</sup> The congregation used this synagogue until the year 1860.

## ASPECTS OF JEWISH LIFE IN NEW YORK CITY UNTIL 1850

### Missionary Activity

It must manifestly be true that a decidedly vigorous Jewish spirit was felt in the hearts of the small Jewish community in New York City. Otherwise, it would have been impossible for the congregation She'erith Israel to have functioned continuously, as it did, serving the educational and philanthropic needs of the community despite the combined handicaps of small numbers and little income. As we have already set forth, the congregation necessarily worried almost consistently regarding its economic status, which was always weak. Only a community feeling, a genuine warmth of Jewish religious spirit could have carried on in the face of apparently overwhelming odds. But the congregation did not merely exist. It served well; it had employed as early as the year 1728 three congregational officials and these were usually of a very excellent character.

-----  
1. cf. Pub. Vol. 21, pp. 198-205; Pub. Vol. 27, pp. 258, 259.  
The date of consecration may have been June 13, 1834,  
cf. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 197.

Despite all this, notwithstanding the splendid interest in and knowledge of matters Jewish which generally obtained among the Jewish residents of New York City, the Jewish community was consistently faced by the problem of keeping the Jews Jewish. Christians were interested in making them Christian. By the year 1843, the activities of missionary organizations working among the Jews had become so conspicuous and so menacing that Rev. S. M. Isaacs of the Elm Street synagogue delivered a powerful address generally attacking the missionizing activities and directing his remarks especially against the "Conversion Society of New York."<sup>1</sup>

This organization published "The Jewish Chronicle" of New York City which was the important organ used for proselyting the Jews.<sup>2</sup> On one occasion The Occident published an editorial attacking The New York Jewish Chronicle.<sup>3</sup> On another occasion Leiser commented resentfully on an article which had appeared in that periodical and which had stated that there were two organizations carrying on missionary activities in the Jewish community.<sup>4</sup>

-----  
1. The Occident,

2. The Occident, Vol. 1, pp. 512-561, 210-212

3. ib. Vol. 5, pp. 462-463

4. ib. Vol. 2, p. 561

The length of time that the above mentioned or similar organizations had annoyed the Jews of New York is not known; probably these had existed for only a brief period before the 1840's and had commenced to operate in organized form only when the Jewish community was augmented by the comparatively large German Jewish immigration which began in the late 1830's. It is reasonable to suppose, however, that without the aid of a periodical or the mechanics of well established organizations, missionary activity, in varying degrees of intensiveness, had been progressing for a long time in New York. The Jewish community was probably fearful of these activities whether or not real harm had resulted therefrom. Otherwise, it would appear that little attention would be given to the organizations in the 1840's.

The congregation probably long remembered with some bitterness the fact that its former Hazan, one Judah<sup>1</sup> Monis, had become converted to Christianity.

---

1. cf. Pub. Vol. 22, pp. 1-11; Pub. Vol. 30, pp. 23-37  
After his baptism, Monis became an instructor in Hebrew at Harvard. He published a Hebrew Grammar in the year 1735, the first book of its kind to see print in the United States.

### Intermarriage

There were certainly occasional instances in which Jewish residents of New York married non Jews for there are several references to intermarriage in the congregation's minute books. The position of the congregation She'erith Israel regarding intermarriage is very clear; it was unalterably opposed to it and would not tolerate in its midst any member of the congregation who had married a non-Jew. Intermarriage was viewed as unforgivable, the guilty person "is regarded as having severed all connection with his brethren in faith," read the minutes of the congregation in the year 1843, and no benefits of the congregation may be extended to such a person upon his or<sup>1</sup> her death, no "ceremony" or "mourning" being permitted. In the year 1847, it was decreed by the congregation that "no seat shall hereafter be leased to any person married contrary to our religious laws" nor would the remains of such an offender be buried in the cemetery belonging to the<sup>2</sup> congregation.

As early as the year 1763, the congregation ruled that congregational officers can not assist in "making proselytes and forbidding them from performing marriage ceremonies between Jews and proselytes. The penalty for trans-

-----  
 1. Pub. Vol. 27, pp. 115-116  
 2. The Occident, Vol. 2, p. 119

gressing the law was \$100.00!"<sup>1</sup> Benjamin I. Jacobs asked the congregation for a Jewish wedding ceremony and at the same time advised that his fiancée wanted to become<sup>2</sup> proselytized. The congregation refused the request. The same individual having married the non Jewess, petitioned the congregation on January 4, 1784 for permission for himself and wife to become affiliated with the congregation as members in good standing. He stated that when he married it was "with intent to make her a proselyte."<sup>3</sup>

In view of the attitude of the congregation toward proselytism, its refusal to accept proselytes, there may be cause to wonder at the action of the congregation when it indorsed a proselytization ceremony in Philadelphia in the year 1810; In that year the congregation of New York affixed its official seal as well as the signature of<sup>4</sup> its Parnas on the document relating to the matter. The congregation was apparently willing to accept proselytes when convinced of their sincerity but consistently refused to admit them when marriage to a Jew was involved.

- 1. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 217  
2. Pub. Vol. 27, pp. 29-30  
3. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 43  
4. Pub. Vol. 27, pp. 231-232

Religious Indifference or Radicalism

The congregation was perhaps compelled to adopt extreme measures in order to preserve Judaism in the village of New York. Frequently it was compelled to adopt extreme measures in order to maintain strict observance. We find the interesting rule in the minutes of the congregation for example, that members must wear a Talith or be dismissed from the congregation.<sup>1</sup> It has been stated that the increasing violations of Jewish law among members of the congregation and the apprehension felt by others as to possible results of such violations brought into existence as early as the year 1731 an organization called Mezyion Teza Torah, having as its purpose the perpetuation of the old observances.<sup>2</sup>

-----  
1. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 108

2. Jewish Encyclopedia. Vol. 9, p. 268. No evidence has been found by the present writer relating to this organization.

## CONGREGATIONAL PROBLEMS

The Budget

The congregation, before the year 1728, had received its income through the system of selling mitzvot, a custom which was abandoned at the beginning of the congregational year 1728. For this method was substituted a system of taxing "mens seats."<sup>1</sup> On April 16, 1747 the congregation, apparently dissatisfied with the method of assessing the members for the pews they occupied, determined to levy annual dues, providing for quarterly payments, assessing the individuals according to their financial standing--and, in addition the pews were paid for. If one makes "offerings" amounting to or exceeding the tax,<sup>2</sup> such offerings were acceptable as substitute for the dues. In 1747 there were fifty-two paying members of the congregation whose dues totaled about 250 pounds, averaging approximately \$23.00 dues from each member. Jacob Franks and Mordecay Gomez and Aaron Louzada paid 11:13:4 pounds each.<sup>3</sup> Fifteen members paid 5 pounds or more per year.<sup>4</sup> In 1748 there were fifty-two paying members.

- 1.  
 2. ib. pp. 52-53  
 3. ibid  
 4. ib. p. 52



In 1749 the congregation found itself in economic distress and unable to pay the salaries of its officers. A committee was appointed for the purpose of drawing up a schedule of fees to be charged for the pews. Fifteen shillings became the minimum and 3 pounds the maximum charge for seats.<sup>1</sup>

On August 7, 1737 the action of the congregation requiring each family or individual, who could afford the expense, to pay forty shillings per year in the form of dues or offerings or both was all but meaningless in view of the trivial sum fixed.<sup>2</sup> Dues could readily be assessed, but collections were made not without difficulties.<sup>3</sup>

The congregation experienced great difficulty in meeting the normal expenses. The salaried officers, the Hazan, the Shohet and Bodek and the Shamas complained frequently because their salaries were inadequate for the needs of their families. The congregation, recognizing the justice of their demands but unable to meet them, frequently granted increased salaries on condition that the treasury could afford it.<sup>4</sup> To supplement the budget, it was ordained that Jews in the neighborhood of New York, presumably those closer to She'erith Israel than to any other congregation, must share the burden by contributing toward or be deprived of congregational benefits.<sup>5</sup>

-----  
1. ib.

2. Pub. Vol. 21, pp. 36-37

3. ib. p. 98

4. This particular has been treated in the section dealing with synagogue administration

5. ib. p. 52, The autocratic manner by which the congregation enforced its regulations will be considered elsewhere in this paper.

The financial problems of the congregation were so pressing that in very early times it became necessary to ask the members of the congregation for voluntary contributions for the purpose of purchasing wood. The prices of the pews apparently fluctuated for on September 11, 1766 a committee composed of Daniel Torres, Samuel Hart, Benjamin Gomez and Sampson Simson were authorized "to regulate the price of each seat for the present year." Regular annual dues, paid in quarterly installments continued to be collected.<sup>3</sup> By the year 1796 the tax on pews, depending upon the comparative desirability of their location, was apparently considerable.<sup>4</sup> In 1792 the tax on pews was as high as 12 pounds each. In 1802, the income from assessment on pews amounted to the sum of \$1,125.00. The entire fixed income was \$1,807 which means that the most considerable part of the regular budget of the synagogue was derived from the sale of seats in the year 1802. In the same year the fixed amount of expense totaled \$1,871, just a little more than the set income. The debts amounted to \$5,160, while monies due the congregation totaled only \$1,317.<sup>5</sup>

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 49
  2. ib. p. 93
  3. Pub. Vol. 27
  4. ib. p. 65
  5. Pub. Vol. 27, pp. 72-73

The congregation burdened by a comparatively large debt, did not have annual revenue sufficient to meet its definite budget. Naturally, the synagogue could well reckon on some extra funds through gifts or from other sources. But the congregation was not financially sound and apparently had not functioned on a solid economic basis consistently throughout its history until comparatively modern times.

Perhaps the methods of assessing the members of the congregation were too haphazard; possibly the failure of the congregation to become financially stable was due to reliance upon generous voluntary offerings. In any event on February 9, 1809 a petition signed by fifteen prominent members of the congregation, asked that there be fewer offerings.....all of which should be used for charitable purposes and that congregational revenues should be derived only from the sale (and rental) of seats.<sup>1</sup>

#### Internal Difficulties of the Congregation

One of the most important difficulties which constantly irritated the early New York Jewish Community and which proved exceedingly irksome to the congregation was the problem of ill will which obtained between the Sephardic and Ashkenazic elements within the group. Had

-----  
1. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 163

the population been sufficiently large, the Sephardim would most probably have maintained a policy of disdainful aloofness from the other Jews. But since every member present and every dollar paid were essential in order to maintain the congregation, the two elements were compelled to mingle. But they never were able to feel homogeneous, to maintain even tolerably peaceful relationships.

The congregation, She'erith Israel included from the beginning non Sephardic Jews although the great majority of the members, at least until the middle of the eighteenth century, were of Portuguese or Spanish Jewish descent. As has been pointed out, the first group of Jews to arrive in New Amsterdam in 1654 had come from Brazil. In Dutch Brazil the Jewish communities were almost entirely Sephardim. But some Germans Jews, Polish Jews and others found their way to New York in early colonial times. In the case of Levy vs. Levy the question was asked by the court as to what institution had been referred to by Uriah P. Levy when he stipulated in his will that certain bequest were intended for the "Portuguese" synagogue. It was explained by the witness that "Portuguese" referred to the ritual only as the congregation included non Sephardic members.

---

1. Innes, p. 85

2. Pub. Vol. 9, p. 87 ff

A clergyman of New York, early in the 18th century wrote that the Jewish community of that city included "many ingenious" Jews from Poland, Hungary and Germany.<sup>1</sup>

During the eighteenth century Germany was not a great sea fairing and commercial nation. Had this been true there probably would have been more German Jews in early New York. Yet we have already had occasion to mention on in the course of this paper a number of names of non Portuguese Jews including Levy, Simson, Solomon, Meyers, Moses, Hart and Hays. By the year 1830 large numbers of German Jews came to New York.<sup>2</sup>

It is the thesis of the present writer that the problem of enforcing rules of decorum, the outburst of violence and the frequent acts of discipline result from the friction between the Portuguese members of the synagogue and the Ash-henagin.

There was frequently a problem in connection with enforcing common decorum in the congregation.<sup>3</sup> It became imperative for the congregation to fix a fine for violators of rules of decorum.<sup>4</sup> There were actual scenes of disturbance within the synagogue during services.<sup>5</sup> The Parnas, upon one occasion asked that "stricter attention be paid to the Rules of Decency and Decorum which have a natural tendency to excite

- 
- 1. Daly, pp. 30-31
  - 2. Pub. Vol. 9, p. 96
  - 3. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 28
  - 4. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 2
  - 5. ib. pp. 50-51

Devotion especially in Time of divine Service, which he is sorry to observe has been for sometime neglected. He mentioned particularly the evil practises of "Leaving the Synagogue in times of Prayer, talking and laughing with and to each other" etc.<sup>1</sup> people were charged with ridiculing the services and of general contempt for the service.<sup>2</sup>

The guilty parties were seldom mentioned but there are convincing reasons to support the position that the offenders were non Sephardim who accepted reluctantly and with little graciousness the will of the majority to them. The ritual was strange and unsatisfactory. The pronunciation of the Hebrew prayers must have been well nigh intolerable. As a group their will was always subservient to the wishes of the Sephardim. In addition to all this the Ashkenazim were surely not personal friends of the Sephardim except in those rare instances that the latter would permit such friendships to arise. It were a safe hypothesis that the two groups maintained little mutual contact except in the synagogue--and in the synagogue they could not be compatible; they fought.

But there is more support for the view of the writer than logic. In the several instances where names of offending parties are mentioned those names are always German.

---

1. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 129

2. Pub. Vol. 21, pp. 97-98

Judah Hays, in the year 1760, became highly <sup>incensed</sup> be-  
 cause his daughter had been dispossessed of her seat in the  
 synagogue by one Mears who claimed it for his daughter.  
 Although Mears was fined, and neither party was allotted  
 the seat in question, Hays remained dissatisfied. It was  
 agreed by officials of the congregation that the Hays' pew  
 be lengthened so that there would be sufficient space on  
 that bench for Miss Hays. The father still remained obdu-  
 rate and refused to abide by the decision. The Parnasim  
 summoned the Elders who refused to consider the matter  
 farther; so the whole congregation met and decided to sup-  
 port the original decree. Hays would not accept the verdict  
 and the congregation at its following meeting on August 10,  
 1760 resolved to levy a fine of 40 shillings and insisted that  
 the daughter be seated as directed. It was also resolved  
 that Hays would be dismissed from the congregation should he  
 refuse to accede to these terms.<sup>1</sup> Jacob Franks paid the fine  
 more than three years after it had been levied.<sup>2</sup> Hays had  
 apparently been severed from all communal contacts and activ-  
 ities during that whole period. Judah Hays had not been on  
 good terms with the congregation for a long time before the  
 incident above related. On October 9, 1747 he asked to "be  
 excused from" future meetings and consultations" of the

-----  
 1. Pub. Vol. 21, pp. 81-84

2. ib. p. 87

At a meeting of the congregation held on July 30, 1769 certain members including Solomon Hays were said, for a considerable length of time, to have proved themselves nuisances in the congregation. They were charged with having been an opposition element with a "tendency to subvert the laws of the congregation. They were, and had for sometime been, trouble makers. The congregation ruled, therefore, to the effect that the several individuals mentioned must each make "proper reasonable and satisfactory concessions" or be "Eraised from the List of Yaheedim" and be "Intituled to no Right, bonofit or Priviledge" in the congregation and community. It is interesting to observe the names of the offenders: Solomon Hays, Barrak Hays, Andrew Hays, Manuel Josephson,<sup>1</sup> Hillel Judah and Moses Judah. All German Jews, the Hays and Judah families.<sup>2</sup> Judah Hays, it will be recalled, had nine years earlier encountered serious difficulty in the congregation.

Shortly after the incident above related, the synagogue dismissed Manuel Josephson, Michael Hays, Eleazer Levy<sup>3</sup> and Samuel Eleazer Levy and Barak Hays was fined.

- 
1. Josephson wrote a polemic letter from Philadelphia where he became president of the congregation, disputing about the order of service, cf. Pub. Vol. 27, pp. 185-190
  2. Pub. Vol. 21, pp. 103-104
  3. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 113. There is evidently an error in the congregational minutes in connection in the dates of the action authorizing the letter to Jonas and his subsequent dismissal. The former action was dated August 28, 1786 and the latter August 10, 1786. Surely the latter date must have been later than the former.



1  
 congregation. He needed the congregation; so he did not wish to be unaffiliated. He evidently desired only to maintain his membership without coming personally to congregational functions.

Other incidents may be cited in connection with the foregoing. It happened on October 10, 1755 that S.... H.... had committed so grave an offense that without undue deliberation or trial he was peremptorily excommunicated from the community. Not only was he dismissed from membership in the congregation but socially ostracized as well, the members of the congregation, having been enjoined not even to engage in conversation with the man. The crime was so heinous, apparently, that the congregation considered itself justified in publishing its action and circulating the same in the community every three months until such time as the individual in question might make restitution to the satisfaction of the congregation. The initials S.... H....<sup>2</sup> almost undoubtedly are the initials of Solomon Hays. This view receives confirmation for the reason that the initials do not belong to any person known to have been a member of the congregation in 1755; but there is further corroboratory evidence in another later incident in which Solomon Hays played a principal role.

-----  
 1. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 56

2. ib. p. 71

One Lion Jonas had offended the community in various respects. He had absented himself from congregational meetings, violated the Sabbath and insulted congregational officers. It was resolved on August 28, 1786 that the Parnas write to Jonas and tell him that he is "conducting himself in a very different manner from what a Yehid ought and that he be allowed until next Friday to make his excuse for not attending which, if not done in a satisfactory manner by that day, he shall have no Mishebarack or have his name mentioned in the synagogue. Following the above, Jonas' time limit for explanation having been extended further and Jonas still failing to make appearance, but having further insulted the congregation, it was resolved that Jonas be dismissed from the congregation, that he be deprived of all religious benefits of the Synagogue, "nor should any offering be made in his name." These disabilities were to be removed whenever Jonas would make satisfactory "concessions" and would pay a fine of 5 pounds. It was also decreed that the full text of the congregations resolution be read in the Synagogue on the following Sabbath<sup>1</sup> and that a copy be preserved in the congregational files.

-----  
1. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 156-158-159

The incidents here recounted, all of which involved only German Jews, lend force to the present writer's theory that the now Sephardic elements of the New York Jewish community did not experience dissatisfaction by disorderliness, by disobeying the rules of the congregation, by constant clashes and general friction. Since they were a minority they were subject to the tyrannical action of the majority element, the Sephardim.

The congregation occupied a strategic position. Alone in the present United States for many years, alone in the City of New York until the nineteenth century, located at a then tremendous distance from any other congregation, possessing the only cemetery and school that could be used by Jews of the city, the She'erith Israel congregation was in a position to enforce its will.

The congregation by reason of its unique position could not merely dismiss members depriving them of the benefits of all religious and communal life but could and did excommunicate members socially forbidding all social relationships between a dismissed individual and the others.

The very helplessness of the non Sephardic Jews in this situation made the situation more fierce, caused a sullen stubbornness at times, an unyielding obstinacy.

It may possibly be a far fetched notion but the writer is inclined to believe, nonetheless, that the difficulties experienced between the Portuguese and Ashkenanim in the early history of New York was responsible for a decline of religious and general Jewish fervor among the German Jews of the time.

It probably explains some of the many intermarriages.

The congregation exercised tyranny not merely in connection with meting out discipline to the deserting Ashkenzim in its midst. It enforced all decrees in the same manner. It remains very probably, however, that nearly all of its disciplinary measures were created for the purpose of subduing the Ashkenazim who would be the more frequent offenders. The tyrannical methods of the congregation may have proved the only certain plan to insure obedience to law sufficiently for the congregation to function.

It became easy for the congregation and its officials to abuse their power. Perhaps it was thought necessary for purposes of intimidating the Ashkenazim to decree on September 27, 1731 that every one called to the Torah must offer at least three blessings for the health of the Parnas and the congregation. No funds can be offered except at the Torah where the said blessings must be uttered.<sup>1</sup> Failure to conform carried with it a severe penalty.

Included among disciplinary actions of the congregation maybe mentioned one in which several members<sup>2</sup> were dismissed from the congregation on September 30, 1765; another case where punishment was meted out occurred on September 3,<sup>3</sup> 1769. A certain S. H. (probably Solomon Hays)

-----  
1 Volume Pub. 21, p.14

2 ib ;p89,97

3 ib ;p 104

paid the staggering price of 20 pounds for insulting the congregation. The Parnas and his two assistants in the early days of the synagogue's history were authorized to use their discretion in fining salaried officials in amounts not exceeding 3 pounds per fine. If the offense were thought to warrant a more considerable penalty the whole congregation must deliberate on the matter.

In the normal course of events, the entire Jewish community desired affiliation with the only available congregation. This is certain because there are no records of the congregation attempting to persuade or coerce members of the of the community into entering the synagogue rolls. There is only one case on record in which it appears that a New York Jew did not in the early history of the community affiliate with the congregation. That person had died and the congregation decided to charge the fee of \$50.00 since the deceased had not contributed to the congregation.

The last instance of internal difficulty within the congregation, occurring before the year 1850, concerned itself with a law suit between one Philips and the congregation. The congregation charged that Philips had usurped the office of trustee. Philips claimed that in 1841 he had been elected trustee to serve a three year term. This action finally reached the (State) Supreme Court.<sup>4</sup>

- 
1. Pub. Vol. p. 81
  2. ib. pp. 44-45,4
  3. ib. 27 p. 330
  4. The Occident

## JEWISH EDUCATION FROM 1728 TO 1850

Although no congregational records have been found, it is certain that the children in the New York Jewish community received general and Jewish education through the agency of the congregation before the date of the known records. This fact must obviously be true because all Jewish communities, in earlier times, would have been sure to provide the children with education. But there is a further reason for the already plausible guess; the congregational minutes from the date that these commence include many references to education.

On the seventh day of Passover, 1731, a record states that on this day of the first anniversary of the opening of the new synagogue, "there was made codez (consecrated) the Yeshivat called Minhat Arev.....for the use of this congregation....and as a Beth Hamidr<sup>1</sup>as for the pupils." Before this date, the children were very likely instructed by parents and by the Hazanim. From the year 1731 to the year 1847 the congregation She'erith Israel, and the several other congregations which had come into existence prior to the latter date, taught in their schools secular studies as well as Hebrew. The congregation provided the entire secondary education of children until after the middle of the 19th century.<sup>2</sup> This fact will become more apparent later.

-----  
1. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 14

2. cf. Dushkin

At the very beginning of the period, it would seem that only Hebrew was taught. On March 3, 1737, when David Mendez Machado was engaged as Hazan, he was obligated to teach "the Hebrew language." It was required that the Hazan devote the whole of every morning or of the afternoons, as he desired, to teaching. The teacher was to be paid by those pupils who could afford such payment; the others must be taught without charge.<sup>1</sup>

By April 15, 1747, the hours which the Hazan must devote to teaching had increased. Beginning with that date he must teach the children each morning for three hours and on each Thursday afternoon. He was to receive remuneration except from the poor children. Each child was required to pay eight shillings per quarter and one load of wood annually for instruction.<sup>2</sup>

By December 7, 1755, subjects of study other than Hebrew were included in the curriculum, Spanish, English, writing and arithmetic were also included, each of these subjects being taught to all children of the school. Now a new arrangement was effected regarding hours of instruction. The school was to be open during the winter from 10:00 to 12:00 A.M. and from 2:00 to 4:00 P.M.; in the summer, the school was to function from 9:00 to 12:00 A.M. and from 2:00 to 5:00 P.M.<sup>3</sup> School sessions were held in the home of the Hazan.

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 35
  2. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 54
  3. ib. p. 72

On December 17, 1760, the personal qualities and abilities desired in a school teacher were listed in a letter sent to Benjamin Pererra asking him to recommend a school teacher for the congregation. The man the congregation desires must be unmarried, modest and sober. It were imperative that he know Hebrew and English but the congregation preferred that he have a knowledge of Spanish, too. For his services the congregation was prepared to pay the teacher 40 pounds annual salary in addition to the funds paid by the pupils who were able to pay for their instruction. The school was to include pupils of beth sexes.<sup>1</sup>

The first man to teach Jewish children in New York City as a full time teacher was Abraham Is. Abrahams who was engaged by the congregation on April 25, 1762, almost two years after the community had made known its desire for a teacher. Abrahams was asked to "keep a publick school in the Hebra, to teach the Hebrew language and translate the same into English, also to teach Reading Writing & Cyphering." No mention is made of Spanish because Abrahams was very likely ignorant of that language. He was offered a salary arrangement which provided for 20 pounds as direct pay, income from the children who would pay and any offerings made to him in the synagogue. He must teach the poor gratis and must agree to substitute for the Hazan in the absence of illness of the latter.<sup>2</sup>

---

1. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 17

2. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 85



Abrahams agreed to all stipulations except the amount of salary. A salary of 40 pounds was thereupon<sup>1</sup> granted, which was quickly increased by a wood allowance of 7 pounds and 10 shillings.<sup>2</sup> On March 6, 1768 Abrahams was given an unconditional salary increase of 10 pounds and a promise of 5 pounds additional remuneration if the budget<sup>3</sup> could afford the extra payment.

In 1793 certain agreements concerning the school were entered into the congregational minutes. These provide that Hazan Gershom Seixas shall set aside space in his home for school purposes and must keep it heated. The congregation agreed to furnish the school room. There were<sup>4</sup> thirty-six boys and girls in the school, each of whom was admitted only on order of the president. Each child must be given at least one lesson daily. The school functioned on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons and on Sunday from 10 A.M. to 1 P.M. The school was closed on all holy days and

By this date it appears that there was no longer a teacher whose sole duty was instructing children. Now, as before the advent of Abrahams, teaching duties were performed by the Hazan. This arrangement was very sensible for, despite all struggles, the congregation was unable to pay sufficiently to have a man of the quality of Seixas for 48 years.

---

1. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 86

2. ib. p. 87

3. ib. p. 97

4. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 55

Had it been necessary to pay a Hazan and a teacher in the early years, both would have been inferior because the congregation could not then have afforded the expense of having capable men.

Seixas was asked to report any instances of pupils who might cease attendance at school. Four such cases were reported.<sup>1</sup>

Myer Polony, a Polish Jew of New York, bequeathed \$900.00 to the congregation in the year 1801 as an endowment for a Hebrew School.<sup>2</sup> This school came to be known as the Polonies Talmud Torah and it was not merely a charity school.<sup>3</sup> The school was opened on April 29, 1803 on which date Rev. Gershom Seixas was the teacher.<sup>4</sup> On May 10, 1808 the congregation appointed I. B. Kursheedt and M. Myers to negotiate with one Carvelho with a view to securing him as teacher. The children, whom he was asked to instruct for six hours daily, numbered 30 or 35. The contract was drawn up definitely on May 29, 1808, after some difficulty regarding the amount of salary.<sup>5</sup> Carvelho contracted to help the Hazan by reading certain specified portions of the service on Rosh Hashanah Kippur and Succoth.<sup>6</sup>

---

1. Pub. Vol. 27, pp. 52-55 for all above

2. Pub. Vol. 21, pp. 161-162

3. Pub. Vol. 27, pp. 397-398, cf. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 162

The school could not have been merely a free school. The community had no need for such a school; it was too small.

4. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 161, cf. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 82

5. Pub. Vol. 21, pp. 161-162

6. ib.

Carvalho's salary was increased on July 5, 1809 to \$1,000.00 per annum following his ultimatum to the congregation on March 15, 1809.

The importance of Jewish education was apparently well understood by the little New York Jewish Community.<sup>1</sup> The realization of its necessity for virtue and for the religious life was the central idea of a paper read in the synagogue on Sunday, April 22, 1804.<sup>2</sup> Yet it was exceedingly difficult for the congregation to pay the salaries of its officials. The problem had continuously existed since the earliest history of the congregation. Now one more salary must be paid to the teacher.

On January 10, 1813, the congregation presented a memorial to the State Legislature of New York requesting a state appropriation for its school. It had finally become necessary to ask for the assistance of the state. The congregation in its memorial stated that the state had performed an admirable service by establishing and maintaining the "New York Free School" which was a public school.

-----

1. The congregation's view was somewhat narrow, however. They conceived of Jewish education primarily as an instrument through which Judaism could be practised: "To make children virtuous they must be reared in the strict principles of "Our holy Religion," and "this can not be done without they understand what they are saying when addressing the deity." Yet it was conceded that there was a general lack of interest in Jewish education. "It is with regret that it is perceived, few, very few indeed, are concerned about it. cf. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 82
2. Pub. Vol. 27, pp. 81-83

But as splendid as this institution was it did not and could not replace the various parochial schools of the city. In the New York Free School, knowledge was imbibed, stated the congregation's memorial, but there was no religious or moral lessons taught. The parochial schools, including the one connected with Congregation She'erith Israel, were training the children for good citizenship, taking that burden from the state of New York and it felt justified, for that reason, in asking for an appropriation to support its educational activities.<sup>1</sup>

It is probable that some children in New York attended the New York Free School supplementing, in some instances, the education received in She'erith Israel and in the other congregations when these were established. It is also probable that some Jewish children received their education exclusively in the "Free School System."<sup>2</sup>

In the year 1839 the congregation issued a circular to other congregations broadcasting the news that it was in need of a "Hebrew teacher." The congregation demanded a man who was a good student of Hebrew, of good personality and religious piety, and one who would be qualified to assist the Hazan in his duties.<sup>3</sup>

Mordecai Manuel Noah of New York City deeply deplored the status of Jewish education in the United States. He wrote a letter on August 18, 1843 to Isaac Leeser, the

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 27, pp. 92-95
  2. ib. p. 516
  3. Pub. Vol. 30, pp. 332-333

orthodox religious leader of Philadelphia and editor of "The Occident," the first Jewish periodical in this country, stating his views. Noah proposed the establishment of a Hebrew College to give students a general secular and classical education" and at the same time he properly instructed in the Hebrew language; where they can live in conformity to our laws, and acquire a liberal knowledge of the principles of their religion." Noah was distressed at the prevalent situation by which Jews in the general schools and colleges must "live in daily violation of the Mosaic institutions," neglecting the Sabbath, etc.<sup>1</sup> Noah's views probably reflected the popular mind. In any event Leeser wrote a stirring editorial on the subject in the same issue of his paper, the sentiment of which agreed entirely with Noah's letter.<sup>2</sup>

Leeser wrote another editorial on the need for religious education in which the writer stated as his belief that intermarriage was the result of its lack.<sup>3</sup> Rev. Isaacs of New York wrote an editorial for the Occident, dealing with the same topic.<sup>4</sup>

By the year 1842, the Misses Palache had established a private Jewish School, the first in New York, at 97 Thompson Street. The curricula included grammar, astronomy, philosophy, reading, geography, spelling, composition, history, mythology, modern languages, Biblical history, instrumental music, drawing, singing, Jewish religion.....and Hebrew.<sup>5</sup> The school

- 
1. The Occident, Vol. 1, pp. 303-307
  2. ib. Vol. 1, p. 302
  3. ib. p. 362
  4. ib. pp. 590-594
  5. ib. pp. 104-105; pp. 200-210

enrolled boys as well as girls,<sup>1</sup> although the sisters Palache<sup>2</sup> had intended at first to teach only girls.<sup>3</sup> It was a boarding school and also accepted day students. In the year 1843 there were about 30 pupils in the school, of ages ranging from four<sup>4</sup> to ten years and forming three classes.

The character of the Palache school becomes apparent from observation of the list of prominent men who recommended it. Leiser said that the school would not only present "mental and moral culture" but Judaism would be imparted "by pious example." Among prominent New York Jews who endorsed the school were Rev. J. J. Lyons, Rev. S. M. Isaacs, Seixas<sup>5</sup> Nathan, and Mordecai Manuel Noah.

Public examinations of the school were held in the Crosby Street synagogue of She'erith Israel. The auditors present included not only members of that synagogue but members of several other congregations.<sup>6</sup>

---

1. The Occident, Vol. 1. p. 200

2. ib. Vol. 1, p. 104

3. ib. Vol. 1, p. 105

4. ib. pp. 200-201

5. ib. p. 105

6. ib. pp. 200-201

The Palache School was in existence in Dec. 1853 but at this date it had reverted to its original policy of accepting only girls. An advertisement of the school in The Asmonean of above date carries the information that it was "For Young ladies of the Jewish Faith."

It has previously been stated in this paper that the Parnas was usually the head of the school board of the congregational school of She'erith Israel. At times he and the Elders<sup>1</sup> formed the Board and whenever no mention is made of the congregational supervision of the school that control probably rested in the hands of the Parnas and his board of Hatanim, assistants, elders, or trustees as the members of the congregational<sup>2</sup> directorate were variously called. On May 26, 1808, we note, however, that with the advent of Carvelho, a high salaried school teacher and with the Polonies Talmud Torah assuming great communal importance, "Inspectors of the School" were appointed. On that date, the Inspectors<sup>3</sup> were Bernard Hart, Seixas Nathan, and Dr. Joel Hart.

The character of Jewish education in early New York City may not have been of the best but it was almost certainly of good quality. If the general membership of the congregation She'erith Israel were not particularly interested, this phenomenon is not unique in Jewish history. The important fact is that the congregation, itself, forever emphasized the importance of Jewish and general education under congregational auspices and that it provided qualified teachers and satisfactory quarters for a school.

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 72
  2. cf. Section Dealing with Congregational Administration
  3. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 162

Other Congregational Schools in New York  
City Before 1850

In the year 1842 a society was formed within the B'nai Jeshurun congregation, located on Elm Street in New York City, for the purpose of organizing the "New York Talmud Torah and Hebrew Institute." The institution was to give its students an elementary English education and a thorough Jewish education with its principal emphasis<sup>1</sup> on Hebrew and the religion of the Jews. The school was actually functioning in the year 1842 and in the year 1843 it had eighty pupils. The school budget during the congregational year 1842-1843 amounted to more than \$1500.00. It was supervised by a "Board of Managers" composed of mem-<sup>2</sup>bers of the congregation.

On December 31, 1843, the children were given an examination in the following topics: Hebrew reading and translation of Hebrew into English, Hebrew grammar, catechism, English grammar, arithmetic, geography and oratory. Two teachers were employed, one Mr. Nelson, evidently a non-Jew who instructed in the secular studies, and one H.<sup>3</sup> Goldsmith who taught the Hebrew and Jewish courses.

- 
1. The Occident, Vol. 1, pp. 107-108
  2. ibid
  3. ib. Vol. 1, pp. 550-555



The school had at first been supported by gifts but after December 31, 1843, it was decided that a tuition fee of \$4.00 (or more) be charged. Children whose parents were not members of B'nai Jeshurun were welcome in the school together with the children of congregational members.<sup>1</sup>

The name of the school in the year 1844 was changed from the title intended two years earlier. In that year it was known as "The New York Talmud Torah and Hebrew Theological Institute." A. L. Levy was president of the school in that year.<sup>2</sup> Rev. S. M. Isaacs, the minister of the congregation, was probably the instructor.

The B'nai Israel, otherwise known as the Netherdutch congregation, located on William Street, apparently had affiliated with it a Talmud Torah School when it was first formed.<sup>3</sup> Later, in the year 1847, it created the Heder Rosh Hachmah (The Academy of the Beginning of Wisdom). The object of this school was "to teach the Hebrew and Chaldean languages and to promote the study of the Talmud, etc." There could be no doubt that this institution intended to serve only for the spread of Jewish studies. Rev. Simon Cohen Noot was principal of the school.

---

1. Vol. 1, The Occident, p. 556

2. ib. p. 514

3. It is entirely likely that the cessation of activities of the Talmud Torah School had reference to the institution connected with B'nai Jeshurun which had, perhaps, in the year 1847, become inoperative.

4. The Occident, Vol. 5, p. 317

The Rev. Henry Felsenheld was the Hebrew teacher in the school conducted by the Anshay Chesed congregation in 1847 and located on Henry Street, otherwise known as the Henry Street Synagogue. This school provided instruction, in English and Hebrew,<sup>1</sup> to a group of almost 100 pupils, both boys and girls.<sup>2</sup>

The "New York Daily Times" in 1854 stated that in that year there were seven Jewish Schools in the city of New York with a total enrollment of 857 pupils and 33 teachers.<sup>3</sup> We have indicated the existence of five Jewish schools in New York City by the year 1854, four congregational, including those affiliated with She'erith Israel, B'nai Jeshurun, B'nai Israel and Anshay Chesed, and one private Jewish School operated by the Misses Palache.

In this connection it should be recalled that the Ashkenazim in congregation She'Erith Israel, or some of them, were not as strict in their observance as were the Sephardim, nor was their ritual the same. This element probably rebelled at times and much of the religious indifference, laxness and radicalism were evidenced by the Ashkenazim.<sup>4</sup>

There can be no reason to support the belief that the Sephardic Congregation became fanatic in its religious zeal. Dr. L. M. Peixotto, a member of that congregation, issued a circular, on August 1, 1832, which was distributed among the

---

1. The Occident, Vol. 5, p. 412

2. ib. Vol. 3, p. 262

3. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 516

4. This has been discussed elsewhere in this paper.

Members of the Jewish community urged them not to fast on the ninth of the month of Ab which fell during the severe cholera epidemic of 1832. The circular, which surely was sanctioned by the congregation, included the statement, "The benign spirit of our laws, if I am not much mistaken, authorizes a latitude in the constitution of its letter, whenever the lives, health of important interests of a community require it." The intense heat coupled with the prevalent illness made it necessary to eat, said the physicians even on an important Fast Day.<sup>1</sup> The liberalism of the congregation was illustrated again on December 14, 1845 when the minutes record that the congregation sanctioned a Jewish wedding ceremony for the daughter of Hart Levy, who previously had been married by an alderman.<sup>2</sup>

### Religious Zeal

The various regulations already listed calculated to insure ceremonial observance indicate the excessive religious piety of the majority of the members of She'erith Israel. But there are positive confirmations of this circumstance: The many contributions to the synagogue in the form of direct gifts, offerings and bequests and the considerable financial burden of maintaining the congregation<sup>3</sup>

1. Pub. Vol. 27 pp. 158-159

2. ib. Vol. 27 p. 117

3. cf. Section of this paper dealing with philanthropy; many of the bequests were in the form of religious and ceremonial objects.

and its heavy expenses further substantiate the view that the congregation was very zealous in their efforts to preserve Judaism. The meticulous attention devoted to Kashruth, with its attendant inconvenience and expense<sup>1</sup> likewise lend support to the view.

Such isolated occurrences as the instance of Isaac Gomez who, in the year 1829 finished the task of copying by hand a complete Jewish prayer book into English and presented it to his wife on their 29th wedding anniversary<sup>2</sup>-----may have little meaning in connection with the attitudes of a community during a period of two hundred and fifty years. The prayer book was copied in English. Since there could have been little or no point in copying the English translation of the prayer book, published in the year 1766 by Isaac Pinto, we may infer that Gomez translated the prayer book in written form. The action of Pinto, too in publishing the prayer book in the vernacular may be merely an isolated and, therefore, a meaningless act in connection with the present writer's view that that the New York Jewish community, in its early history, was fired by exceedingly great religious zeal. There are other evidences of the fervent Jewish attitudes of the Jews in early New York. These may be traced through the

-----

1. See section of this paper dealing with The Shohet and Bodek

2. Pub. Vol 27 p. 301

relationships of the congregation to other Jewish communities in the United States and abroad.

### Intercongregational Contacts

The congregation She'erith Israel was from the beginning of its existence in close contact with the community of Curacao, Barbados and other Jewish communities abroad through commercial relations and also because of the fact that these communities depended on New York for part of their Kosher meat supplies. A friendly mutual relationship existed between the New York Jews and these communities, a spirit which became intensified when many of the Jews from across the waters filtered into New York. Assistance in the form of material gifts as well as religious advice came from abroad frequently in the early years. In 1729 about 330 ounces of silver was sent from Curacao to the officials of congregation She'erith Israel to swell the fund established for building their synagogue. On January 16, 1729 a letter was sent to Jamaica advising the community there of the fact that She'erith Israel congregation owned a lot, but needed additional funds for building purposes; money was needed, also, for the purpose of construction of a wall around the cemetery. The reply

- 
1. This has been considered. See Pub.21 pp. 56, 77-78  
Pub.Vol. 27 pp. 7, 12 etc.
  2. Pub. Vol. 27 p. 35
  3. Pub. Vol. 27 pp. 2-3

from Jamaica indicates that a considerable sum of money was promptly remitted to New York in response to the request.<sup>1</sup> Funds from Jamaica were sent in at least two installments.<sup>2</sup> In June 1737, Mrs. Lunah Burgos of Barbados contributed 40 pounds to the New York congregation, which sum was utilized for the purpose of building a wall<sup>3</sup> around the congregation's cemetery.

She'erith Israel was frequently in a predicament in the early years when it needed the services of salaried officials, particularly Hazanim. There were few qualified men for such offices in territory near New York. It became imperative, therefore, to rely upon foreign congregations for such assistance. We not~~h~~<sup>4</sup> record of an appeal to Jamaica for a suitable school teacher.

The congregation leaned heavily for support on the London Jewish community. In the year 1737 it asked the London congregation to suggest a Hazan. A reply was received and noted in the minutes of October 28, 1737 to the effect that it could not, at that time, comply with the request, but that it would attempt to secure a qualified man<sup>5</sup> for the New York congregation when it became advisable

- 
- 1. Pub. Vol. 27 pp. 3-4
  - 2. ib. Vol. 27 p. 5
  - 3. ib. Vol. 27 p. 37
  - 4. ib. Vol. 27 p. 17
  - 5. ib. Vol. 27 pp. 8-9

for the congregation to reinter its dead in the cemetery, London was immediately consulted for its official ruling as to the Jewish law relative to such an action. In reply the officers of She'erith Israel were assured that the proposed procedure accorded with strict Jewish law and cited<sup>1</sup> passages of the Talmud and Yoreh Deah as authority. London had sent four subscriptions to the building fund<sup>2</sup> which was noted in the minutes of February 1730.

The New York Jewish community did not only accept gifts from other congregations but was happy to reciprocate favors frequently. It was not called upon, except on three occasions, to assist foreign Jewish communities, presumably because the latter were well established. But in the year 1772, the community of St. Eustatius appealed to the New York congregation for relief needed as a result of a severe storm which had destroyed its synagogue. The congregation sent funds, raised in subscription, amounting to little more than \$190.00 which gift was<sup>3</sup> acknowledged with thanks. Emergencies were responsible for the other instances of assistance rendered to foreign Jewish communities. From Constantinople a letter was received describing the damaging effects of an earthquake in Zaphet which had wrought havoc, killing a number of people and injuring property including the synagogue. The New York

-----

1. Pub. Vol. 27 pp. 47-50
2. ib. Vol. 21 pp. 24
3. ib. Vol. 21 p 115 of Pub. Vol. 11 pp 149-151

community was advised that an agent would come to collect funds for relief purposes. Funds were most probably<sup>1</sup> contributed. Smyrna suffered from the effects of a bad fire which burned the homes of Jews and the synagogue. The London community wrote asking for aid. Surely aid was<sup>2</sup> sent.

Several letters and considerable sums of money were sent to Moses Montefiore to aid in his Morocco Relief<sup>3</sup> work. The original letters have been preserved. In the year 1843 the Occident carried reports of the excellent work<sup>4</sup> done by Montefiore with the aid of Cremieux of France. Together they brought solace not only to the Jews of the East but to world Jewry because of their activities in connection with "The Damascus Affair". The New York Jewish Community, feeling keenly its kinship with world Jewry, gladly assisted in the enterprise. On January 11th and January 20th of the year 1843, they sent letters with en-<sup>5</sup> closures of some \$700.00 and they sent funds at other times. The congregation's trustees drew up a special resolution commending Montefiore's work, and what is more important,

-----

1. Pub. Vol. 27 pp. 19-20
2. ib. Vol. 27 pp. 30-31
3. ib. Vol. 27 pp. 177-179
4. The Occident Vol. 1 pp 390-393
5. Pub. Vol. 27 pp. 127, 146-147
6. ib. Vol. 27 pp. 117-118



proving their keen interest in Jewry everywhere.

She'erith Israel was able to help congregations in the United States when they were struggling for existence. Even in Colonial times, on March 21, 1759, it sent some \$740.00 to the community in Newport to augment the fund to be used for building a synagogue there. The receipt of these funds were acknowledged with thanks.<sup>1</sup> Additional requests for financial assistance came in April 1761 and on July 25, 1762. More money was remitted.<sup>2</sup> The Newport congregation sent to She'erith Israel a copy of the deed of its synagogue property as a token of appreciation.<sup>3</sup> In the minutes of January 12, 1760 there is included a record of the congregation having decided to lend Sefer Torah "to the Kaal at Newport". This Sefer Torah had apparently been returned by a congregation in Georgia to whom it had been loaned, and now it was available for Newport.

It appears that in September, 1761 a Sefer Torah as loaned to the Jewish community of Reading, Pennsylvania but negotiations for the loan proceeded through the agency of the more important Philadelphia congregation.<sup>4</sup>

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 27 pp 177-180
  2. ib. Vol 27 pp 183-184
  3. ib. Vol. 27 p 181
  4. ib. Vol 27 pp 20-21

Reading was not known to have had a Jewish community until many years later than the above date. Perhaps it had a community which disintegrated and grew up again later

The Cincinnati Jewish community received benefits from She'erith Israel of New York City in the year 1818 when the second synagogue of the New York Congregation was ready for occupancy. The Cincinnati congregation was loaned the chandeliers, which had evidently been used in the old <sup>1</sup> synagogue. Again on September 10, 1835, just one year after the completion of construction of its new Crosby Street synagogue, there is recorded in the congregational minutes an item stating that five brass chandeliers were loaned to Messrs. Ralph Jonas, Elias Mayer and Phineas Moses in Cincinnati, to be used in their synagogue and which were to be "be returned when no longer in use." <sup>2</sup> On one occasion a Sefer Torah was loaned to the Cincinnati congregation.

In October of the year 1829 there is a record which demonstrates that the sum of \$360.00 was contributed to the synagogue of Richmond, Virginia. <sup>3</sup>

The strong bond which apparently united congregation She'erith Israel with Jewry everywhere, the virile feeling of kinship with world Jewry, its willingness to receive aid for religious purposes and its generosity in serving other congregations assisting them in their building enterprises and lending them Torahs and the interest in the Jewish communities in the far east-----all this indicates the fine Jewish spirit of the Jewish community of New York in early times.

- 
- 1. Pub. Vol. 27 p. 251
  - 2. ib. Vol 27 p. 259
  - 3. ib. Vol. 21 p 165

## "PHILANTHROPY"

### Unorganized Social Service

The philanthropies of the Jewish community of New York City until comparatively recent times, operated exclusively through congregational channels. At the beginning all communal social service functioned through the Parnas of the congregation and his board, or resulted from the action which took place in congregational meetings. Later charitable organizations were formed and these were in every instance until rather recent years, affiliated with particular congregations.

The Jewish community was faced by several types of social problems. There were always the itinerant poor to be cared for or despatched from the city. These were dependent families of deceased congregational employes who must be supported. Finally, there were even present in the community the sick, the indigent and the socially un-<sup>1</sup>adjusted.

---

1. It is indeed unfortunate that no original records are available which describe in detail the character of the cases assisted by the community.

Charities for Local Needs

Before definite organizations had been established to administer to the needs of the poor of the city, we find records such as the following sprinkled throughout the minute books of the She'erith Israel Congregation: "Resolved that 40 shillings shall be given in small sums to the poor Shoemaker and 40 shills in the like manner be given to Isaac Navarro."<sup>1</sup>

The sum of 5 pounds was sent to the family of Levy Moses, who was detained in prison<sup>2</sup> and 3 pounds was contributed to one Doras Benja, probably the wife of a prisoner.<sup>3</sup>

Mazos were distributed to the poor.<sup>4</sup>

On one occasion, an individual, Moses Hart, was granted one loaf of bread daily.<sup>5</sup>

An interesting item appears in the minutes of September 18, 1773 when it was decided upon the application of Marshall Jacobs for assistance, to return to him the total of all funds he had paid into the congregational treasury.<sup>6</sup> Such and similar actions may have been actuated by a desire to prevent pauperization whenever possible.

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 72
  2. ib. p. 105
  3. ib. p. 108
  4. ib. p. 109
  5. ib. p. 105
  6. ib. p. 117

Medical attention was provided for the indigent sick as is demonstrated by the minutes when the physician,<sup>1</sup> Andrew Judah, was reimbursed for such services. Money was given to the impoverished sick and there is a record of a house being provided for the sick.<sup>2</sup>

The sum of 10 pounds was granted to Jacob Cohen for the purpose of securing more comfortable living quarters<sup>3</sup> "as his wife's present condition requires it."

The sum of \$1500.00 had been spent by the congregation for the purpose of supporting one Martha Lazarus who<sup>4</sup> had been dependent for 6 years and 9 months.

The type of social service described was typical of the philanthropies of the New York Jewish Community until approximately the year 1787. There was another kind of service which proved a more serious problem during the same period.

Dependent families of deceased salaried employees of the congregation, including the families of Hazanim, Shohetim and Shamasim frequently became a burden on the Jewish community. It appears that in all instances when deaths of former officials created a condition of dependency, the congregation willingly granted annuities to the widows of such deceased persons. These annual grants, it

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 27. p. 22
  2. Pub. Vol. 21. p. 106
  3. Pub. Vol. 21. p. 144
  4. Pub. Vol. 27. p. 350

should be observed, usually amounted to the same sums as had formerly been paid to the husbands when they were in the active service of the congregation. This is a noteworthy fact, more particularly because the congregation, itself, suffered consistently by reason of inadequate income,<sup>1</sup> being usually unable to meet the budgetary requirements.

Among the widows of deceased congregational servants who were the recipients of annuities from the congregation, may be mentioned several which were typical:

On October 3, 1743, the widow of Solomon Meyers (or Solomon Bar Meyer), the recently deceased Shohet of the congregation, was granted an annuity of 30 pounds,<sup>2</sup> which annual grant was decreased to 20 pounds four years later when<sup>3</sup> the financial problems of the congregation became more pressing.<sup>4</sup> Meyer's successor was paid only 20 pounds annual salary, which was supplemented by perquisites.

In the year 1753, the widow of Asher Campanal, the deceased Shamas, became the recipient of an annual gift of

-----  
1. This fact was made clear elsewhere in this paper. The congregation would probably not have been troubled with financial problems had it not been willing to accept its social responsibilities in connection with the present discussion.

2. Pub. Vol. 21, pp. 46, 54

3. ib. Vol. 21, p. 56

4. ib. Vol. 21, p. 45

20 pounds, which sum was augmented in 1758 by 5 pounds plus a supply of wood and matzoth. Six years after the death of Campanal, the remuneration of the Shamas of the congregation in that year amounted to less than the amount given to the widow of Campanal.<sup>1</sup> On May 7, 1759 the congregation resolved to "pay the widow of the late Shamas 20 pounds yearly."<sup>2</sup>

From these and other examples which need not be included in this paper, it is apparent that the congregation and its membership conceived it their duty to support in comfortable fashion the families of deceased employees. Nowhere in the congregation's minutes can be found a single reference to indicate otherwise.

#### The Itinerant Poor

New York City is so situated that there can be no cause for astonishment by the fact that many poor itinerant Jews found their way to the city. Many of these, once there, the Jewish community was compelled to care for.

At the very first congregational meeting of which records have been preserved, the meeting of September 15, 1728, this problem was discussed and a naive solution was decided upon. The Parnas of the congregation was authorized, himself, to administer to the needs of itinerant, indigent individuals. He was authorized to grant to such individuals assistance to the extent of 8 shillings per week during a

---

1. Pub. Vol. 21, pp. 69, 80  
2. ib. Vol. 21, p. 80

period not to exceed 12 weeks. As early as possible the stranger was to be sent away "to sum othere place" for which journey the Parnas was permitted to spend a maximum sum of 40 shillings for each such individual. If itinerant poor should come in families then the Parnas must consult the other congregational officers who would consult with him and together decide as to proper disposition of the<sup>1</sup> problem.

Many of the strangers who asked for aid desired travelling expenses to distant points. The congregation<sup>2</sup> actually paid passage fares to Barbados, Curacao, etc. Some of these were probably adventurers and others may have come to the colonies with the intention to remain permanently, but finding adjustment too difficult, desired to return home.

In some instances the indigent strangers in New York were dispatched to other communities for aid. Upon the application of such a person the congregation decided to support him while he was in New York but to send him to Philadelphia to secure money for his proposed trip to Barbadoes. In the event that he should still lack 3 or 4 pounds after having obtained funds from Philadelphia, that deficiency<sup>3</sup> would be supplied by the congregation.

-----  
1. Pub. vol. 21, p.3

2. Pub. vol. 21, p. 117

3. Pub. vol. 21, p. 109; Pub. vol. 27, p. 99



The community, in its very early history, adopted a principle that is now regarded as sound social service. It was the policy to send indigent strangers to their home cities or the points from which they had come. They sent, for example, a "dumb man" back to Philadelphia from whence he had come.<sup>1</sup>

To gain the proper appreciation of the extent of the Philanthropies of the early Jewish community of New York City, in connection with the problem of indigent strangers, it should be necessary only to read the congregational minutes, listing five items of congregational expense paid for the journeys of such persons. In the congregational year 1740-1741, almost 15 pounds was spent for this type of philanthropy alone. This sum amounted to about 8% of the total congregational budget of the year.<sup>2</sup>

That the congregation She'erith Israel assisted a large number of Jewish itinerants is apparent from the fact that arrangements were made with the Shamasim when they were employed by which they must always have a room ready for such people and must be prepared not merely to give the strangers lodging facilities, but must likewise give them board. According to the terms of this novel clause in the contracts the Shamasim were to receive no extra remuneration for the trouble and expense of lodging such poor persons, but the congregation agreed to reimburse them for cost of board.<sup>3</sup>

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 117
  2. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 43
  3. ib. p. 87

### Organized Philanthropy

The earliest records of the first organized Jewish social service agency in New York City bear the date May 21, 1786.<sup>1</sup> This organization, by the name Hebra Gemilas Hasadim, directed all organized philanthropic activities of the Jewish community until the year 1799 when the society Mathan Basether was formed<sup>2</sup> to supplement and complement the work of the first organization. The Gemilas Hasadim had ceased to function by the year 1802 when a similar organization,<sup>3</sup> the Hebra Hased Va Amet came into existence.

The Hebra Gemilas Hasadim was a general charitable organization, administering funds and other assistance to the needy of the community. It supplied fuel, medicine and money wherever it was deemed wise. Its members were compelled, on penalty of a considerable fine to visit the sick. The organization took charge of all funeral arrangements. It owned a hearse. Various tools and implements necessary for interment of corpses were the property of the organization which it kept in a shed constructed on the cemetery lot in the year 1789. It extended "religious consolation" to mourners and "greatly contributed toward the maintenance of brotherly love and kindly feeling in the community."<sup>4</sup>

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 21, pp. 150-151
  2. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 138-140
  3. ib. Vol. 27, p. 255
  4. ib. Vol. 27, pp. 252-254

The head of the Hebra was called Gaboy.<sup>1</sup> Its governing board consisted of four "mangers".<sup>2</sup> Records reveal the names of four treasurers of the organization: Abraham Isaacs, 1786; Isaac Levy, 1787; Benjamin Jacobs, 1789; Jacob Hard,<sup>3</sup> 1790.

The sources of revenue of the organization were derived from regular dues from its members, initiation fees, gifts and "offerings" made in the synagogue. The schedule of revenue follows:<sup>4</sup>

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| Initiation fee of new member was four pay-  |                    |
| ments to be paid quarterly.....ea.  | 1.17.4 lb.         |
| Annual dues   | 0.1.6              |
| Monthly dues (in addition to above  | 0.2.0              |
| Fine for non attendance at Minyan (at the synagogue or, more likely, at the house of mourning) during the seven days of mourning. | 0.1.0              |
| Fine for non attendance at Minyan the morning of Jahzeit.   | 0.1.0              |
| Fine for non attendance at Minyan on the afternoon of Jahizeit.   | 0.0.6              |
| Fine "for not sitting up with the sick" when summoned.  | each offense 0.8.0 |
| Fine for insulting the Gaboy  | 0.1.0              |
| Fine for absence from general meeting of the Hebra  | 0.1.0              |

-----  
1. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 150

3. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 253

2. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 253

4. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 253

Due probably, to the urgent pressure of financial difficulties on the part of the congregation, it was considered necessary to impose some restrictions on the manner in which funds could be subscribed to the Hebra Gemilas Hasadim. Though the congregation desired to "Countenance every Charitable Institution as far as consistent with the interests of this congregation" it would permit offerings to be made to the Hebra in the synagogue. But it was decreed that no person might "make more than one offering for the said society" at a time and a person, making a such offering, at the same time is "obliged to offer for the Zedakah" (the congregational treasury). Right was reserved to rescind this action should it be found later that too much money would be diverted from the congregation by reason of the existence of the Hebra.<sup>1</sup> The congregation was fearful of this possible consequence and being unaccustomed to such an organization it is understandable. Much discussion followed; there was question as to whether the Parnass and his assistants had authority to act for the congregation.<sup>2</sup> It appears, however that the synagogue did give its complete support to the organization or it could neither have existed as long as it did nor functioned as effectively.

---

1. Pub. Vol. 21 pp. 151

2. Pub. Vol. 21 pp. 151-

In the year 1799 the Society "Mattan Basether" was established as an affiliated organization of the She'erith Israel congregation. On December 20, 1805 the Hazan Gershom Seixas made reference to the "Kalfe Sedaca" which he said had been established in the congregation in the year 1799.<sup>1</sup> In the same sermon it becomes clear that the "Kalfe Sedaca" and the Mattan Basether" are synonomons<sup>2</sup> usages. The organization was generally known, however, as the "Mattan Basether" or the "Society Mattan Basether."

This charitable organization had as its purpose the performance of philanthropic acts in a private way. The recipients of charity admistered by the Mattan Basether would not be made known to the community.<sup>3</sup> The names of contributors to the funds of the organization, likewise, would be kept secret.<sup>4</sup>

In the year 1805 a committee was appointed for the purpose of revising the laws of the organization, or to suggest revisions of the constitution. The members of the committee were Jacques Ruden, Aaron Levy and M. Meyers. In their report these gentlemen made the interesting observation that although the Jewish community of the city had very generously distributed charity in the past the charity had been "applied in such a manner as to have been productive of a limited effect."

-----  
1. Pub. Vol. 27 p. 138

2. Pub. Vol. 27 p. 140

3. ib. Vol. 27 pp. 141-142

4. Pub. Vol. 27 p. 255

Relief had resulted only temporarily but not permanently. The committee emphasized the fact that New York City, due to its favorable location, its commercial advantages and the friendliness of its inhabitants, would surely grow very rapidly until, in time, the Jews might expect there "the largest congregation in the world." Because of this expected enlargement of the community, the committee recommended that the Mattan Basether form the foundations of a permanent organization "able to cope with the problems of a populous city." Finally the Committee recommended that a permanent<sup>1</sup> house for the Poor and a hospital be established.

The society dispensed the sum of \$350.00 in the<sup>2</sup> year 1804. There are no further records of importance pertaining to the society Mattan Basether.

In the year 1802, the Hebra Hased Va Amet (Ve Emet) organized for the purpose of continuing the activities of the Hebra Gemilas Hasadim which had, by that year, disintegrated. It administered to bereaved members of the community, attend funerals, made funeral arrangements, visited<sup>3</sup> the sick, dispensed charity etc.

-----  
1. Pub. Vol. 27, pp. 256-257

2.

3.

On January 18, 1828 the "Society for the Education of Poor children and Relief of Indigent Persons" was formed. It, too, was connected with the She'erith Israel congregation. It evidently assumed a position of importance in the community for at its first anniversary special services were held in the synagogue before a large audience. On this occasion a subscriptions to the organization amounting to nearly \$400.<sup>1</sup> were made.

Before the year 1850 another philanthropic organization had been established in the congregation. The "She'erith Israel Sewing Association" was in existence in the year 1847, meeting every Wednesday during the winter months from 11:00 A. M. to 2:00 P. M. Fifty women were members of this organization in 1847.<sup>2</sup> It has been said that the first Sewing Society providing clothing for the poor was founded in Baltimore in the year 1856.<sup>3</sup> It can not categorically be maintained that the New York Sewing organization provided clothing to the poor but the present writer believes that it was a philanthropic organization.

---

1. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 311

2. The Occident Vol. 5 p. 412

3.

Philanthropic Organizations Connected with other  
Congregations.

The B'nai Jeshurun synagogue was established principally by a group of families who seceded from the She'erith Israel Congregation about the year 1817.<sup>1</sup>

In the year 1819 an organization known as the "Female Hebrew Benevolent Society" was created by Mrs. Aaron Levy and Mrs. Hannah Levy as an affiliated organization of the congregation. It was active, at first, in general inclusive philanthropic activity. It cared for cases of desertion and itinerants. The report read at its 25th anniversary, included the statement, "The judicious kindness of our Visiting Committee is frequently more important than the money they furnish." If the organization did actually minister to the poor with "judicious kindness" it accomplished the as yet not altogether realized objective of modern social service.<sup>2</sup> The organization had spent \$232.75 during the year 1843-1844 and had a balance on hand of more than \$200.00. The writer could find no further references to an organization of this precise name. "The Ladies Benevolent Society", apparently well organized, existed in the year 1844. At that time the following officers: Mrs. John M. Davis, First Directress; Mrs. M. Micholl, Second Directress;  
-----

1. cf. The Occident Vol. 1 p. 451, Vol. 2 p. 445,  
Vol. 3 p. 459 (cf. Occident Vol. 5,  
218 which is incorrect)
2. The Occident Vol. 2 p 445



Mrs. M. Morrison, Treasurer; Reverend S. M. Isaacs was<sup>1</sup>  
 Honorary Secretary. The new name of the organization  
 may merely indicate a change of name or it may mean that  
 an entirely different organization had been formed,  
 the "Female Hebrew Benevolent Society" having altogether  
 ceased to exist in the year 1844.

In the year 1821 the "New York Hebrew Benevolent  
 Society", also connected with the B'nai Jeshurun congre-  
 gation came into being. Its twenty second anniversary  
 was observed in style, with a banquet and speech making.  
 Many distinguished non Jews attended the function, including<sup>2</sup>  
 several lawyers and editors and three distinguished musicians.  
 Reverend S. M. Isaacs of the congregation delivered the  
 principal address which was well received. A prominent<sup>3</sup>  
 Christian, Salem Dutcher, also spoke at this occasion.  
 Women, usually absent from such affairs, were at this  
 important time, present. The Occident reports " What lent  
 and additional and peculiar spirit to the enjoyment of the  
 feast was the concealed presence of several ladies who-----  
 had been admitted into the gallery usually occupied by  
 the orchestra-----a neat curtain, being placed as a  
 screen, left them a full view, whilst their faces were only  
 partially exposed.<sup>4</sup>

- 
- 1. The Occident Vol. 1 p. 514
  - 2. ib. Vol. 1 pp. 498-501
  - 3. ib. Vol. 1 pp. 502-504
  - 4. ib. Vol. 1 p. 497

This organization collected the sum of \$3,000.00<sup>1</sup> for its expenses during the year 1843. The following year its income was \$3,500.00. This fact was reported at its twenty fourth anniversary banquet meeting held on November 5, 1845, which Reverend Mr. Sabagh, an Episcopal minister<sup>2</sup> spoke, and the City Recorder, among other prominent<sup>3</sup> personages, was in attendance. The sum of \$2,000.00 was collected at this meeting, \$200.00 or ten per cent of which was contributed by the ladies of the wealthy Hendricks family.<sup>5</sup>

Mordecai Manuel Noah, editor, dramatist, critic, philanthropist, Jewish communal leader, popular and powerful man of affairs, was president in the years 1844, 1845 and 1846. In the latter year control rested in his hands together with a Vice President, a Treasurer and eight Directors.<sup>6</sup> <sup>7</sup>

In the year 1847 the New York Hebrew Benevolent Society spent for its charitable enterprizes the sums of \$2,251.43. It owned stocks, bonds and other property to the extent of \$6,815.76 which fund kept constantly increasing.<sup>8</sup>

- 
1. The Occident Vol. 1 p. 498
  2. ib. Vol. 3 p. 459
  3. ib. Vol. 3 p. 463
  4. ib. Vol. 3 p. 459
  5. ib. Vol. 3 p. 469
  6. ib. Vol. 1 p. 514
  7. ib. Vol. 3 p. 455
  8. ib. Vol. 5 p. 265

It has been maintained that a penniless and friendless Jew entered the city hospital of New York in the year 1820 where , in response to his desire for Jewish company, John Hart and Joseph Davis responded. Through the efforts of these men the stranger left the hospital with funds. Upon the death of this individual, he left a bequest of \$300.00 which sum became the treasury of a New organization called the Hebrew Benevolent Society. This organization (which in the year 1860 opened a home for children or what was then West 29th Street between 8th and 9th Avenues, and which is said, in 1870, to have become known as the "Hebrew Benevolent and Orphan Asylum Society") is reported ultimately in 1874 to have become the United Hebrew<sup>1</sup> Charities.

This original organization , formed during or immediately after the year 1820, can have reference only to the New York Hebrew Benevolent Society of B'nai Jeshurun congregation. No other organization of a similar name was formed in or about the year 1820. One of the charitable institutions affiliated with She'erith Israel could not have been the forerunner of the United Hebrew Charities of New York City. The congregation, which had never been financially strong, must have suffered serious financial blow when many of its ashkenazic members withdrew to form  
-----

the B'nai Jeshurun synagogue. We have demonstrated that the philanthropic work of the She'enth Israel continued after that event. But nowhere in the columns of the Occident of in the minutes of the congregation can be found references to any organization by the name of the New York Hebrew Benevolent Society or to any similar name of an organization connected with She'erith Israel.

Undoubtedly, then, if the United Hebrew Charities the forerunner of the Associated Jewish Charities which started in New York in 18<sup>1</sup>74, found its origin in the New York Hebrew Benevolent Society then the Associated Jewish Charities can trace its beginnings to the B'nai Jeshurun congregation. There is every reason to believe that the New York Hebrew Benevolent Society did eventually expand into the Associated Jewish Charities. The former organization, flourishing in a growing congregation, under able leadership, had amassed a very considerable sum of money as early as the year 1847. It was by far the strongest Jewish philanthropic organization in New York City by the middle of the 19th century.

Two organizations bearing slightly similar names to "Hebrew Benevolent Society" are mention in the Occident as having functioned in New York immediately prior to 1850.<sup>2</sup> The Bachelors Hebrew Loan Association is referred to in a letter from the organization on October 18, 1848 and<sup>3</sup> again on January 15, 1849.<sup>4</sup> In March of the year 1849 the

1. Bogen, p. 10

2. The Occident Vol. 6 pp 416, 618-620

3. ib. Vol. 6 p. 416

4. ib. Vol. 6 pp. 618-619

Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Association was created<sup>1</sup> according to a press announcement. These were apparently separate organizations.

The Bachelor's Hebrew Benevolent Loan Society evidently had as its sole purpose the free giving of loans to the needy. This organization was unquestionably the first free loan society to be established by the Jews in the United States. It has been said that the first such organization was probably founded in Cincinnati in the year 1893.<sup>2</sup> From its report for the preceding year in the columns of the Occident on October 18, 1848, we gather that the organization was financially sound. It had given out loans during the year to the amount of \$252.50 and had given direct relief totaling \$110.16. Approximately \$400.00 remained in its treasury and its membership of 97 was<sup>3</sup> "daily increasing". At the annual benefit ball held by the organization immediately before January 15, 1849, the sum of \$1,023.18 was realized in net profits. Some Christians<sup>4</sup> in the community attended the dance.

The Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Association having a membership, in the year 1849, of 108 members, apparently had as its principal purpose the giving of fuel to the poor in winter. Annual dues charged were \$2.00 per<sup>5</sup> member.

-----

1. The Occident Vol. 6, pp. 619-620
2. Jewish Philanthropy - Bogen
3. The Occident Vol. 6 p. 416
4. ib. Vol. 6 pp. 618-619
5. ib. Vol. 6 pp. 619-620

In the year 1844, five separate philanthropic organizations were affiliated with the B'nai Jeshurun<sup>1</sup> Congregation. These will be mentioned in the order of their apparent importance:

1. The New York Hebrew Benevolent Society
2. The Ladies' Benevolent Society
3. The Gemilas Hesed<sup>2</sup>
4. The New York Talmud Torah and Hebrew Theological Institute
5. The Society for Indigent Old Men

Affiliated with the Sha'are Tefillah synagogue, the structure of which was completed in August, 1847, there was a Ladies' Benevolent Society functioning before the<sup>3</sup> year 1850.

#### Other Instances of Jewish Philanthropy

Before the middle of the nineteenth century very little money was bequeathed by deceased members of the New York Jewish Community to the congregation She'erith Israel.

- 
1. The Occident, Vol. 1, p. 514
  2. This organization was evidently concerned only with the making of funeral arrangements, the giving of religious consolation, personal visitations to the sick, and in the houses of mourning, etc. There were other organizations in the congregation to dispense charity.
  3. The Occident, Vol. 5, pp. 461-462; Vol. 4, pp. 508-509; Vol. 5, p. 218

There would have been little reason to leave bequests specifically for philanthropic purposes, or, in later years, to the charitable organizations of the synagogue, for concerned individuals well knew that money left to the synagogue would be used for the best interests of the community. More money might have been bequeathed, nevertheless, by certain individuals and more bequests might have been made to the congregation. The present writer can not agree with the view of the writer of an article on "Wills of Early Jews of New York,"<sup>1</sup> that the early Jews were generous in this respect.

Joshua Isaacs, in his will under date of September 6, 1744, bequeathed the sum of 50 pounds to the She'erith Israel congregation, the income of which was to be used to support a free Hebrew school. He left bequests for no other charitable purposes although he was apparently wealthy.<sup>2</sup> Jacob Franks, a very wealthy man, apparently left no money for the congregation or the Jewish poor of the city, but his estate made a donation of 25 pounds to the congregational treasury.<sup>3</sup>

None of the members of the wealthy Gomez family, as far as can be determined from records, bequeathed large amounts to charity or to the congregation. Isaac Gomez stipulated in his will (September, 1770) that 15 pounds was to go to the congregation.<sup>4</sup> Benjamin Gomez in his will

- 
1. cf. Pub. Vol. 23, pp. 147 ff.
  2. N.Y. Historical Society, Vol. 28, pp. 11-12
  3. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 102
  4. ib. Vol. 27, p. 108

provided 10 pounds for the congregation.<sup>1</sup> Mordecai Gomez who died in 1750, an exceedingly wealthy man, left only 25 pounds to the congregation--and certain Hebrew books.<sup>2</sup> David Gomez, wealthy though he was, bequeathed only 10 pounds to the congregation, though he, like Mordecai and Louis Gomez,<sup>3</sup> bequeathed certain Jewish things to the congregation. Isaac Adolphus left only 10 pounds to the synagogue.<sup>4</sup> Joseph Bueno bequeathed 20 pounds to the synagogue.<sup>5</sup> Uriah Hyam left 6 pounds to the congregation. Samuel Myers Cohen, although he left 25 pounds each to four executors of his will to provide for them mourning clothing, left only 25 pounds to the congregation.<sup>6</sup>

Isaac Pinheiro, very wealthy, left nothing to the synagogue nor did Moses Levy leave any funds for philanthropic purposes.<sup>7</sup> Isaac Levy, who left a considerable estate,<sup>8</sup> made no bequests to the poor or to the congregation.

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 114
  2. Pub. Vol. 23, pp. 153-154
  3. Pub. Vol. 23, pp. 147, 153, 155
  4. ib. Vol. 23, p. 157
  5. ib. Vol. 23, p. 149
  6. ib. Vol. 23, pp. 151-152
  7. ib. Vol. 23, pp. 157-159
  8. N. Y. Hist. Soc. vol. 28, pp. 56-57



Michael Michaels evidently had no dependents, yet he bequeathed no money to the congregation.<sup>1</sup> Many of the members of the Jewish Community of Early New York City, who had, through their generosity, built up the congregation, benefitted it little when dead. It is a strange fact.

---

1. N. Y. Historical Soc. Vol. 27, pp. 222-223

THE POSITION OF THE JEWS IN THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE  
FROM THE LATE 18th CENTURY UNTIL 1850

Economic Status

Elsewhere in this paper we have presented some data regarding the commercial activities of the Jews in the earliest history of the New York Jewish Community. We have learned that the small community was a real factor in the business life of the period. They were engaged in the import and export trade, carrying on business relations with merchants of London, Amsterdam, Barbadoes, Rhode Island and Virginia. They also traded at the well-known trading posts in the vicinity of New York city.

It is the purpose of the writer to consider at this point the economic status of the community during the latter part of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries.

One fact is indisputable, that by the middle of the nineteenth century, a comparatively large part of the Jewish population of the city was comfortably situated economically. Otherwise, it would be impossible to explain the great amount of money that was expended for philanthropic purposes during the fifth decade of the nineteenth century.

The wills of several Jews discussed in this paper in relationship to Jewish philanthropy indicate that at

about the year 1750 the Jews of New York had begun to establish themselves solidly in an economic way. As was indicated, some Jews who died during the middle of the 18th century were fairly wealthy. The fact that the congregation She'erith Israel suffered economic disabilities during and after that time can mean little in relation to the present discussion for the total membership of the congregation remained exceedingly small consistently until about the year 1850. There were only 52 paying members of the congregation in the year 1748 as is seen from a list of such members of that year.<sup>1</sup>

The congregation was burdened with all the expense of a well-organized community, accepted the burden of local philanthropies, and cared for itinerant destitute and for the families of deceased congregational employees. Even though the members of the congregation were comfortably situated, the communal demands on them were so considerable and their numbers were so small that the synagogue continued to be annoyed by economic problems.

Considerable information on the subject has been gathered by a writer.<sup>2</sup> He made mention of the following pertinent facts:

Hayman Levy owned most of the houses on Duke Street. His principal business activity was in the capacity of furrier. He merchandised general articles such as shoes, tents, camp equipment, etc. John Jacob Astor, as a youth was

1. Pub. Vol. 21, p. 52
2. Markens, pp. 14-17

employed by Levy.<sup>1</sup> Levy, together with Samuel Judah, Jacob Moses, Jacob Myers, Jonas Philips and Isaac Seixas, among others signed a document in 1770 which was calculated to effect more favorable taxation terms with England. These men<sup>2</sup> were evidently merchants of prominence.

Burglars, robbing the home of Mrs. Rebecca Hays, took, among other articles "a silver tankard, large silver bowl,<sup>3</sup> and a pair of earrings."

Uriah Hendricks was a prominent business man. He died in New York in 1798. Harmon Hendricks, the son of Uriah, was born in 1767 and died in the year 1837. He was in the metal business and also owned the Soho Rolling Mills at Belleville, N.Y. Harmon Hendricks subscribed the sum of \$40,000.00 to a loan fund requested by the U.S. government to help the<sup>4</sup> country finance the War of 1812.

Sampson Simson, the leader in the Jewish community, was the owner of many trading vessels. He was one of the men who drafted the original constitution of the New York Chamber<sup>5</sup> of Commerce.

From congregational records we know that in the middle of the 18th century Daniel Gomez, among other articles,<sup>6</sup> probably imported pork.

---

1. Markens, pp. 14-17

2. Pub. Vol. 4, p. 89

3. Markens, p. 14

4. Markens, pp. 16-17. Although the public was requested to subscribe \$16,000,000.00 less than \$4,000,000.00 was actually raised. Hendrick's subscription represented more than 1% subscribed in the whole country. cf. Pub. Vol. 4, p. 90

5. Pub. Vol. 2, p. 83

6. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 244

He also sold clothing, hosiery, cloth, powder, etc.<sup>1</sup>  
 Myer Myers, one of the most important Jewish communal  
 leaders in the early history of New York was a celebrated  
 silversmith.

Isaac Gomez was the owner of the brig, "The  
 Farmer" sold to him by Isaac da Silva, who was also a mer-  
 chant in New York. The sale was made in 1794, the price  
 being \$1600.00

According to a statement of amounts of duties paid  
 to the government on auction sales in New York City during  
 the year 1816, the following Jews of the city were taxed as  
 listed:

|                 |            |
|-----------------|------------|
| Benjamin Seixas | \$2,120.71 |
| Simon Nathan    | 782.76     |
| Mordecai Myer   | 467.26     |

This item was taken from Longworth's Pocket Almanac of 1818  
 and transcribed.<sup>2</sup>

The above record would appear to indicate that the  
 three men mentioned above operated exceedingly large busi-  
 nesses. The amounts of government taxes mentioned are stag-  
 gering. The record gives one the notion that a considerable  
 amount of buying and selling in New York City in the early  
 19th century must have been carried on by auction.

---

1. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 244  
 2. Pub Vol 27

Another item, from the same source as indicated above, demonstrates that Moses Judah was a Director of the Phenix Bank which was capitalized at \$700,000.00 when its charter was issued in 1812.<sup>1</sup>

In the year 1784, Isaac Moses, a merchant of New York City, was one of 30 prominent men who signed a memorial presented to the New York State Legislature calculated to improve public credit and securities. Moses subscribed the sum of \$15,000 to a fund of \$1,500,000. secured by the government for the purpose of provisioning the United States Army during the Revolutionary War.<sup>2</sup>

Samson Simson of She'erith Israel, long active in that congregation was able to contribute the sum of \$3,000. to a different congregation of New York in the year 1852. He was a graduate of Columbia, '1800, and one of the founders of Mt. Sinai Hospital.<sup>3</sup>

The members of the New York Jewish community were engaged in innumerable occupations before the middle of the 19th century; in the crafts may be mentioned Samson A. Myers, a coppersmith.<sup>4</sup> Many Jews were engaged in the manufacture of sealing wax and quill pens during the period which came approximately between the years 1820 to 1840.<sup>5</sup> Hyman Myers was a butcher.<sup>6</sup> Aaron Levy was an auctioneer.<sup>7</sup>

---

1. Pub. Vol. 27, p. 398

2. Pub. vol. 2, pp. 86-87, cf. Pub. Vol. 2, pp. 78-87

3. Pub. Vol. 9, pp. 64-66; Pub. Vol. 22, p. 152

4. Pub. Vol. 25, p. 123

5. Markens, p. 25

6. Pub. Vol. 13, Appendix of article listing the names of Jews of N.Y. City who were naturalized, in the years 1740-1741

7. Pub. vol. 27, p. 337

The following Jewish men owned vessels which cruised the high seas in search of prey. Privateering was considered an honorable occupation 150 years ago. The men listed were active in the last quarter of the 18th century:

Naphtali Hart had an interest in the Dolphin and the Diamond.<sup>1</sup>

Isaac Moses, one of the most active men in New York interested in privateering, owned many ships. Moses was mentioned above in relation to other enterprises.<sup>2</sup> Other Jews in New York City were engaged in privateering.<sup>3</sup>

Moses Gomez owned the following real property the value of which was appraised by the State of New York for taxation on June 24, 1791:

1. Building at 203 Water St.  
value .....1300 pounds
2. Store Building on Front  
Street ..... 800
3. House and Coopers shop  
on Front Street..... 400
4. House at 18 Water Street. 500
5. House at 28 Hanover Square  
.....850
6. House at 29 Queen Street..860
7. House at 30 Queen Street..860
8. House on Golden Hill.....250
9. House and Shop on " ".....250
10. House on Golden Hill.....150
11. House on Golden Hill.....300 4

---

1. Pub. vol. 23, p. 165  
 2. ib. vol. 23, pp. 172-174  
 3. cf. ibid, p. 165 ff.  
 4. N. Y. Hist. Soc. Collection 1911, vol. 2, pp. 319, 320, 322, 323, 327, 358, 369, 370

The following Jews of New York are listed as property owners before the eighteenth century:

The East Ward

David Levy, Rebecca Isaacs, "Jew Widow", Moses Levy, Joseph Isaacs, Joseph Bueno, Moses Levi, Hendrick Meyer.

The Dock Ward

Jew Woman.

The Bowery Division

Solomon Pieterston, Joseph Bueno, Jacob Solomans, Abraham Pieters.

The North Ward

David Hendricks, "Asuherus Hendricks", Isaac Abramse, Abram  
1  
Isaac.

B. Gomez was a stationer and book salesman as was Naphtali  
2  
Judah.

The following are referred to by Isaac Markens as important in the 19th century:

S. Luedo was a pioneer in the manufacture of copal varnish in the United States. Moses L. Moses and Isaac Moses were important cotton brokers. Naphtali Judah served as one of the first presidents of the Mechanics Bank. His son, Samuel N. Judah became engaged in commerce with South America and Spain. Henry Hart was President of the Third Ave. Rail Road Co. E. Velleman introduced the manufacturing of whalebones within this country. Asher Marx became well known as a merchant.

- 
1. N. Y. Hist. Soc. Collection 1911, vol. 2, pp. 319, 320, 322, 323, 327, 358, 369, 370
  2. Pub. vol. 30, p. 98 ff.
  3. Markens, pp. 19-26



By the middle of the 19th century, it is evident that the members of the New York Jewish community were already well established in the economic life of the city. They had by that time laid the foundations of a great economic prosperity which was destined rapidly to follow.

### Cultural and Political Status

In the period we shall now consider, the Jews not suffering restraints, apparantly became prominently identified with the general life of the community. They became educated and cultured in some instances. They were respected because some of their number were leaders in the professions. They participated in full measure in the War of the American Revolution, had assisted the American cause by patriotic service as well as by financial contributions. They, likewise, responded to the country's need in the war of 1812. Although the Jews were philanthropic in the community at large they supported their own charities. The Jewish community had not yet become sufficiently large, wealthy or powerful to be conspicuous in an unfavorable manner. There could be no reasons for Anti Semitian in early New York City----except that blind fanaticism and prejudice needs no reason. It is evident, however, that the anti Jewish feeling was an unimportant factor in the life of the community before the year 1850. The Jewish community was for the most part socially alone, but there were occasions when the good feeling of non Jews brought the two groups together.

Before the year 1783, only two medical schools existed in the present United States. Until this date only an insignificant number of students had been enrolled in each of these schools. In New York City between 1695-1775, there were only 44 medical practitioners in New York City.

1. cf. My treatment of the banquet of the New York Hebrew Benevolent Society.

2. Valentine pp. 396-397

The following Jews were in the medical profession  
in early New York:

1. 1761 Dr. Andrew Judah, who it will be recalled,  
was paid by the She'erith Israel congregation  
for medical attention to certain poor persons.
2. A Dr. Levy is mentioned, too, in the congregational  
<sup>1</sup>  
records.
3. 1752 Dr. Jacob Isaac, mentioned in the records  
<sup>2</sup>  
of the congregation.
4. Dr. Nunez, mentioned in the records of the  
<sup>3</sup>  
congregation.
5. Dr. Elias Woolin
6. Dr. Isaac Abrahams, a graduate of Columbia
7. Dr. Barnet Cowan 1786
8. Dr. Hyman Isaac Long
9. Dr. Joel Hart  
<sup>4</sup>
10. Dr. Daniel L. M. Peixotto, who it may be recalled  
issued a statement urging the people not to fast on the 9th  
of Ab during the cholera epidemic of 1832, was one of the most  
celebrated of New York physicians in the first half of the 19th  
century. After having graduated from the Columbia College  
Medical school in 1819, he studied for a master of arts degree  
which was awarded him in 1825. A scientist of distinction,

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 21 p. 60 cf. Pub. Vol 22 p 156
  2. ib Vol. 22 pp. 160-161
  3. ib Vol. 22 p 160
  4. cf. Pub. Vol. 22 p 160

Peixotto was at first a contributor to and later editor of the "New York Medical and Physical Journal," which was the first scientific medical magazine published in America. He became Vice President of the Medical Society of the city and county of New York and was a Fellow of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of the university of the State<sup>1</sup> of New York.

The daughter of Dr. Peixotto, Judith Salzedo Peixotto, was probably the first Jewish public school teacher in New York City. She began to assume such a position during or approximately the year 1843. In 1850 when she became a principal of the James Street Jewish elementary school, Miss Peixotto was the first Jewish person to have<sup>2</sup> become principal of a public school in New York City.

The prominent Mordecai Manuel Noah became a powerful force in the community, a fact which probably rebounded to the favorable advantage of the Jews. In the war. He became editor, literary critic, author and writer of drama. He published newspapers and his "Courier and Enquirer" was the principal<sup>3</sup> organ of Tammany.

Emanuel Hart, a political leader in New York politics for many years after 1840, was associated with Peter<sup>4</sup> Sweeney and Fernandro Wood, Tammany bosses. Hart was a very

1. Pub. Vol. 28 pp 225

2. ib. 26 pp 249-250

3.

4. The Vanguard, July 1929 - Article by Bernard Postal, p 15

active Jackson democrat; alderman 1845-1846, refused nomination for third term; delegate to Democratic State Convention, Chairman of Tammany general committee in 1849. In 1851<sup>1</sup> he served in the United States House of Representatives. From the official "appendix to Proceedings" of the Tammany Society of the following Jews were listed as officers before the year 1864.

Naphtaly Judah - Sachem

Mordecai M Noah - Grand Sachem

Emanuel B. Hart - Sachem

<sup>2</sup>  
Albert Cardoza - Sachem

Reverend Gershom Mendez Seixas of the She'erith Israel congregation was a member of the first Board of Regents of Columbia College, established in 1784.<sup>3</sup> He served on its Board for some years.

A comparatively large number of Jews of New York City attended the higher institutions of learning before<sup>4</sup> the middle of the 19th century.

-----  
1. Jewish Enc. Vol. 6 p. 242

2. Pub. Vol. 27 p 394

3. ib. Vol. 19 p 119

4. cf. Pub. Vol. 19 p 101 ff

In the year 1798, Jacob Hays was appointed by the Mayor of New York to serve as one of the marshalls of the city. In 1802 he was appointed High Constable which office was the equivalent of the present office of Chief of Police. He served in this position very efficiently for 48 years until his death in 1850.

### Patriotism

The Jews lived in the spirit of America. They appreciated the freedom afforded them, a freedom which they exploited, as we have seen, spiritually and economically. But they were inspired by a keen sense of appreciation for the country which had given them liberty. The following Jews are daid to have signed the Non Importation Agreement: Isaac Pinto, Jacob Abraham, Uriah Hendricks, Samuel Judah, Jacob Moses, Jonas Philips and Isaac Seixas.

In the year 1770 a document was promulgated by the colonists in an effort to make more stringent the Non Importation Agreement which had previously been adopted for the purpose of effecting more just terms with England in connection with the taxation question. Among the signatures on the former document are the names of Samuel Judah, Hayman Levy, Jacob Moses, Jacob Myers, Jonas Philips and Isaac Leixas.

1. Markens pp 28-29

2.

3. Pub. Vol. Vol. 4 p. 89

As soon as the War of the American Revolution had started and the British occupied the city of New York, the congregation She'erith Israel disbanded temporarily. Most of its members having been loyal patriots would not remain in the city under the British. They hastened to Philadelphia where they remained until the close of the war when many returned<sup>1</sup> to the city and resumed their congregational activities. The Hazan Gershom Mendez Seixas, himself, removed synagogue properties such as the Torahs to Stratford, Connecticut and from there to Philadelphia. Before Seixas returned to New York the Reverend Isaac Touro and Reverend Mr. Cohen officiated alternately.

Probably the best service rendered by Jews of New York City to the cause of the war consisted in the privateer-<sup>3</sup>ing activities of ships owned by Jews. These menaced British shipping and probably proved to be a factor of importance in the war. There should be no occasion for wonder that this type of service is claimed to have been the greatest rendered by the Jews of New York City during the war. The total number of adult males of the city at that time of the Revolution was very insignificant and this fact accounts for the view of the writer. It is almost impossible, too, to identify the Jews who enlisted in the army. Records are all too scant. A careful<sup>4</sup> writer on the subject has found nothing of importance. No all the Jewish community of New York were patriots. Newcomers

-----  
1. Pub. Vol. 27 p 252

2. ibid

3. of the section of paper dealing with the economic status of the Jews at this period.

4. Wolf

to the country, some of them had lived in England and many of them, as has been indicated elsewhere in this paper, carried on business relations with England. There were many loyalists among the colonists. It is not strange that some Jews were among them.

Jacob Abrahams, John Solomons and Joseph Emanuel (or Emanuel Joseph?) "were ordered 40 miles beyond the water." They were loyal to the British cause. Emanuel went to England and the other two men "had to give satisfaction to the government." Haym M. Solomon and others had reported to the government concerning the above. Abraham Wagg who before the war of the Revolution had married Rachel Gomez, took the oath of allegiance to the Crown on January 24, 1772.

The Jews of New York City did serve the cause of the Colonists although they prayed for peace in May 1776 before the Declaration of Independence had been promulgated. The minutes of the congregation She'erith Israel of June 20, 1775 show that a letter was received from John Hancock under date of June 15, 1775 thanking the Jewish community for its patriotic services. On June 17, 1780, when money was needed at a critical stage during the war, Isaac Moses contributed 3,000 pounds to a fund of \$260,000.00 subscribed by the public to

1. Pub. Vol. 27 p. 395 and note

2. ib. Vol. 31 pp. 39-40 cf ib.pp. 37-53 - Jacob Frands and one Lopez of N. Y. C. were probably Tories cf. Pub.Vol. 23 p 167

3. Pub. Vol. 27 pp. 31-32

4. Publ Vol. 27 p. 390



<sup>1</sup>  
the government. The minutes record that Hart Jacob was  
excused from military service on Friday nights<sup>2</sup>. The well  
known Hayman Solomon should perhaps be mentioned as one of  
the greatest Jewish patriots of all time. He aided the  
government with tremendous sums.

Following the war the congregation She'erith Israel  
on behalf of the Jewish community of New York, addressed a  
letter to Governor Clinton of New York State, referring to the  
hardships occasioned by the war and declaring the loyalty and  
patriotic devotion of the Jewish community. Another letter  
to the governor on December 9, 1783 pledged the loyalty of the  
Jews to the state.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>5</sup>  
The sermons of Leixas were patriotic in the extreme.  
His prayer of January 11, 1807 petitions specifically for the  
well being of the President, Vice President, Senate, Congress  
Governor, State Governor, the people of New York.<sup>6</sup> The  
wording is strikingly similar to a prayer of the Union Prayer  
Book, both resulting apparently from the "Prayer for the Government".

On December 13, 1790, the congregation She'erith  
Israel sent a letter to George Washington, signed also by  
the Richmond and Charleston Jewish communities. In it the  
greetings and patriotic sentiments of the Jews were expressed.<sup>7</sup>  
<sup>8</sup>  
A fine reply was returned to New York by Washington.

- 1. Pub. Vol. 27 p 332 cf. ib. Vol 27 p 333 - It appears that  
the government had asked for \$1,500.00 cf. Pub Vol.2 pp 86-87  
2. ib. Vol 27 p 391  
3.  
4. Pub. Vol 21 p. 141, Pub. Vol. 27 pp 31-34  
5. ib. Vol. 27 p. 137  
6. ib. Vol. 27 p. 140  
7. Wolf pp. 57-58  
8. ib. pp . 58-59

### The War of 1812

There was a total Jewish Population in the United States of approximately 3,000 people at the time of the war of 1812. For this reason and because few records concerning the war, notably lists of soldiers, have been preserved, there can be only limited knowledge concerning Jewish participation in it.<sup>1</sup>

Captain John Odroneaux of the New York Jewish community was an important naval officer in the war whose activities consisted primarily in privateering.<sup>2</sup>

Captain Mordecai Meyers of New York City served in Richmond and later in New York where he received a commission. He became a captain in the 13th United States Artillery in March 1812<sup>3</sup> Meyers described his reactions to his life in the army in a letter sent to Naphtali Philips dated March 1813 in which it appears that he greatly enjoyed the social contact afforded by his service. According to him, his duties and responsibilities were of the greatest importance.<sup>4</sup> Haym or Hayman Solomon became a captain of the 10th Brigade, 115th Regiment.<sup>5</sup>

- 
1. Pub. Vol. 26, p. 173
  2. Cohen, pp. 81-82
  3. Pub. Vol. 26, p. 174-175
  4. Pub. Vol. 27, pp. 396-397
  5. Pub. Vol. 26, p. 179

Sampson Simson became an ensign in 1802, a Lieutenant in<sup>1</sup> 1803, and during the war was captain of a company.

Samuel Noah a graduate of West Point served in the war. He was first an ensign and later a Lieutenant. Then he resigned only to reenlist as a private at the beginning of<sup>2</sup> the War of 1812. Noah was a cousin of Mordecai Manual Noah.

Perhaps the most distinguished Jewish officer in the war was Uriah Philips Levy, the father of the law abolishing corporal punishment in the United States Navy. At the time of his death in 1862 he was the highest ranking officer in the<sup>3</sup> United States Navy.

Colonel Nathan Meyer commanded a brigade near New<sup>4</sup> York City.

Both Abraham and Solomon Seixas achieved the rank of<sup>5</sup> Second Major after having previously served as Captain.

Aaron Levy, son of Hayman Levy, became successively<sup>6</sup> paymaster, first Lieutenant, second Major and first Major.

Bernard Hart was a Division quartermaster.<sup>7</sup>

Dr. Manuel Philips was an assistant surgeon during<sup>8</sup> the war.

-----  
1. Pub. Vol. 26, p. 180

2. ibid

3. Wolf pp. 81-84

4. Pub. Vol. 4, p. 90; the writer is unable to determine whither or not Meyer was a resident of New York City.

5. Pub. Vol. 26, p. 178

6. ib. pp. 177-178

7. ib. p. 178

8. ib. p. 179

It has already been stated in this paper that Harmon Hendricks subscribed the sum of \$40,000 to the government when it appealed to the citizenship for funds.

From all indications it may be concluded that the Jewish community of New York City participated patriotically in the War of 1812. Many of its representatives were active<sup>1</sup> later in the Mexican War of 1846.

#### Attitude of Non Jews

Since much has been written (on the basis of the Meagre records available) concerning Jewish participation in the wars, the present writer has made reference to the subject principally for the purpose of indicating that such demonstrations of loyalty and patriotism undoubtedly left good effects, resulting in general esteem of the New York Jewish community.

There are various other indications of the fact that Jews were favorably regarded in New York. In the year 1847, when the Sha'are Tefillah synagogue was dedicated many non Jews including Christian clergymen were present to rejoice with<sup>2</sup> their Jewish fellows.

Rev. S. M. Isaacs of New York was invited by "several professors of Yale College" and the Mayor of New Haven to deliver

-----  
1. cf. Wolf pp. 72-75

2. The Occident Vol. 5, p. 224

a lecture in that city "On the Present <sup>1</sup>Condition and Future Spiritual and Temporal Hopes of the Jews." This fact merely tends to show that the reputation of Isaacs among non-Jews was very good. Salem Dutcher, a prominent New York Christian, it may be recalled, had spoken on the same program together with Isaacs at a previous time and on an occasion when non<sup>2</sup>Jews attended a Jewish function.

The good will of the Christian community was clearly demonstrated when a Christian minister and a prominent city official, among others, attended the 24th anniversary banquet of the New York Hebrew Benevolent Society at which time the clergyman delivered an address. Such an action probably would not occur if good will or at least tolerance were not extended to the Jews of the city.

Had there been a condition of intolerance in New York City, during the period we are discussing, there would undoubtedly have been references to it in the Occident and, more particularly, in the Congregational files. All such references are conspicuously absent.

---

1. The Occident, Vol. 3, p. 526

2. ib. Vol. 1, pp. 502-504. This fact has previously been mentioned in the present paper.

# SYNAGOGUES FUNCTIONING BEFORE THE YEAR 1850

The Occident reports that in July, 1847 there were ten synagogues in New York City. It mentions the following  
<sup>1</sup>  
 congregations:

One Portuguese

1. She'erith Israel

Four "Polish"

1. The Elm Street Synagogue
2. The Wooster Street Synagogue
3. The White Street Synagogue
4. The Pearl Street Synagogue

Three "German"

1. The Henry Street Synagogue
2. Attorney Street Synagogue
3. Attorney Street Synagogue

One German Reform

1. Emanuel

One New Netherland Synagogue ✓

---

1.  
 The Occident Vol. 5 p. 214

The problem of identifying these synagogues is not easy. What were the actual names of the synagogues designated only be the names of the streets upon which these were located? The story in the Occident describing the dedication services upon the completion of the Sha'are Tefilla synagogue helps to clarify the problem. Here it immediately identifies the latter synagogue as the Wooster Street synagogue previously listed as one of the four "Polish" congregations<sup>1</sup>. The same story tells that the following New York ministers were present ( in addition to Reverend Isaacs of the Sha'are Tefilla<sup>2</sup>).

J. J. Lyons of She'erith Israel

Merzbach of Emanuel

Hecht of Aushe Chesed

Herbner of Rodef Shalom

Danziger of Sha'ar Hashomazim and

Reverend Ellis Lyons of Richmond, Virginia

with this information and after a careful search through the pages of the Occident the writer has been able to locate the New York synagogues functioning in the year 1847:

---

1. The Occident Vol. 4 pp. 508-509

2. The Occident Vol. 5 p. 219

## The "Polish" Congregations

| <u>Synagogue</u>  | <u>Location</u> | <u>Minister</u> |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| B'nai Jeshurun    | Elm Street      | Ansel Leo       |
| Sha'are Tefilla   | Wooster Street  | S. M. Isaacs    |
| Rodef Sholom      | White Street    | Heilner         |
| Sha'ar Hashomazim | Pearl Street    | Danziger        |

## The "German" Congregations

|                           |              |                  |
|---------------------------|--------------|------------------|
| Anshe Chesed              | Henry Street | ) M. Lillianthal |
| Attorney Street Synagogue |              |                  |
| Attorney Street Synagogue |              |                  |

## The "German Reform" Congregation

Emanuel                      56 Chrystie Street    Merzbach

## The "Netherdutch" Congregation

B'nai Israel                      S. C. Noot

## The "Portuguese" Congregation

She'erith Israel                      J. J. Lyons



The B'nai Jeshurun Congregation

The writer, elsewhere in this paper, has established the fact that the congregation was established approximately or in the year 1818, its membership having apparantly having been formed from seceders out of the congregation She'erith Israel. On August 15, 1826 it purchased at auction a church which had formerly been the possession of negroes. By June 30, 1827, the building had been converted into a beautiful <sup>1</sup>synagogue. It was called the "Polish and German" <sup>2</sup>synagogue and the "Elm Street" <sup>3</sup>synagogue. On June 30, 1844, the congregation abolished its former custom of selling mitzvoth, according to a notice appearing in the Occident, even though Reverand Isaacs stated that this change in policy would result in a \$600.00 annual loss to the congregation-----a loss not <sup>4</sup>regretted. In that year the congregational income amounted to about \$4,200.00, being <sup>5</sup>about \$1,000.00 more than the expenses.

- 
1. Pub. Vol. p 311
  2. ib. Vol. 27 p 342
  3. The Occident Vol. 5 p 214
  4. The Occident for August 1848
  5. The Occident Vol. 4 pp 214-215

Manual Noah was President of the congregation. It is not surprising that the synagogue became mighty----despite the fact that many members seceded in August of the year 1845.

The story of the difficulties within B'nai Jeshurun which led to the secession of a very considerable portion of its membership is told in detail in the pages of the Occident. It appears that a certain element in the congregation experienced difficulties in giving direction to congregational policies. There were charges and counter charges. Intrigue was employed. A law suit before the Supreme Court. Violence and scenes were enacted. The synagogue doors were said to have been nailed tight between services on a holy day. Isaacs was suspended. Members seceded. Isaacs resigned and a new congregation immediately<sup>1</sup> formed consisting of the seceders. On June 2, 1846, Reverend Ausel Leo succeeded Isaacs at a salary of \$1,000.00. In that year the congregation's budget was \$1,000.00 less<sup>2</sup> than its expenses.<sup>3</sup> Mordecai M. Noah was its president.

#### The Sha'are Tefillah Congregation

The new congregation formed in 1845 immediately engaged Reverend S. M. Isaacs, formerly of B'nai Jeshurun. At the beginning worship was conducted at 67 Franklin Street. There<sup>4</sup> Isaacs preached in English at least once each month.

- 
- |                 |                                    |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. The Occident | Vol. 3 pp 209-211, pp 258-260, 304 |
| 2. ib.          | Vol. 3 pp 214-215                  |
| 3. ib.          | Vol. 1 p 514                       |
| 4. ib.          | Vol. 3 pp 210-211                  |

The congregation had completed the construction of their synagogue building in August of the year 1847. The new structure built at a cost of \$30,000 was said, at the time, to have been the finest synagogue edifice in the country.<sup>1</sup> Rev. S. M. Isaacs was its spiritual head and Louis Levy its president<sup>2</sup> where the new building was being erected.

At its consecration the sum of \$3,000. was collected.<sup>3</sup> The various rabbis of the community were present at the dedication ceremonies and Rev. Ellis Lyons of congregation Beth Shalom of Richmond, Virginia, attended the function.<sup>4</sup>

A Ladies Benevolent Society, attached to Sha'are Tefilla, was formed before the year 1850. Mitzvoth were not sold.<sup>5</sup>

The Sha'are Tefilla, like the B'nai Jeshurun synagogue, formed its membership from among German and East European Jews who were glad to have the Ashkenazic ritual rather than that used by the Sephardim in congregation She'erith Israel. As the number of German Jews in New York City increased, however, the opportunity came to form a purely German congregation. The Anshe Chesed synagogue resulted from that opportunity.

- 
1. Occident 4, pp. 508-509
  2. " 5, p. 223
  3. " 5, p. 221
  4. " 5, p. 219
  5. " 5, p. 461-462-224

### The Anshe Chesed Congregation

In the year 1840 the Anshe Chesed Congregation composed of German Jews, in existence at least ten years, consecrated a synagogue on Henry Street. It had only a Hazan until the year 1845<sup>1</sup> when it secured the services of one Rabbi Hecht<sup>2</sup> who was later succeeded by Rabbi Herman Felsenkeld.<sup>3</sup> Rabbi Max Libienthal led the congregation from about the year 1848 until 1850. He was not listed as Rabbi of the congregation<sup>4</sup> in 1845 or in 1847.

### The Other German Congregations

Anshe Chesed joined the two other German Jewish congregations, both located on Attorney Street, after the year 1847.<sup>5</sup> This act probably did transpire before then because it appears that the merger took place after Libienthal became the head of Anshe Chesed. The Rabbi conducted separate services in each of the three synagogues and preached in one each week until, in 1849, he resigned, also, from his position as rabbi of Anshe Chesed.<sup>6</sup>

### Emanuel

Because of a "broader view of the requirements of these religion than obtained" in New York City a group of German Jews, sometime before 1845, established the "Cultus

1. Pub. Vol. 9, pp. 98-99-97

2. Occident 5, p. 214

3. Occident 5, p. 412

4. cf. last two references. It has been said that Rabbi Libienthal was in charge of the congregation in 1845 cf. Pub. Vol. 9 pp. 99

5. Pub. Vol. 9, p. 99

6. ibid

Verein" when this society had enrolled thirth three members, it was converted on April 6, 1845 into a regular congregation<sup>1</sup> which was given the name Emanuel. A room was soon rented at the corner of Grand and Clinton Streets which served as synagogue. The ritual was "altered to meet the views of the congregation." A choir sang. But the men sat in the front seats and the women in the rear of the auditorium.<sup>2</sup> German hymns were used in the services on July 6, 1845.<sup>3</sup>

The congregation and its members were poor. At its second meeting only \$28.25 was collected from 38 men, an average of less than seventy one cents from each. Only one contribution exceeded \$1.37 and there were two subscriptions of twenty five cents each.<sup>4</sup>

Leo Merzbacker (or Meizbach) was the first minister of Emanuel and G. M. Cohen its first cantor a "Sexton and secretary" was also employed. The salary of each Merzbacker and Cohen was \$200. per year (surely not a livable wage). These salaries were supplemented by small fixed fees paid to the congregation's spiritual leaders for performing marriage ceremonies and funerals. The sum of \$2.00 was paid the minister for each funeral he conducted and \$1.00 additional was granted when he was required to delivery a eulogy.<sup>5</sup>

---

1. Stern, M., History of Temple Emanuel, New York

pp. 13-14

2. ibid p. 15

3. ibid pp. 21-22

4. ibid p. 17

5. Stern pp. 18-20

The congregation struggled along, its income amounting to about twenty per cent less than its expenses of \$1520.27 during its first year of existence. A cemetery was purchased for \$600. When in 1847 purchase of a new temple was being considered which, finally was purchased, the directors of the congregation reported to the members that the sum of \$15,000. was asked, that \$13,000 could buy it and that \$12,000 be offered for the building. Only \$600 was paid in cash when it was bought. Members were able to contribute only \$150 but they loaned the congregation \$3,480 and the Zion Lodge of the Independent Order B'rai B'rith loaned the congregation the sum of \$1,700.<sup>1</sup>

The congregation had no president at first. I. Orthenhoefer was its first chairman and I. Rosenbourg the first treasurer.<sup>2</sup> There was a board of Directors each of whom in turn acted as chairman for a period of three months.<sup>3</sup>

#### The Netherdutch Congregation

The congregation B'rai Isarel composed at first of 60 members, most or all of whom were Dutch Jews, consecrated its synagogue on William Street on May 20, 1847.<sup>4</sup> As we have elsewhere observed, Rev. S. C. Noot was the rabbi.

- 
1. Stein pp. 20-21
  2. " pp. 27-28
  3. " pp. 18
  4. " p. 25

Before the structure was completed the congregation had acquired furnishings for the new synagogue and had secured a cemetery on 95th Street.<sup>1</sup> We have elsewhere considered the educational and philanthropic activities of this congregational.

Nothing need be added concerning the congregational life of She'erith Israel. We have fully considered its administrative organization, its educational activities and its philanthropic enterprises. No important changes occurred in the synagogue's policies before the middle of the nineteenth century for the Portuguese element was always strong enough to direct those policies in its customary manner. When the dissatisfied persons became sufficiently numerous as we have seen, they withdrew and formed new synagogues the policies of which were congenial to them. By the year 1850 the Germans had their synagogues, The East European Jews worshipped in their way and among people to whom they were accustomed; the liberal minded created a Reform synagogue; the Dutch Jews had their own place of worship. She'erith Israel remained the same essentially as it had been two hundred years earlier; better organized, stronger in members and wealth, housed in a splendid structure, it still continued at once the creator and the witness of two hundred years of constructive history in New York City.

-----  
1. Occident Vol. 5, p. 370